

It's Your Choice!

**MOTIVATING A CHALLENGING STUDENT
THROUGH THE USE OF
CLEARLY DEFINED CHOICES**

***Megan Schmidt
Gray's Woods, Intern
3rd Grade
mbs216@psu.edu***

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I. Background Information

A. Teaching Context

The State College Area School District, located in State College, Pennsylvania, draws in students from an area of 150 square miles surrounding the borough of State College. The State College Area School District includes ten elementary schools from the following surrounding townships: College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris, and Patton. In the 2005-2006 school year, the enrollment of the State College Area School District is approximately 7,284. The student teacher ratio at the elementary level is approximately 23 students to 1 teacher.

Gray's Woods Elementary School is one of the ten elementary schools in the State College Area School District consisting of grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade. The total students enrollment is 420. The intermediate division consists of three third grade classrooms and three fourth grade classrooms, a total of six intermediate division classrooms (SCASD).

My student teaching internship placement is in the third grade at Gray's Woods Elementary School. There is a total of twenty-two third grade Caucasian students, eleven of which are male and eleven of which are female.

The twenty-two students are very diverse in their academic learning abilities.

- Three students attend Title I reading.
- Four students attend Title I mathematics.
- One student receives learning support services for language arts and special attention throughout the regular school day.
- One student has an Individualized Education Plan for speech therapy.
- Four students receive learning enrichment services.
- Eight students are high-achievers.

The twenty-two students are very diverse in their behavior patterns.

- Five students' behaviors create challenges within the classroom on a regular basis.
- Six students never (or almost never) create challenges within the classroom.

The twenty-two students are very diverse with their social relationship skills.

- Two students are challenged socially.
- Eight students are social leaders in the classroom, able to influence other students.
- Four students are quiet and very anxious to conform.

- Four students are easy to get along with, but have trouble getting work done.

The twenty-two students in my third grade class at Gray's Woods Elementary all have very diverse needs academically, behaviorally, and socially.

II. Rationale

A. *Deciding on an Inquiry Project*

- What types of lessons and activities will increase the motivation, participation, and on-task behaviors of a child in my third grade classroom?

Upon walking into the third grade classroom that I would be learning and teaching in for the next several months, I wondered about each of the students I began to encounter. Some of the students were very shy while talking with me while others wanted to learn all about their new intern. One student in particular caught my attention, and he has kept it ever since. This child, Bob, ran up to me to show me his new boots.

As the days went by and the excitement of the first day of school began to drift away, the anxious new third graders began to have the attitude that school was just school. I began to see a very different side of Bob. A side that was argumentative and stubborn, resulting in behavioral extreme highs and lows.

My school year continued, and as an intern I carried out my responsibilities as a student, taking my methods courses. A course assignment that would take eight weeks to finish was a case study. I had trouble deciding on a student, not knowing whom to choose. When I finally decided, I chose Bob for my case study assignment. This child was still a mystery to me; therefore, I was not sure what direction to take. Bob brought up a variety of problems within our third grade class. It was a challenge to involve Bob during the school day because of his refusal to do school work. His low motivation during written assignments kept him from creating written assignments that were at his achievement level. Bob's low motivation, low participation, and off-task behavior created arguments within the classroom, especially when he did not feel the need to participate.

Discovering this information in the first months of school, I did not know how to complete a case study on Bob. There was so much I did not understand about this child and so much learning that needed to take place. For those reasons, Bob was always in the back of my mind, but I decided to choose another student, Kara, to participate in my assignment. As this assignment took place, I kept mental notes of Bob, trying to "figure him out." Questions about Bob were always in the back of my mind. "What can I do for him to change his overall attitude about school?"- "Why does he act the way he does?" "What can I do to help him with his anger that arises in certain situations?"

Months later, when the time had come to decide on an inquiry project, there were a few ideas running through my head: community building within the third grade, language arts workshops aimed at building motivation and participation, on-task behavior of Bob, and general ideas to

help Bob be successful in school. Two of my three ideas related to Bob, this is why I knew I needed to make a difference in this child's life. I had it narrowed down to changing the attitude of Bob toward school.

Observing Bob in the beginning of the year, I knew that most of his off-task time occurred during individual writing assignments. Therefore, I began to brainstorm ideas about building his motivation and on-task behavior during writing time. I came up with the idea of language arts stations and the affect they had on Bob's behavior. I put together station ideas that specifically created motivation. This is when I realized my ideas were all over the place and building Bob's positive attitude was not number one. For that reason, I had to answer this question: Do I want to do stations and see how they affect Bob's attitude, or do I want to focus on Bob's attitude while building a positive attitude in the classroom? I knew my decision had to be solely based on building Bob's attitude, motivation, participation, and on-task behavior. There it was, I had found my inquiry: *What types of lessons and activities will increase the motivation, participation, and on-task behaviors of a child in my third grade classroom?*

B. The Importance of My Inquiry

What do you do when a child that lacks motivation, participates only when he/she wants to, and has minimal on-task behavior? Many teachers have been through this with at least one student in their teaching career. The questions that arise are, "What do I do with this child?" "How can I get this child to become a student?" These questions went through my mind as an intern this 2005-2006 school year. As I began to enter the career world, I thought to myself, how am I going to deal with a child like this on my own? I wanted to develop my own plan of how to deal with students that create a challenge in my classroom in the future. I felt it was important for me to inquire about this on my own and learn how I might deal with a demanding child.

Every student is different, and it is important to know and understand how each child deals differently with the classroom assignments and activities. Some assignments and activities may be more challenging for some students, and therefore, it is important to give those children the support they need in order to succeed. This inquiry project has shown me how to connect with a child who has difficulties connecting with other people. It is important as a teacher to make a positive connection with each and every one of your students. Creating an open line of communication, personally and academically, allows the child to become a part of a more comfortable school environment. Morning greetings, involvement during recess, and conversations throughout the school day create a positive connection with the students in your classroom.

Understanding that every student is different and requires very different levels of attention has opened my eyes of how to connect with each student individually. A child that requires few reminders to completing his/her schoolwork, has high levels of motivation and participation, and is on-task throughout the day, does not need a high level of attention. Bob, who requires a number of reminders throughout the school day to complete his schoolwork, has low levels of motivation and participation, and is off-task a large portion of the day, needs higher levels of attention in school. Understanding what causes the various levels of attention, in my future career of teaching, I will be able to understand the individual student and recognize the importance of developing a positive relationship with each student in my classroom.

C. *Questions and Wonderings*

1. Main Research Question/Wondering

Thinking about the school performance of a specific third grade child in my classroom, I decided on the following inquiry question:

- What types of lessons and activities will increase the motivation, participation, and on-task behaviors of a child in my third grade classroom?

2. Research Sub-Questions/Wonderings

While I began to think about my main research question/wondering, I began to wonder about this child's likes and dislikes. I wanted to discover which lessons or activities he would enjoy most and therefore positively increase his attitude toward school and schoolwork. I knew this child had low motivation, low participation, and off-task behavior through informal observations within the classroom. I also saw the troubles he caused while in the classroom from not doing his assigned schoolwork. How could I help this child create a positive attitude during school? What could I do as his teacher to help him enjoy his time in the school atmosphere? With these sub-wonderings in mind, the following sub-questions developed:

- What kinds of activities does the student enjoy the most, and which aspects of those activities seem to motivate and appeal to him?
- What can I do to increase this student's participation and enjoyment of classroom activities?

- Will the student develop increased participation working within a small group?
- Are there outside factors that are affecting his work habits and performance?
- How does he interact with peers during small group or partner time, and do these interactions impact his work?
- Will the opportunity to make more choices related to his assignments improve his motivation?
- Does individualized instruction affect his motivation level and overall assignments?

III. Literature/Experts/Research

Working with troubled students is a challenge in the teaching career. You need to know what each student's needs are and how to fulfill them as a teacher. To develop this understanding, a teacher can follow basic principles found in the book: **Building Classroom Discipline** by C.M. Charles. The following principles were used throughout the process of my inquiry project. The first principle I focused on is, "Know what causes misbehavior and how to deal with those causes" (Charles, p. 5). Once I found my inquiry question, it was time to develop an understanding of Bob's attitude at school. From the beginning I was looking for evidence that caused his misbehaviors and how I was going to deal with them. The next principle I focused on was, "Understand your students' needs and how to meet them" (p. 5). I felt it would be beneficial to understand Bob's needs and that this would affect my decisions throughout my inquiry project. Finally, the last principle I looked toward to find answers to Bob's low motivation, low participation, and off-task behavior was, "Involving students meaningfully in making decisions" (p. 6). I felt these three principles would help me determine why Bob lacked motivation, participation, and on-task behavior while at school.

Chapter Three of **Building Classroom Discipline** says that Lee and Marlene Canter acknowledge the following three phases to help difficult students achieve: "reach out to difficult students, meeting the special needs of difficult students, and communicating with difficult students"(p. 46). Throughout my inquiry plan, I kept in mind what this child needed to succeed, trying to find the answer to his achievement. What would make a difference in this child's school success?

IV. Inquiry Versus Project

From the beginning of the year, Bob had continually created questions in my mind about his school performance. I began thinking about what specific subject I wanted to use to build his motivation, but found as I began to observe, his lack of motivation was not specific to a subject. I then wondered why he lacked the motivation in his school activities and with his school assignments. This made me wonder what I could do to change his attitude about the activities and assignments given during the day.

- What created his angry outbursts and how could I help him handle his anger in a mature way?
- Why does he act so immature randomly throughout the school day?
- What was this child really thinking?
- What does he feel deep down inside of him and why is his motivation, participation, and on-task behavior so low throughout the school day?

These questions developed as I began my inquiry project and continued throughout.

V. My Inquiry Plan

Once I decided on my question, I knew it was important to begin my inquiry project through informal observations of Bob in order to develop an understanding of his behavior. Through this understanding I implemented a variety of strategies that would provide evidence of increase in motivation, participation, and on-task behavior. I began by taking notes throughout the school day, specifically; date, time, and activity, and kept notes of positive or negative behavior and seat choice.

As I continued to take notes for weeks, I realized I was not successful in finding any evidence related to the reasons of his low motivation, low participation, and off-task behavior. For example, I was not seeing any evidence that the day of the week and the time related directly to his misbehavior. I did however notice, as I took notes of my mentor teacher working with Bob that the use of choices helped Bob to participate. He had to either participate, or he would lose five minutes of his recess time. Although this method of using choices increased his participation and on-task behavior, it did not increase his motivation. During class he showed that he wanted to get the work done and then he would sit and do nothing. I knew there had to be something else I could do.

Therefore, I decided to change my note sheet, hoping it would be beneficial to my findings. (See Appendix B) I decided to keep the date, activity, and time for more observations. I then added space to record a morning comment, the color of clothes he was wearing that day, observations for specific activities and inferences about those activities. I wanted to see if a positive morning comment would create a personal relationship with Bob and if it positively affected his school day. I also was curious about the color of clothes he was wearing on a daily basis and if that affected his school work. When walking into school angry, I would want to notice the color of clothes and perhaps relate it to a negative at home experience while getting dressed. This would lead me to believe that the reason for his angry outbursts could be linked to a morning fight at home and not the lack of school enjoyment. While keeping notes, I made sure to write down the activity, any observations about the activity, and then inferences.

I began to give positive reinforcement through the use of positive comments in the beginning of the day. I was curious to see if this had an affect on his overall attitude throughout the school day. Once I found that the use of positive comments resulted in Bob's positive attitude throughout the school day, I began to use positive comments and positive conversations with Bob during the school day. After a week and a half of positive comments and positive conversations with Bob, I began to see a change in his attitude in school. Therefore, I thought it would be a great idea to use an assessment sheet each day assessing a subject/activity. I decided that it would be great to start this assessment sheet while Bob had

increased his motivation, participation, and on-task behavior rather than while he was lacking this positive attitude. I brought him back to my desk and discussed how well behaved he was this week. I told him we like to reward friends that work hard on their assignments and school activities and then explained the assessment plan we would begin. If Bob received four smiley faces he would receive a sticker, after four stickers we was rewarded with fun cursive sheets, extra computer time, or picking from the gift bin.

Bob showed great enthusiasm for the new assessment sheet and suggested getting started right away. He offered to begin the assessment sheet for the PSSA reading session one and I agreed that it would be a great idea. After a few days, I noticed more motivation, participation, and on-task behavior only during the subject/activities we were assessing. Therefore, I felt it was a good idea to implement a plan of randomly picking during the day; therefore, he did not know when he was being assessed. The following weeks, the assessment sheet definitely affected his motivation, participation, and on-task behavior in a positive way. He has completed his work neatly and with effort, showing his motivational growth. He completes his schoolwork with no more than two reminders, which shows his increased participation and on-task behavior.

With this great improvement, I have been slowly trying to build his extrinsic motivation of receiving stickers and prizes to intrinsic motivation by asking various questions.

- How do you feel about this assignment compared to that assignment (pointing to two different assignments, one in which he put forth effort and one in which he did not)?
- How do you feel when you do not try?
- How do you feel when you do a great job on an assignment?
- Would you rather feel good about your assignments or bad?

As the year comes to an end, I hope to transfer his motivation from an extrinsic motivator to an intrinsic motivator. I plan to talk with him about his assignments and discuss his feelings when he does a good job and when he does a poor job. I hope that he begins to enjoy feeling satisfaction for completely good work, and therefore become intrinsically motivated. His good work can be described as neat, directions are followed, it is his best work and it shows effort.

VI. Method of Data Collection

A. *Field Notes/Observations*

- Evaluation Note Sheets

Personal Evaluation Note Sheet One- To begin my observation, I created a personal evaluation note sheet to collect any positive or negative activity of Bob throughout his daily school routine. I included his seat choice on the rug, the time and subject of the observation, any participation throughout the subject, amount of off-task behavior with reasons, and any comments made by Bob. After a few days of using Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number 1 (See Appendix A) I decided to revise Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number one and create Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number two. (See Appendix B)

Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number Two- On Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number two I included the date, activity, time of activity, morning comment given by teacher, any observations and inferences about the observations. While observing I continued to record his seat choice on the rug, when he was off-task and reasons for his off-task behavior, and any comments made by Bob. With this new evaluation sheet, I began to record the amount of participation and volunteering within each activity. I also recorded any angry outbursts that happened in the classroom and reasons for these outbursts.

PDA/Other Evaluation Sheets (See Appendix C)

On the evaluation sheets for my PDA or other teachers who may be teaching Bob in a different room, observations that were to be recorded dealt with questions about Bob's academic performance and interaction with others in the classroom.

B. *Student Survey*

I created a student survey (See Appendix D), which contained ten questions that fell under the following categories: working with others in the classroom, and personal opinions about the subjects taught within the classroom.

C. Sample of Student Work

Samples of Bob's writing were used to provide evidence of his effort and motivation or lack of effort and motivation. Bob and I analyzed his writing assignments together using the "How Am I Doing?" assessment sheet that I created (See Appendix E). Through the sample work, I was able to look at neatness, whether or not he followed the directions, and evidence of effort.

D. Weekly Reflections

Weekly reflections were used to look for the week's daily notes. I looked for any similarities in behavior and the causes of them, as well as recorded notes that were repeated throughout the week. I was looking for consistency in his behavior. I also used the weekly reflections to note any concerns I was having with his attitude and possible reasons for his attitude, whether they be positive or negative.

E. "How Am I Doing" Assessment Sheet

The "How Am I Doing" Assessment Sheet was used to assess the student's work on one assignment throughout the day. The assessment sheet allowed Bob and I to critique his schoolwork together. The assessment sheet looked at his overall neatness on the assignment, whether it was his best work, if he took his time, if he put his name on the assignment, and if he completed it with no more than two reminders. (See Appendix E) The assessment sheet had three levels of grading; a smiley face, a neutral face, and a frown face.

VII. Method of Data Analysis

Following my method of collecting data, I analyzing that data to look for any patterns in Bob's behavior. I analyzed how each method of data collection was used in discovering any patterns that positively affected Bob's motivation, participation and on-task behavior during the school day.

A. *Field Notes/Observations*

- Evaluation Note Sheet

Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number one- I used Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number one to look for patterns in Bob's behavior throughout the regular school day. I began by documenting his seat choice on the rug, his attitude toward his assignments, when he enjoyed doing activities and when he did not enjoy doing activities, the time of day, the day and date, when he was involved in class activities, and his overall actions throughout the school day. This documentation allowed me to discover any patterns in Bob's behavior.

Personal Evaluation Note Sheet number two- I used Personal Evaluation Sheet number two to look for patterns in Bob's behavior based on the following: date, day, time of day, activity, morning comments, color of clothes, any observations that dealt with his participation in class, angry outbursts and inferences about any observations I made. Personal Evaluation Sheet number two allowed me to look at his participation, on-task behavior, angry outbursts and document possible reasons for these behaviors.

PDA/Other Evaluation Sheets (See Appendix C)- The PDA/other evaluation Sheets were used to document behavioral observations made while other teachers were teaching. This allowed me to look at Bob's engagement in lessons and his attitude throughout these lessons. I could also see whether or not he was doing the work assigned, when he was working with others or individually, and whether he was refusing to do any of his assigned work in a different atmosphere or with a different teacher.

A. *Student Survey*

By giving a student survey, I was able to discover Bob's feelings about interacting with others in the classroom and his opinions about subjects within our classroom. The survey also asked opinion questions of what is enjoyed in the classroom or what

would like to be done more often. By looking at the results, I was able to get an idea of what Bob enjoys and what he does not enjoy.

B. Sample of Student Work

I observed Bob's work to see if there was any improvement throughout my inquiry project that could be used as evidence for or against my inquiry. The samples provided me with information as to whether Bob's motivation, participation on assignments, and overall on-task behavior, when given an assignment, increased.

C. Weekly Reflections

I looked for any patterns in my weekly observations related to participation, motivation, and on-task behavior. My weekly notes also included questions about Bob's participation, motivation, and on-task behavior that developed while recording his actions. The questions provided me with possible answers as to why Bob lacked motivation, participation, and on-task behavior.

D. "How Am I Doing" Assessment Sheet

The assessment sheet I used allowed me to observe Bob's overall effort during specific classroom assignments and activities. I used the assessment sheet to determine whether or not the use of an assessment sheet helped build motivation and on-task behavior.

VIII. Claims and Evidence

A. Claims

After collecting and analyzing the data I collected, I was able to make the following claims about my inquiry project:

- *The use of choices during an activity increased participation and on-task behavior.*
- *An assessment sheet provided motivation, participation, and on-task behavior during the school day.*
- *Possessing positive self-esteem during an activity increases motivation, participation, and on-task behavior.*
- *Positive comments increase motivation, participation, and on-task behavior.*

B. Evidence to support each claim

- *The use of choices during an activity increased participation and on-task behavior.*

According to the book *Building Classroom Discipline* by C. M. Charles, Choice Theory states, “Motivation is an extremely important contributor to academic and behavioral success.” “If they choose to work hard, and comply with expectations, it is because they get satisfaction from doing so” (p. 82). The use of choices in the classroom has a positive affect on Bob’s attitude during classroom activities and assignments. The following field notes/observations provided evidence that giving choices to Bob about his work had a positive effect on Bob throughout this inquiry project.

Field Notes/Observations

2/21/05- During reading group Bob had the choice of what book to read. With the option to choose the book he wanted to read, during individual reading time, Bob went to a quiet spot in the room and began reading quietly on his own with no off-task behavior. Choosing his book provides evidence for his increased motivation and on-task behavior.

3/13/06- After the catapult field trip, our class was instructed to

write thank you notes to the parent helpers. Bob ended up not getting the parent he wanted, and became very angry. The lack of having a choice created low motivation and off-task behavior. He was then introduced to a choice of working alone or having minutes taken off of his recess time. He made the choice of working alone on a thank you note.

3/21/06 An explorer and simple machine “wrap up” activity was presented to the class. During this culmination, they could make a choice of one out of six activities. Given a choice of activities, Bob began working right away without any off-task behavior and a high level of motivation.

- *An assessment sheet provided motivation, participation, and on-task behavior during the school day.*

The assessment sheet used throughout my inquiry was used to increase Bob’s motivation, participation and on-task behavior. I used the assessment sheet to increase his overall behavior during school activities or on a school assignment.

According to Terri Mauro, author of the article **How to Make a Behavioral Chart Work**, the following are important aspects to consider when creating a behavioral chart: Accentuate the positive and make rewards motivating. With the use of the assessment sheet, Bob needed to receive four out of six smiley faces in order to receive a sticker. When he received four stickers, he could pick from the gift bin, receive 15 minutes of extra computer time, or do fun cursive sheets. This reward system was very beneficial throughout the inquiry project, as you will read in my field notes/observations that follow.

Field Notes/Observations

3/24/06- The first assessment day of PSSA testing was over. test. At the beginning of the day, we talked together about what we should assess, deciding on the reading part of the PSSA. As Bob worked, I observed him reading carefully, taking his time, and checking over his answers. This provided evidence that as he worked he took into consideration the assessment sheet and wanted to do a good job and get the answers correct.

3/28/06- The students were to be drawing a map of Pennsylvania from memory. Bob lacked motivation, participation, and on-task behavior during this activity. My mentor teacher went to talk with Bob and decided to assess his

performance during this activity. He did not show quality work and therefore did not receive a sticker for that activity. Once the assessment was over my mentor teacher gave him a new piece of paper and he began redrawing his map of Pennsylvania with effort and motivation.

3/29/06- Bob and I decided the assessment would be during the science journal activity today. While he was working, he was not rushing, he was on task, and he was following all of the directions. This provides evidence that he was motivated during this activity, he was participating in the activity, and he was on-task during the activity.

4/6/06- Before beginning poetry he did not seem excited. I went up to talk with him and he suggested doing the assessment. I told him, "That will be my choice." Therefore, he had the assessment in his mind as he began writing poetry and continued uninterrupted for fifteen minutes. This showed his high motivation, participation, and on-task behavior as a result of the assessment sheet.

- *Possessing positive self-esteem during an activity increases motivation, participation, and on-task behavior.*

Supporting Research and Classroom evidence

The lack of self-esteem and self-efficacy creates a low level of motivation during school activities and assignments. According to the periodical **Improving Self-Efficacy and Motivation: What to Do, What to Say?** Margolis and McCabe state, "Often, the key to motivating and engaging struggling learners is to get them to believe that they can succeed." I was able to observe self-esteem issues with Bob in the classroom because of my inquiry project.

As the research indicates, when a child has high self-esteem he/she is more likely to have high motivation and therefore increased participation and on-task behavior. Data collection through field notes, student survey, sample work, and an assessment sheet all provide evidence for my claim.

The following field notes provide specific examples related to self-esteem and self-efficacy.

2/23/06-Groups were to be reading summaries about a chapter they had read. Each group received two summaries, a short one and a long one. Bob was instructed to read the longer summary, but decided to sit there and do nothing. When told he should begin reading, he blurted out, "I didn't want to read the longer one! I don't like reading that much!" This student comment told me that Bob did not believe he

was a good reader and therefore he decided not to read at all.

2/27/06- During a Berenstain Bear read aloud Bob was off-task, playing with a book basket near him, and lying on the floor. This behavior was a result of lack of enjoyment of the book chosen. Beginning the read aloud, Bob stated, "That's a kids book and I don't like kid stuff." This provides evidence that his participation and on-task behavior is strongly affected by enjoyment of the activity.

3/14/06- During large group math instruction on the rug, there was a break in the middle to energize the students through use of a Simon Says game. My notes indicated that Bob participated a number of times during the math instruction, but stood with his hands in his pockets during the Simon Says game. The Simon Says game did not corrupt his later math involvement, but showed his low self-esteem during the game.

3/15/06- A social studies fate assignment was to create fates for the Explorer unit. Once the fates were created, the result would be pulling fates from a bag and participating in a fun activity as a group. Bob participated very well in his group, working with the group members to create a challenging fate. His enjoyment in pulling fates strongly affected his increased participation when creating the fate.

3/16/06- The large amount of participation during large group math provided evidence that Bob had a high level of enjoyment and a high level of self-esteem during math time.

3/22/06- He did not participate in an individual relaxation activity between the PSSA testing. It appeared that Bob did not have high level of self-esteem and did not enjoy activities that involved acting silly.

3/23/06- We began a new cursive letter, which he worked on right away when returning to his desk. He also sat in the front during directions. (He usually sits in the back.) This behavior provides evidence of his enjoyment during cursive instruction and writing time.

4/4/06- During large group math instruction, Bob, showed a high level of participation. When he shared an answer that was correct, he smiled and was very eager to explain the answer. When asked to explain his answer, he responded, "Well, it's so simple!" This informs me that when he knows he is right, he is happy to explain the answer and participate in the activity.

4/6/06- The class was given time to write poems, followed by

sharing one of them with the class. Bob ran eagerly to the rug with his poem, but then turned around and brought it back to his desk. When asked why he decided not to share, he responded, "I get stage fright." This provides evidence that he is very shy when it comes to presenting or talking when it is something in which he lacks confidence.

- 4/6/06- During fifteen-minute quiet poetry writing Bob did not start to write immediately. Therefore, I decided to go and talk with him about poetry and where to look for ideas. Once I left, he began to write poems and did not stop until he was instructed to do so. Throughout his writing, I gave "confidence boosters" about each of his poems, for example "I really like that poem, Bob. Great Job!" When he left school he said, "I don't usually like writing!" This demonstrated that with the confidence boosters, he developed a high level of self-esteem during writing that he was very excited about.
- 4/7/06- The beginning of the day was for writing poems. Bob began writing more poems immediately and his ideas began to broaden. Throughout his writing, I continually gave confidence boosters that helped increase his motivation.

- *Positive comments increase motivation, participation, and on-task behavior.*

According to the book **Tools for Teaching** written by Barbara Gross Davis, "To encourage students to become self-motivated independent learners, give frequent, early, positive feedback that supports the students' beliefs that they can do well" (Davis). During my inquiry, evidence of positive changes in Bob's attitude due to positive feedback can be found in the field notes/observations below.

On the days that morning compliments had been given, Bob had higher levels of motivation, participation, and on-task behavior throughout the school day. The following field notes and observations provide evidence for the benefits of using positive comments and positive reinforcements.

Field Notes/Observations

- 3/14/06- I began the day complimenting Bob and talking with him. This short conversation created a positive school environment and therefore, Bob had no angry outbursts or refusals about any school activities or assignments.
- 3/21/06- I began the day complimenting Bob, which resulted in on-

task behavior and a positive attitude throughout the day. He worked through all his activities with minimal reminders.

3/23/06- Today, I decided to leave out the positive comment of the morning. When it was time to work on his portfolio, he scribbled down words quickly. When he was told to add illustrations to his portfolio, Bob sat there lacking participation. This provided evidence that positive reinforcement through the use of positive comments has an influence on Bob's attitude throughout the school day.

4/4/06- Starting the day off with a compliment resulted in positive outcomes. During math large group, Bob participated a number of times. He also participated quite a few times during calendar math. During social studies and reading, he showed high motivation, participation, and on-task behavior. This proves he is positively affected by conversation and comments.

4/6/06- While Bob was working on poetry, I continually gave him positive comments about his poems. I praised him for working hard and for how great his poems were. As a result he continually wrote poems and said, "I usually do not like writing!" This statement proved that if Bob believes he is doing a good job, he is more apt to be on-task showing high motivation as he works.

4/7/06- In the morning, instead of verbally using a comment, I wrote Bob a note about his poems from the previous day. The note said, "Bob, I really love your poems! Thanks for working so hard on them." Our morning work was to write poetry, which he did with out any reminders. He then shared with me, "You can copy these if you want." This response to the note proves that he is positively affected by positive reinforcement through the use of positive comments.

Skinner's principles developed contributions related to classroom discipline. His principles discovered that, "Shaping desired behavior through reinforcement led directly to behavior modification" (Charles, 25). As you can see through my field notes and observations, the positive reinforcement through the use of positive comments clearly modified Bob's behavior throughout the school day.

IX. Conclusions and Further Directions

A. *Conclusions*

After considering the evidence I have collected throughout my inquiry project, motivation, participation, and on-task behavior of a child in my third grade class can be increased using four different strategies. Allowing choices during the school day creates enjoyment of the activity, and therefore, results in high motivation while completing the activity, increased participation and on-task behavior during the activity. The use of an assessment sheet allowed the student to understand when he was not using his full potential. The use of positive comments and positive reinforcement developed higher self-esteem resulting in increased motivation, participation, and on-task behavior. The discovery of these strategies has increased my understanding of why a student may lack motivation, participation, and on-task behavior. For that reason, I will implement them in my future classroom.

B. *Implications for Future Practice*

Although these strategies have increased the motivation, participation, and on-task behavior of a child in my third grade classroom, the following are a few changes I would use in future practice.

The assessment sheet worked very well with the child, but it focused mostly on deskwork activities. I would like to make a separate assessment sheet for written activities and listening/discussion activities. This would increase his overall motivation, participation, and on-task behavior throughout the whole school day, and not just during a written activity. I would eventually like to add an assessment sheet assessing how he is working with others while in partner or group situations.

An aspect I would change for future practice is creating a more personal relationship with the student from the beginning. I would prefer to get to know the student and open the line of communication with him/her. I feel this is something I could have done earlier in my inquiry project rather than backing off and just observing this student.

C. *New Wonderings*

With the claims that I have made, because of my inquiry project, a variety of new wonderings have developed based on my findings. These wonderings are related to the same child, specifically, as well as wonderings that can be addressed in my future classroom.

- Wonderings about the specific child
 - Will this child continue to have high motivation,

high participation, and on-task behavior without the assessment sheet?

- How can I motivate this child with intrinsic motivation as opposed to extrinsic motivation? Will intrinsic motivation alone work?
 - Will this child continue to develop an ability to express his emotions without anger?
- Wonderings that can be addressed in my future classroom
 - Is an assessment sheet going to work under different circumstances; different issues of motivation, participation, and on-task behavior?
 - If positive conversation is developed early with students in my future class, will they be more willing to participate and stay on-task?
 - What strategies will work when switching from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation?

X. Bibliography Page

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XI. Appendix

A. Personal Evaluation Note Sheet Number 1

Date: _____ Activity: _____

Observations:

Date: _____ Activity: _____

Observations:

B. Personal Evaluation Note Sheet Number 2

Date: _____	Activity: <u>Morning</u> _____	Time: _____
Comment:	Color of clothes:	
Observations:	Inferences:	

Activity: _____	Time: _____
Observations:	Inferences:

Activity: _____	Time: _____
Observations:	Inferences:

Activity: _____	Time: _____
Observations:	Inferences:

Activity: _____	Time: _____
Observations:	Inferences:

Activity: _____	Time: _____
Observations:	Inferences:

C. PDA/Other Evaluation Sheet

Date _____

Subject: _____

Working with anyone? yes no

individual

partner

group

teacher

Names of people he is working with:

Is he doing any work? yes no

Is he at his desk

floor

rug

other _____

Making an effort? yes no

Did he have to be reminded to do his work? yes no

Anything important to write _____

Did he refuse to do his work? yes no

Anything important to write _____

Other observations:

D. Student Survey

Name: _____

Special interest survey:

While in our classroom, which do you prefer (circle one):

- 1.) working alone or working with a partner
- 2.) working with a partner or working in a group of 3 or 4
- 3.) working alone or working with a teacher
- 4.) working with a teacher or working with a partner

Name three friends in our class that you think you work best with.

Name three or four friends you would like in your desk group.

If you had the choice, do you prefer (circle one):

- 1.) writing with a partner
- 2.) writing on your own
- 3.) writing with the help of a teacher

Rate the writing activities with a 1-5

(1 the least liked, 3 okay, and 5 the most liked):

- _____ journaling
- _____ creative writing
- _____ poetry
- _____ nonfiction
- _____ fiction
- _____ other _____ ?

**What are your two favorite school subjects we learn about in our classroom?
(circle one)?**

math writing reading word study
sciencesocial studies computer lab cursive
other _____

**When something upsets you, which of the following do you prefer?
(circle one):**

- 1.) like to be alone
- 2.) like to talk with a friend
- 3.) like to talk with an adult
- 4.) other: _____

**How do you feel about journaling back and forth with a teacher to discuss anything
on your mind? (circle one)**

I would like to do
maybe like to do
probably would not like to do

Is there anything we do in our classroom that you would like to do more?

Is there anything **WE DO NOT DO** in our classroom that **YOU WOULD LIKE
TO DO?**

E. "How Am I Doing?" Assessment Sheet

How Am I Doing?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Subject: _____

Shade in the smiley face that describes your work.

1.) I took my time.



2.) I did neat work.



3.) I followed the directions.



4.) I did my best work.



5.) Did I put my name on it.



6.) I completed my work with no more than 2 reminders.



Signature: _____