

EVERY student can learn:

How differentiating instruction by focusing on learning styles can increase struggling students' confidence, engagement, and language arts performance in a second grade classroom

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Abstract

How can a teacher differentiate instruction effectively for three students who are more than one year below grade level in their reading abilities? My inquiry will be focusing on helping these special needs students learn to read and write their 35 no-excuse words during my daily seventeen-minute spelling station. Throughout my inquiry, I have discovered that by incorporating student interests and learning styles, I can maximize our limited instructional time, increase language arts performance, and raise students' engagement and self-esteem levels.

I. Teaching Context:

As part of the Professional Development School (PDS), a partnership between State College Area School District and The Pennsylvania State University, I was able to take part in a yearlong internship in a State College Elementary School. State College Area School District is located in central Pennsylvania. The school district draws its students from a 150-mile area, which includes the Borough of State College and the townships of College, Ferguson, Halfmoon, Harris, and Patton. There are about 7, 233 students who attend ten elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school.

My student teaching experience at Ferguson Township Elementary School has been in a self-contained, second grade classroom. Ferguson Township is a small, rural school located in Pine Grove Mills with three hundred and six students currently enrolled. There are two kindergarten classrooms, six primary (1st and 2nd) classrooms, four intermediate (3rd and 4th) classrooms, and two upper-intermediate (5th) classrooms.

There are twenty students in my classroom, which consists of 13 boys and 7 girls. My classroom is not very culturally diverse because everyone is Caucasian except for one Asian student, one Indian student, and one student who is biracial (Asian and Caucasian). The students are very diverse however with regards to their academic, behavioral, emotional and social differences.

Among these students, there is a wide range of academic abilities. Five students in my classroom are very gifted academically and attend an enrichment class once a week. These students are at a much higher ability level than what is normally expected from second graders during this time of the year. Due to their increased abilities, these five students are classified as being early third grade readers. There are seven students in my

classroom who are exactly where they should be academically as second grade students. Four students receive Title I services everyday for reading assistance. These students struggle with most, if not all, of the academic subjects throughout the day. One of these students is currently being considered as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, which could be the cause of his difficulties. Four students in my room attend the resource room at least once a day because they have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Three of these students are early first grade readers. Two of my students only receive assistance for reading and they are in my classroom for math while two students attend the resource room for both reading and math. Among the four students who have an IEP, we have a student diagnosed with autism, a student diagnosed with a learning disability in reading, a student diagnosed with low functioning mental retardation, and a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

In addition to the academic levels in my classroom, there are also a wide variety of social relationships among my students. There are three students who are typically the leaders when working in small groups. During small group activities, these students can influence other students to agree with their opinions. In addition to the leaders in my room, eleven students are easy to get along with and listen well to others. These students have many friends in our classroom. The final six students are quiet. They do not participate in large groups as much as the other students in the room and they appear to have only a few friends, in comparison to the previous groups. One student in this category is the boy in my room who is diagnosed with autism, which is a disorder that tends to interfere with social skills. The student in my room who has minor mental retardation also fits into this group because he has difficulty with reasoning which is why

he doesn't spend much time socializing with others. Three of my students receive counseling twice a month while one student receives speech support.

The behavior problems in my room are limited; however when they do occur there is a wide range in the intensity of the problems. Only six of my students represent some challenges with regards to their behavior. The student with minor mental retardation becomes very emotional when he feels that one of his friends is upset with him. When this occurs he goes to a corner of the classroom to cry. During these occasions, which occur about once a month, he will refuse to do any of his work. The student in my room who is diagnosed with autism will have "meltdowns" when he does not want to follow rules. For example, when told to walk down the hallway rather than run he fell to the floor and became limp when asked to move. This student also acts very impulsively throughout the day. There are two other students in my room who act very impulsively. They frequently call out answers without raising their hands when working in groups. Finally, the student who is currently being considered for ADHD has problems focusing on his work throughout the day because he would rather be looking around the room and watching others. Most of my students present almost no challenges with regards to their behavior.

II. Rationale:

Student Profiles:

My inquiry will be focusing on three students in my classroom, Jason, Mike and Joe. (*All student names have been changed) Each of these students receives an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Mike and Joe receive assistance in language arts and math daily. Jason only receives extra support in language arts.

Jason is a second grade student who is very sociable and works hard in our classroom. Jason is a very good math thinker, however, he has a learning disability in reading. He is also very impulsive and throughout the day he will blurt out answers without giving them much thought. His impulsiveness also involves physical bursts where he wants to help his classmates and teachers. Jason stutters and receives speech therapy on a weekly basis due to his impulsiveness.

Mike is another student in our classroom. He is very helpful and comes to school with stories to share with his teachers. Mike is identified as a student with a speech and language impairment and mental retardation. He also receives emotional support one to two times per week. According to Susie Scanlon, his special education teacher, Mike “has made much progress since last year with regards to his communication skills, social skills, and his ability to control his emotions” (personal communication, March 1, 2007).

The third student Joe is a very friendly and hard working second grade student. Since Joe was born prematurely, he is developmentally delayed. He is also diagnosed and currently being treated for Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). In addition, Joe struggles with a poor short-term memory which makes school challenging. Joe was

retained in kindergarten so he is a year older than the rest of the students in our classroom.

All three boys are at the beginning of a first grade reading level. They are grouped together during our language arts stations, which includes reading, spelling, writing, speaking, and listening. Throughout the year, the boys have been working on blending sounds together to decode two, three, and four letter words. According to the State College Area School District's reading guidelines these boys are considered developing readers.

What led me to this inquiry and why is it important?

As a student teacher, I wanted to focus my inquiry on helping Joe, Jason, and Mike, the three students who need additional support in reading to learn to read and write the thirty-five no-excuse words, also known as high frequency words. According to Pinnell and Fountas, "high frequency words are words that occur often in oral language and thus occur often in reading and writing" (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). These words are important to recognize quickly in order to build fluency and comprehension. In addition, most of these words are not words that can be sounded out so they need to become automatic. The twenty-five most frequent words in our English language, which includes most of the words on the list these students will be learning, make up about thirty percent of our written material (Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). The thirty-five words that I had the students work on are the core words that are typically taught to first grade students, which is why they are second grade "no-excuse" words.

After choosing a goal for these students, to learn to read and write the second grade "no-excuse" words, I decided that I wanted to differentiate instruction by focusing

on learning styles. The learning styles I explored throughout my inquiry include visual, auditory, and tactile/kinesthetic learning. According to *The Kaleidoscope Profile* website, visual learners take in information best by seeing. Auditory learners learn through speaking, listening, and discussing. Kinesthetic learners learn through doing and being actively and physically involved in his or her learning and daily work (2004). I recently read a quote about learning styles that states educators should not be asking themselves, “Is this student smart?” but rather they should be finding out, “How is this student smart” (The Kaleidoscope Profile, 2004)? During my inquiry, I wanted to find out the dominant learning styles of these students so I could differentiate instruction to meet their individual needs.

In addition, I also wanted to see whether or not the self-esteem and engagement levels of these students would change throughout my inquiry. In the beginning of the year through February, these students were not engaged during my spelling station, which is where I will be implementing my inquiry. This lack of engagement was evident by looking at their facial expressions, posture, and eye contact. They also lacked self-esteem because they were aware of academic differences in comparison to their peers. They have a special education paraprofessional that works with them on a daily basis in our classroom. They leave the classroom at least one time a day to go to the resource room and are often given different assignments throughout the day, compared to their peers.

How does it affect your current and future teaching?

In the future, because of the importance of inclusion, I will have students who receive special education in my classroom. This inquiry will help me to become better prepared to teach these students. I also feel that this inquiry will help me to understand

the importance of differentiated instruction. In order to effectively teach all students, it is the role of the teacher to find out how each student can be successful. One way a teacher can differentiate instruction is by differentiating based upon learning styles.

III. Wonderings and Questions

Main Wonderings:

How can differentiating instruction by focusing on learning styles increase struggling students' confidence, engagement, and language arts performance in a second grade classroom?

Subquestions:

What is the most dominant learning style for these three students (tactile, visual, or auditory learner) and how can I incorporate these learning styles into my spelling station?

Does a hands-on approach to teaching spelling words really enhance struggling spellers ability to learn their no-excuse words? What types of hands-on activities would be most enjoyable and appropriate for these students?

How can I incorporate the students' interests into spelling?

What can I do to make these students more motivated and engaged during my spelling station?

How can I increase these students' self-esteem about their reading and spelling abilities?

VI. Inquiry vs. Project

As a member of the teacher education community, I join other teachers in using teacher inquiry as a tool for professional growth. Teacher inquiry is defined as focusing on a concern of a teacher, rather than an outside researcher and then designing, collecting data, and interpreting data around a wondering (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). I choose to focus my inquiry on three students in my classroom who attend the resource room. These students are more than one year behind their peers in reading. As a student teacher I am very interested in learning how to differentiate my teaching to meet the needs of struggling students. This is important to me because it is likely that I will have students who attend the resource room in my classroom in the future. My inquiry will be focused around my spelling station and helping these students to learn the thirty-five no-excuse words for second grade. Through my inquiry, I will be learning about these students' interests and learning styles so that I can incorporate them into my spelling lessons. Lastly, I will be exploring which types of positive reinforcement work best for these students in helping them to build confidence as spellers. This information will be valuable for the adults in my classroom, the special education teacher at Ferguson Elementary, as well as for these boys' future teachers.

V. Inquiry Plan Description

Once I decided on a topic, I began my inquiry by researching differentiated instruction and learning styles as well as how I could most effectively increase student confidence, engagement, and performance in the area of language arts. After completing this research, I learned that I needed to begin my inquiry by assessing the three students' interests and abilities.

My inquiry plan began in early February, when I conducted a baseline assessment of the three students. I did this by giving each student a spelling test on the thirty-five sight words we would be working with during my inquiry. Following this pre-assessment, the next portion of my plan consisted of having the students fill out a student survey about their hobbies as well as their overall feelings towards my spelling station. In addition to the student survey, I sent home a parent survey to each family. A third survey that I did with the students was a learning style questionnaire. The student, parent, and learning style surveys will be explained in more detail throughout my inquiry paper.

Once I tested the students on their "no-excuse" words and was able to determine each student's needs, I was able to begin the next component of my inquiry plan. Each week during my spelling station, Joe, Mike, and Jason were responsible for learning five of their "no-excuse" words. I chose these five words by looking at the results of the students' baseline assessments and choosing three words that all the students misspelled and two words that were misspelled by at least two of the students. The students worked with their five weekly spelling words during my spelling station and when completing their homework activities. The words were also reinforced during reading and writing stations, as well. As a review, I also made sure that the students were given opportunities

to practice the words that all three boys spelled correctly on their baseline assessment such as the words, “and”, “the” and “to.”

After I conducted my baseline assessment, I focused my spelling lessons around one mode of learning per week in order to investigate each student’s dominant learning style. The first week of my inquiry plan included activities that were dominantly kinesthetic. Throughout the week, I used a lot of hands-on materials such as shaving cream, play-dough, alphabet blocks, alphabet magnets, alphabet cereal, and alphabet stamps so that the students would be able to manipulate their spelling words.

The second week centered on learning a second set of spelling words by having the students participate in dominantly visual activities. One of the activities I had the students do was to be spelling detectives and find their spelling words in a “just right” book of their choice. I had the students write each of the spelling words on a sheet of paper and make tallies each time they came across each of their words. A second visual activity I had the students complete during my spelling station was writing their words in sentences. This activity helped the students to understand the relationship between spelling, writing, and reading. Another visual activity we did during the week was playing the game, “Magic Hat”. Before the lesson began, I drew a hat on the whiteboard, and wrote the five spelling words inside of the hat. After allowing the students to study the words inside the hat, I had them close their eyes and I erased one word. After the word was erased, the students’ job was to figure out which word was erased and then they were asked to spell the word. Once students were ready for a challenge, I would add the review words from the previous week and I would erase more than one word at a time to see if they could recognize the words that were missing. In addition to this activity, I

had the students play concentration, which is a visual game used to practice spelling words.

The third week consisted of primarily auditory spelling activities. Two similar auditory activities I had the students participate in during this week were tic-tac toe and spelling baseball. Both of these games closely resemble a spelling bee, where the students are individually asked how to spell a word. If they spell the word correctly, the student is able to place a mark on the tic-tac toe board (tic-tac-toe spelling) or shoot a baseball in the bucket for a point (baseball spelling). Another auditory activity I did with these three boys was using sound boxes. According to *Spelling Success in the Early Grades*, sound boxes help students to identify the individual letter sounds in sight words (Hodrinsky, McBride, Moreno, Sherman-Fowler, & Varrone, 2003). During my station, each student received five strips of paper. Then I had them make boxes on each card so it showed the number of individual sounds in each of their spelling words for the week. Once the boxes were made, the students moved a small manipulative into the boxes as the sounds were read aloud.

The fourth week of my inquiry allowed the students a choice week. Each day, I had one activity from each mode of learning planned for the students to choose to participate in. Once they arrived at my station, I allowed each student to choose which activity they wanted to do to practice their spelling words. Many times throughout my inquiry, I asked the students about their most and least favorite spelling activities so I could take into consideration their interests when planning for my spelling station.

In addition to these activities, the students were assigned spelling homework on a daily basis. Their spelling homework allowed the students to practice their weekly

spelling words as well as review past words. Some examples of their homework activities include alphabetizing, rainbow spelling, spelling pyramids, fill in the blank, and word searches. To help these students practice vowels and consonants, a new activity the students began in April was finding out how much money their spelling words were worth if vowels cost \$.10 and consonants are \$.05. The students' spelling homework was glued inside of Buzz's journal.

Buzz is a bee puppet that I introduced to the three boys early on during my inquiry. When I introduced Buzz to them, I told them that Buzz wanted to learn the "no-excuse" words too, and their responsibility during the rest of the year was to help him learn their weekly words. I reminded the students on a daily basis, that in order for Buzz to learn the words, they needed to be reading and spelling the words aloud to him when they were working on their homework in the evening. This got the students to say the words as they were writing them for homework. The students took turns taking Buzz home with them on a weekly basis.

Each week on Friday, I gave the students a spelling assessment on their weekly spelling words. Starting on the second week, I also included a review section where the students were asked to spell selected words from previous weeks. I will elaborate on these assessments in the later sections of my inquiry paper.

In addition to the academic portion of my inquiry, I also focused a lot on the students' self-esteem. Since the beginning of the school year, the adults in my second grade classroom as well as myself have given these three struggling students both positive and meaningful praise in our classroom. When students received an A on an assessment, I attached a super spellers certificate to their test. During my station, I also

gave the students handshakes, thumbs-up, and many smiles when they had done a great job. I will continue to discuss these students' self-esteem in later sections of this paper.

VI. Data Collection

I collected a variety of different types of data to support my inquiry including surveys, assessments, interviews, observations, student work, and photographs. I wanted to use my data to enrich and make the most of my differentiated spelling station, help my students to learn their spelling words, increase their engagement levels, as well as boost these students' self-esteem. Each method of data collection is described in the following section.

Surveys:

Early in my inquiry I gave the three students a survey that I wanted them to answer about themselves. The questions on the survey would have been too difficult for the students to read and answer independently, so one by one I took each student aside to ask them the questions while I recorded their answers. I did this during my spelling station while the rest of the students worked independently. The first three questions focused around the students' interests such as their hobbies, favorite food, and favorite animal. The second part of the survey was about their thoughts on my spelling station and spelling homework. I first asked them to circle the face that described the way they felt when they thought about my spelling station. In addition, I asked them to name their favorite and least favorite station and homework activities, as well as the number of days they practiced their spelling words at home in a different way than just completing their homework. I created this student survey on my own. (See Appendix A-1)

Another survey that I gave to my students was a learning styles questionnaire that I received from Doris Grove, a student teaching supervisor for PDS. This questionnaire included a set of 24 questions that the students were asked to answer based on their

interests and learning preferences in order to find out their dominant learning style. I administered this survey to each student individually. (See Appendix A-2)

A third survey was one that I made for the parents of the three students. Attached to the survey was a letter introducing my inquiry as well as the importance of their continued support at home. The survey asked questions about their child's homework including the anxiety level, interest level, and number of days they practiced their spelling, other than doing their spelling homework. It was returned by two out of three of the students. (See Appendix A-3)

In the beginning of my inquiry I adapted the Teacher Enthusiasm Scale that we received from our Classroom Learning Environment course by making a Student Engagement Scale. Based upon my observations at my spelling station, I ranked each student in four areas between the numbers one and five, where a one indicates low engagement and a five indicated high engagement. The scale consisted of four descriptors: vocal expression, eyes, enthusiastic movements, and facial expressions. I filled out the scale in both February as well as in April. (See Appendix A-4)

The last survey that I used during my inquiry asked each student to name their two favorite spelling activities that they did as part of their homework or during my spelling station. (To see the results, see Appendix A-5)

Assessments

The first assessment I conducted was a baseline assessment on all 35 no-excuse words. During the pre-assessment, I divided the list in half so that I could give the test over two days. I split the list because I thought that Jason, Joe, and Mike might become too overwhelmed with the number of words I was having them spell if I did them all in one

day. When giving the students their spelling test, I made sure to incorporate the students' interests in the sentences that I used in order to help increase their engagement. For example, I knew that Joe recently got a new pet, a snake, so when using the word, "has" in a sentence I said, "Joe has a new pet snake at home!" (See Appendix B-1)

In addition to the baseline assessment, I also assessed the students on a weekly basis after I focused on each type of learning style. Each assessment included five sentences with blanks for the students to write in their spelling words. I believe that this format allowed students to see the connection between spelling, reading, and writing. There is also a section on their assessment where the students were asked to spell words from previous weeks so they could continue to practice these essential spelling words. I also assessed the students on all their spelling words during the end of March and the middle of April to monitor their progress on these words. (See Appendix B-2—B5 for records of all assessments)

Observations

I kept track of important observations that I noticed about my students as well as quotes they said relating to my inquiry. My cooperating teacher as well as my mentor teacher made observations that I included in my inquiry. A list of both student and teacher observations/quotes is included in sections C-1 and C-2 of Appendix C.

Interviews

In April I interviewed my mentor teacher on the three students. I wanted to find out what she had noticed in the last few months with regard to their self-esteem and whether or not being aware of these no-excuse words had affected them in other subject areas such as during her reading station. I asked her the following questions during the

interview, “How long did it take for you to see a change in these students’ spelling abilities?” and “How has my inquiry affected the students’ self-esteem?”

(See Appendix C-3 to read more about the interview).

Photographs

The last way that I collected data was by taking pictures of the students as they were participating in kinesthetic, visual, and auditory spelling activities. I also took pictures of the work that they produced during my station as well as at home for homework.

VII. Data Analysis

After collecting multiple forms of data, I had to analyze all of my information by looking for patterns in student behavior and performance.

Surveys

I used the student interest survey (Appendix A-1) to find out my three students' interests. This allowed me to incorporate their interests into my spelling station. I also looked at the each student's favorite and least favorite spelling activity so that I could make changes in my spelling station according to their preferences. The second survey, on learning styles allowed me to calculate the number of true responses for each mode of learning. This helped me to determine which mode of learning was the most dominant for each student and also if the students had close scores among different modes. (See Appendix A-2) For the parent survey (Appendix A-3), I looked at whether or not the spelling homework created anxiety for the students so that if it did, I could make accommodations. Lastly, as stated in the previous section, I rated each student in all four categories of the Student Engagement Scale in both February and April. When analyzing the results, I took both scales for each student and compared the differences. I then determined whether the students' engagement levels had increased or decreased.

Assessments

Assessments are crucial because they allow the teacher to determine whether his/her students are meeting the designated learning objectives. During my inquiry, I compared the spelling assessments that I gave at the end of the kinesthetic, auditory, and visual week. I also compared the difference between the baseline assessment on all 35 no-excuse words I gave to the students in February with the same assessment I gave in

April to determine if my students had become more successful at spelling their “no-excuse” words. (See Appendix B for these assessments)

Observations

When I first started analyzing my notes and observations, I realized I had collected many post-it notes and loose-leaf paper between February and April. I decided to type a list of the comments made by my mentor teacher, supervisor, and myself. I also typed up the comments made by the three boys. I typed them up in the order in which they occurred in our classroom. In addition to the observations and comments, I also typed up an interview that I had with my mentor teacher who has seen my entire inquiry from beginning to end. As I analyzed this information, I looked at whether or not the observations supported an increase in student engagement, confidence, and performance. (Appendix C).

Photographs

I took pictures of my students working during my spelling station and analyzed them by looking at their expressions while they worked. These pictures helped me to study the level of engagement of each student. I also took other pictures to illustrate some of the activities we did during each week of my inquiry.

VIII. Claims

1. The students with special needs in my classroom do not have a dominant learning style. They learn best when using all three modes of learning.
2. Student engagement and student confidence has increased as a result of an increase in spelling achievement.
3. The students with special needs in my class prefer hands-on activities when given a choice about how to practice their spelling words at my spelling station.

XI. Evidence to Support Claims

A. Claim 1: The students with special needs in my classroom do not have a dominant learning style. They learn best when using all three modes of learning.

This claim was very surprising to me, as a student teacher. Initially, I was interested in finding out the best way that these three struggling students learn so that I could differentiate instruction to meet their individual needs. After the third week of my inquiry, I was gradually becoming convinced, through multiple data collection that all three modes of learning, visual, auditory, and tactile were essential for these three students to learn.

As stated earlier in my paper, I gave each student a Learning Style questionnaire. According to the questionnaire, any area in which you scored a lot higher than others is your learning strength. As I analyzed the results of each individual survey, the scores among the three types of learning were not significant. The highest number you could have for each mode of learning is an eight. For example, Joe scored a five in hearing, a four in visual, and a seven in tactile. This is much different from the survey that I took on myself. I found out that I learn the best when presented material visually. I scored a two on both auditory and tactile and a seven in visual. The significant discrepancy between the different styles shows my dominance in visual learning. For a copy of all three students' learning style surveys, see Appendix A-2.

Another piece of evidence that supports my claim, that all three students do not have a dominant learning style, is the result of the weekly assessments on their five spelling words. The scores were very close among all three weeks, which consisted of primarily kinesthetic activities for the first week, primarily visual activities during the

second week, and primarily auditory activities during the third week. (See Appendix B-2—B-4 for assessments and student scores)

Before coming up with my final claim about these three students, I had an interview with the special education teacher, Susie Scanlon who has been working with these three boys since they started attending Ferguson Township Elementary School. After showing her the data that I collected she agreed with my claim. She informed me that the majority of students who attend special education services need to use all three modes of learning to learn. When working with spelling words, she has them touch, look, and say the words to learn them.

Richard Gentry's finger spelling is a technique to learn the parts of words. This method begins with the thumb and each consecutive phoneme in a word is put on a finger in the order of thumb, index finger, third finger, and so forth. This allows students to visually see the number of sounds in a word as they are saying each sound aloud (Gentry, 2006). We often have the boys do this activity themselves, which uses all three modes of learning.

Ms. Scanlon and I also had a discussion about whether or not these three boys came to school needing all three modes of learning in order to learn, or if school has made them this type of a learner because they are being taught to use all three modes. This is a wondering that I will always have about these three boys.

B. Claim 2: Student engagement and student confidence has increased among these three students as a result of an increase in spelling achievement.

During my inquiry, I found that I share Carol Tomlinson’s philosophy of teaching because it describes essential components of my inquiry, which are important to me as a teacher. Her philosophy deals primarily with student understanding, engagement and confidence.

Successful teaching requires two elements: student understanding and student engagement. In other words, students must really understand, or make sense of, what they have studied. They should also feel engaged in or “hooked by” the ways that they have learned. The latter can greatly enhance the former and can help young people realize that learning is satisfying. (Tomlinson, 1999).

The level of achievement among the students at my station has greatly increased over the past few months. This is evident by looking at the high scores among the weekly assessments as well as by looking at the differences between the baseline and final assessments on the “no-excuse” words. Jason went from spelling eleven words wrong to only spelling one word wrong in April. Joe and Mike went from spelling fourteen words wrong to three words over the past two months. This achievement is not only evident in the spelling station, but it is connecting to other subjects such as reading and writing. For example, Mrs. Cowan, my mentor teacher stated “Two weeks into the project it became evident through conversations with the children when they came to my station that they could make the connection between the guided reading and spelling stations. They would say, oh, we have this word over in Miss Esposito’s station.” (See Appendix C-3). During my station a few weeks ago, Jason told me that he could spell the word “one” quickly because he had just spelled it during math class. (See Appendix C-1).

Throughout my inquiry, the students' engagement levels at my station have changed significantly. This is evident by looking at the Student Engagement Scale that I filled out on every student in both February and April. There has been an increase in every category, which consists of vocal expression, eyes, movements, and facial expressions over the past two months. (Appendix A-4) In addition to the scale, my supervisor, Susan Lunsford, regularly comes into our classroom to make observations of myself as well as my students. She has been very pleased with the progress Mike, Joe, and Jason have made as a result of my inquiry. She wrote an observation describing the differences that she has seen over the past few months, with regards to their engagement and confidence. In her observation, she states, "Their lack of attention has turned to smiles of engagement. Their participation changed from trying to pry discussion from them to all three speaking at once. Most importantly, they expressed pride in their work." To read her entire observation, see Appendix C-2) My mentor teacher, also discussed this increase in engagement during a recent interview, "The students are much happier now, they sit up with taller postures and smile and laugh more. (See Appendix C-3)

Lastly the student photographs that I collected during my inquiry displays the level of engagement and fun the students had at my spelling station as they learned their spelling words.

As noted earlier, the confidence among the students has increased significantly as a result of my inquiry. This is evident through the observations that my mentor, supervisor, and myself have made about the boys. During a recent spelling lesson, Jason said "these are easy, give us something harder Miss Esposito!" The boys appear the most confident during book time, which is when we have our four language arts stations. Every

time they do sometime they are proud of they want to tell all of the adults in our classroom. A few days ago, I had the boys come up with sentences using their spelling words and then write them down to reinforce the connection between spelling, reading, and writing. As soon as they were finished, they rushed over to Mrs. Cowan to read her the three sentences. During my interview with Cindy Cowan, she discussed their self-esteem. “They are taking more risks in front of their peers because of their increase in self-esteem. In the middle of the year, all three boys signed up to popcorn read one of their instructional books during read aloud. A few weeks ago, Jason signed up to read a book in front of the class that he got from our classroom library. He was not as comfortable reading this book, because he only spent time practicing during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). Jason took a big risk to read this in front of the class.”

3. Claim C: The students with special needs in my class prefer tactile activities when given a choice about how to practice their spelling words at my spelling station.

Even though the students do not have a dominant learning style, they each prefer kinesthetic spelling activities when given a choice. Throughout my inquiry, I have kept track of quotes by Joe, Jason, and Mike that relate to my spelling station. Their interest in certain activities frequently come up in the beginning of my station, right before I am telling them what we are doing for the day. The following comments from two of the students relate to the claim that these students prefer hands-on spelling activities to more visual and auditory ones. On February 27, Joe asked me enthusiastically before beginning book time, “Are we going to be spelling our words with shaving cream again!!” Also, on April 6th, Jason said, “Are we going to use play-dough today, that’s my favorite!”

As stated in my inquiry plan, the fourth week was a choice week where students were given a choice on what activity they wanted to do during my spelling station. Each day they had one primarily kinesthetic, one primarily visual, and one primarily auditory activity to choose among. On the first day, the students had the choice of doing play-dough spelling, rainbow spelling, or tic-tac-toe spelling. All students voted to use play-dough, the kinesthetic activity. On the second day, the students were given the choice of alphabet magnets, sentence writing, or spelling baseball and again the students preferred magnets, the kinesthetic activity to practice their words. These results continued for the remainder of the week.

A third piece of evidence supporting this claim occurred in early April. I read each student a list of all the spelling activities we have done during the past few weeks as part of my inquiry. Then I had them tell me the two that they enjoyed the most. Based on the results of my survey, which is available in Appendix A-5, all three students chose

tactile activities. They prefer to make their spelling words using shaving cream, stamps, and play-dough. All three students chose shaving cream as one of their top two choices.

XII. Conclusions

Implications for my future teaching

When I reflect back on everything that I have learned throughout this inquiry, I have embraced the importance of what it truly means to differentiate instruction. Every classroom I will teach in the future will consist of different students with varying levels of knowledge and experiences. This inquiry has taught me how to differentiate instruction for students, especially for my struggling students. In addition to this, I have also learned the importance of patience and repetition when working with students who receive special education services. I have also learned that differentiating instruction does not need to take a great deal of time, but the benefits for students and teachers are incredibly rewarding because of the growth in the students' levels of engagement, confidence, and performance over the past few weeks. I have also increased my repertoire of spelling activities that I can do with my students in the future. I now am more comfortable in assessing my students' dominant and preferred learning style, so that I can introduce activities that will be both engaging and valuable for them as learners. Overall, my experiences working with these three struggling students have allowed me to become a more flexible, creative, and responsive teacher.

XIII. New Wonderings

As I reflect on the experiences I have encountered throughout my inquiry project, I continue to have questions about differentiated instruction and learning styles. These are my new wonderings that I will continue to explore in my classroom this year, as well as in the future.

1. Do most special education students have a dominant learning style and if so, why? What about the students in my classroom who do not receive special education services?
2. How can I incorporate more choice at my spelling station?
3. Can I effectively group students according to their dominant learning styles?
4. As a teacher, how does my dominant learning style influence the students that I am teaching?
5. Will students do better on assessments that focus upon their dominant learning style? (For example: spelling bee style for auditory learners, spelling test for visual learners, spelling with manipulatives for kinesthetic learners)

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Appendix A:

Surveys

A-1: Student Interest/Spelling Survey

A-2: Student Learning Styles Survey

A-3: Parent Homework Survey

A-4: Student Engagement Scale

A-5: Favorite Spelling Activity Survey

A-1: Student Interest/ Spelling Survey

Please answer the following questions about yourself. ☺

My favorite animal is.....

In my free time, I like to

My favorite food is.....

When I think of spelling, I am...



What is your favorite activity during Miss Esposito's spelling station?

What I don't like to do during Miss Esposito's spelling station is.....

My favorite way to practice my spelling words at home is.....

How many days a week do I practice my spelling words at home?

0 1 2 3 4 5

Sample Student Surveys:

Please answer the following questions about yourself. 😊

My favorite animal is.....

dog

In my free time, I like to

play games (computer games)

My favorite food is.....

macaroni & cheese

When I think of spelling, I am...



What is your favorite activity during Miss Esposito's spelling station?

typing up words with computer

What I don't like to do during Miss Esposito's spelling station is.....

spelling pyramids

My favorite way to practice my spelling words at home is.....

word searches

How many days a week do I practice my spelling words at home?

0

1

2

3

4

5

mom says word,
Matt spells.

Please answer the following questions about yourself. ☺

My favorite animal is.....

sharks

In my free time, I like to

playing dominoes, collecting rocks

My favorite food is.....

macaroni + cheese

When I think of spelling, I am...



What is your favorite activity during Miss Esposito's spelling station?

shaving cream spelling

What I don't like to do during Miss Esposito's spelling station is.....

pyramid spelling

My favorite way to practice my spelling words at home is.....

ABC order

How many days a week do I practice my spelling words at home?

0 1 2 3 4 5

just do hw-thats it!

Please answer the following questions about yourself. ☺

My favorite animal is.....

dinosaurs

In my free time, I like to

play dominos, play on computer (Funbrain)
play the "We" videogame.

My favorite food is.....

pizza

When I think of spelling, I am...



What is your favorite activity during Miss Esposito's spelling station?

word search, typing out words w/ computer

What I don't like to do during Miss Esposito's spelling station is.....

ABC order

My favorite way to practice my spelling words at home is.....

word search

How many days a week do I practice my spelling words at home?

0

1

2

3

4

5

do hw- nothing else

A-2: Learning Styles Questionnaire

Directions: For each item, circle “T” if the statement is true for you most of the time.
Circle “F” if the statement is false for you most of the time.

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 1. I have poor handwriting. | T F |
| 2. I have trouble copying from a book or chalkboard. | T F |
| 3. I easily forget what I read unless it is talked about in class. | T F |
| 4. I prefer teachers to explain directions out loud instead of having to read the written directions. | T F |
| 5. I prefer listening to music to watching TV. | T F |
| 6. I prefer talking on the phone to writing a letter to someone. | T F |
| 7. I would rather be in a group discussion than read about a topic. | T F |
| 8. I like to take part in dramatic events like plays. | T F |
| 9. I would rather read about a topic than listen to a teacher tell about it. | T F |
| 10. I like to read ahead in class when material is being read aloud. | T F |
| 11. I like classrooms that have lots of pictures and posters to see. | T F |
| 12. I can learn to spell words by simply reading them several times. | T F |
| 13. I prefer watching TV to listening to music. | T F |
| 14. I have difficulty remembering directions that were told to me. | T F |
| 15. I would rather go to a movie than to a concert. | T F |
| 16. I would rather watch athletic events than participate in them. | T F |
| 17. I would rather participate in athletic events than watch them. | T F |
| 18. I don't understand math well unless I work out a lot of problems. | T F |
| 19. I would rather do experiments in science than read about them. | T F |
| 20. I like to make models or other hand-crafted projects. | T F |
| 21. I get bored in classes where you just have to sit and listen to the teacher talk. | T F |
| 22. I have difficulty remembering directions told to me if I have not done a similar activity before. | T F |
| 23. I like being outdoors and doing activities like hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, camping, etc. | T F |
| 24. I dislike going to museums where I can't touch anything. | T F |

Directions for Scoring:

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF “T” RESPONSES IN ITEMS 1-8 _____

(This is your auditory or hearing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF “T” RESPONSES IN ITEMS 9-16 _____

(This is your visual or seeing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF “T” RESPONSES IN ITEMS 17-24 _____

(This is your tactile or touching; and kinesthetic or moving score)

Any areas in which you scored a lot higher than others is your learning strength. Any areas in which you scored a lot lower than others is your learning weakness. Similar scores in all 3 areas mean you can learn things in almost any way that are taught.

Student Samples:

LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For each item, circle "T" if the statement is true for you most of the time. Circle "F" if the statement is false for you most of the time.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | I have poor handwriting | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 2. | I have trouble copying from a book or chalkboard. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 3. | I easily forget what I read unless it is talked about in class. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| 4. | I prefer teachers to explain directions out loud instead of having to read the written directions. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 5. | I prefer listening to music to watching TV. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| 6. | I prefer talking on the phone to writing a letter to someone. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 7. | I would rather be in a group discussion than read about a topic. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 8. | I like to take part in dramatic events like plays. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 9. | I would rather read about a topic than listen to a teacher tell about it. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 10. | I like to read ahead in class when material is being read aloud. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| 11. | I like classrooms that have lots of pictures and posters to see. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 12. | I can learn to spell words by simply reading them several times. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| 13. | I prefer watching TV to listening to music. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 14. | I have difficulty remembering directions that were told to me. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 15. | I would rather go to a movie than to a concert. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 16. | I would rather watch athletic events than participate in them. | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| 17. | I would rather participate in athletic events than watch them. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 18. | I don't understand math well unless I work out a lot of problems. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 19. | I would rather do experiments in science than read about them. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 20. | I like to make models or other hand-crafted projects. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |
| 21. | I get bored in classes where you just have to sit and listen to the teacher talk. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 22. | I have difficulty remembering directions told to me if I have not done a similar activity before. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 23. | I like being outdoors and doing activities like hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, camping, etc. | <input type="radio"/> | F |
| 24. | I dislike going to museums where I can't touch anything. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | F |

DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING:

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 1-8 6
(This is your auditory or hearing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 9-16 5
(This is your visual or seeing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 17-24 8
(This is your tactile or touching; and kinesthetic or moving score)

Any area in which you scored a lot higher than others is your learning strength.
Any area in which you scored a lot lower than others is your learning weakness.
Similar scores in all 3 areas mean you can learn things in almost any way they are taught.

LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For each item, circle "T" if the statement is true for you most of the time. Circle "F" if the statement is false for you most of the time.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|--|---|
| 1. | I have poor handwriting | T | | F |
| 2. | I have trouble copying from a book or chalkboard. | T | | F |
| 3. | I easily forget what I read unless it is talked about in class. | T | | F |
| 4. | I prefer teachers to explain directions out loud instead of having to read the written directions. | T | | F |
| 5. | I prefer listening to music to watching TV. | T | | F |
| 6. | I prefer talking on the phone to writing a letter to someone. | T | | F |
| 7. | I would rather be in a group discussion than read about a topic. | T | | F |
| 8. | I like to take part in dramatic events like plays. | T | | F |
| 9. | I would rather read about a topic than listen to a teacher tell about it. | T | | F |
| 10. | I like to read ahead in class when material is being read aloud. | T | | F |
| 11. | I like classrooms that have lots of pictures and posters to see. | T | | F |
| 12. | I can learn to spell words by simply reading them several times. | T | | F |
| 13. | I prefer watching TV to listening to music. | T | | F |
| 14. | I have difficulty remembering directions that were told to me. | T | | F |
| 15. | I would rather go to a movie than to a concert. | T | | F |
| 16. | I would rather watch athletic events than participate in them. | T | | F |
| 17. | I would rather participate in athletic events than watch them. | T | | F |
| 18. | I don't understand math well unless I work out a lot of problems. | T | | F |
| 19. | I would rather do experiments in science than read about them. | T | | F |
| 20. | I like to make models or other hand-crafted projects. | T | | F |
| 21. | I get bored in classes where you just have to sit and listen to the teacher talk. | T | | F |
| 22. | I have difficulty remembering directions told to me if I have not done a similar activity before. | T | | F |
| 23. | I like being outdoors and doing activities like hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, camping, etc. | T | | F |
| 24. | I dislike going to museums where I can't touch anything. | T | | F |

DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING:

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 1-8 5
 (This is your auditory or hearing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 9-16 4
 (This is your visual or seeing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 17-24 7
 (This is your tactile or touching; and kinesthetic or moving score)

Any area in which you scored a lot higher than others is your learning strength.
 Any area in which you scored a lot lower than others is your learning weakness.
 Similar scores in all 3 areas mean you can learn things in almost any way they are taught.

*TIC 110

LEARNING STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

DIRECTIONS: For each item, circle "T" if the statement is true for you most of the time. Circle "F" if the statement is false for you most of the time.

- | | | | |
|-----|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | I have poor handwriting | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 2. | I have trouble copying from a book or chalkboard. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 3. | I easily forget what I read unless it is talked about in class. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 4. | I prefer teachers to explain directions out loud instead of having to read the written directions. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 5. | I prefer listening to music to watching TV. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 6. | I prefer talking on the phone to writing a letter to someone. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 7. | I would rather be in a group discussion than read about a topic. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 8. | I like to take part in dramatic events like plays. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 9. | I would rather read about a topic than listen to a teacher tell about it. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 10. | I like to read ahead in class when material is being read aloud. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 11. | I like classrooms that have lots of pictures and posters to see. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 12. | I can learn to spell words by simply reading them several times. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 13. | I prefer watching TV to listening to music. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 14. | I have difficulty remembering directions that were told to me. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 15. | I would rather go to a movie than to a concert. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 16. | I would rather watch athletic events than participate in them. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 17. | I would rather participate in athletic events than watch them. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 18. | I don't understand math well unless I work out a lot of problems. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 19. | I would rather do experiments in science than read about them. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 20. | I like to make models or other hand-crafted projects. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 21. | I get bored in classes where you just have to sit and listen to the teacher talk. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |
| 22. | I have difficulty remembering directions told to me if I have not done a similar activity before. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 23. | I like being outdoors and doing activities like hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, camping, etc. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> T | <input type="radio"/> F |
| 24. | I dislike going to museums where I can't touch anything. | <input type="radio"/> T | <input checked="" type="radio"/> F |

DIRECTIONS FOR SCORING:

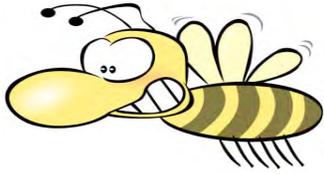
TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 1-8 7
(This is your auditory or hearing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 9-16 4
(This is your visual or seeing score)

TOTAL THE NUMBER OF "T" RESPONSES IN ITEMS 17-24 7
(This is your tactile or touching; and kinesthetic or moving score)

Any area in which you scored a lot higher than others is your learning strength.
Any area in which you scored a lot lower than others is your learning weakness.
Similar scores in all 3 areas mean you can learn things in almost any way they are taught.

A-3: Parent Survey



Dear Families,

Feb. 28, 2007

During the rest of the year, I will be working with your child on helping them learn the thirty-five “no-excuse” or sight words. Sight words are essential to build fluency because they make up a large part of our written material. They are also important because they do not sound like their spelling so they cannot be sounded out easily. Each week your child will be responsible for learning five of the “no-excuse” words. They will be practicing these words during my spelling station and as part of their homework. Students will also be continuing to review spelling words from previous weeks so they can maintain these words in their long-term memories. Please support your child with practicing their spelling words on a regular basis.

To help me better implement my spelling station and activities assigned for homework, I have attached a survey to this letter. Please fill this survey out about your child by Monday, March 5th. If you have any questions, please email me at lae149@psu.edu or by contacting the school either between 8:00-8:30 a.m. or between 3:00-5:00 p.m. Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,

Miss Esposito

Child's Name: _____ Date: _____

Please answer the following questions about your child's homework. Thank you for your time! 😊

1. Getting my child to do their homework at night is hard or easy? Please explain.

2. What types of homework assignments are the most enjoyable for your child?

3. What types of homework assignments seem to cause anxiety for your child?

4. Do you think the content of the homework is too hard, too easy, or just right? Please explain.

5. Does your child talk to you about activities they do during Miss Esposito's spelling station? If yes, please explain.

5. Please circle the number of days per week your child practices his spelling words in a different way than just completing his spelling homework.

1 day

2 days

3 days

4 days

5 days

A-4: Student Engagement Scale

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression	Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.		Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes	Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.		Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements	Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions	Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.		Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

Student Engagement Scale (February Ratings for Jason)

1 2 3 4 5

<p>Vocal Expression</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.</p>	<p>Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.</p>	<p>Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.</p>
<p>Eyes</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.</p>	<p>Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.</p>	<p>Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.</p>
<p>Enthusiastic Movements</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.</p>	<p>Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.</p>	<p>Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.</p>
<p>Facial Expressions</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.</p>	<p>Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.</p>	<p>Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.</p>

Student Engagement Scale (April Ratings for Jason)

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression 5	Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.		Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes 5	Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.		Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements 5	Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions 5	Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.		Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

Student Engagement Scale (February Ratings for Mike)

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression 1	Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.		Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes 2	Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.		Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements 2	Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions 3	Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.		Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

Student Engagement Scale (April Ratings for Mike)

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression 4	Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.		Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes 5	Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.		Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements 5	Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions 4	Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.		Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

Student Engagement Scale (February Ratings for Joe)

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression 2		Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.	Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes 2		Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.	Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements 1		Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.	Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions 2		Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.	Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

Student Engagement Scale (April ratings for Joe)

	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal Expression 4	Student uses monotonous voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speed of speech.		Student uses variations of pitch, volume, and speed.		Student uses great and sudden changes in volume, speed, and pitch of voice.
Eyes 4	Student looks bored. Seldom opens eyes wide or raises eyebrow.		Student appears interested; occasionally lights up, shining, opening wide.		Student is lighting up, shining, frequently opening wide, eyebrows occasionally raised.
Enthusiastic Movements 3	Student seldom or never uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Student occasionally uses enthusiastic movements such as using hands when talking, clapping hands, or head shaking.		Students frequently uses enthusiastic movements such as clapping hands, head nodding rapidly, and using hands when talking.
Facial Expressions 4	Student does not denote feeling or frowns most of the time. Little smiling-lips closed.		Student smiles frequently, longer and at a regular rate. Looks pleased/happy/sad when obviously called for.		Student appears vibrant, demonstrative, shows joy, surprise, awe, sadness, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth open, quick sudden changes in expression.

A-5: Favorite Spelling Activities Survey

What are your two favorite spelling activities at Miss Esposito's station?

Spelling Baseball	
Magazine Words	
Tic-tac-toe spelling	
Sound Boxes	
Shaving Cream Spelling	III
Concentration	
Flashcards	
Play-dough	II
Alphabet Blocks	
Alphabet Magnets	
Alphabet Stamps	I
Spelling Pyramids	
Alphabetical Order	
Rainbow Spelling	
Alphabet Cereal Words	
Typing Words	

Appendix B:

Assessments

B-1: Spelling Assessment Scores

B-2: Kinesthetic Week Spelling Assessment

B-3: Visual Week Spelling Assessment

B-4: Auditory Week Spelling Assessment

B-5: Choice Week Spelling Assessment

B-1: Spelling Assessment Scores

	Baseline Assessment	Kinesthetic Week	Visual Week	Auditory Week	Choice Week	Final Assessment
Jason	+25/35	+5/5	+5/5	+4/5	+5/5	+34/35
Mike	+21/35	+5/5	+4/5	+5/5	+5/5	+32/35
Joe	+21/35	+5/5	+4/5	+5/5	+5/5	+32/35

*For weekly assessments, score reflects five “core” words, not the review words.

B-2: Kinesthetic Week Spelling Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Spelling Review

1. I ate _____ of my candy from Valentine's Day!
2. It _____ snowing all day.
3. I had a boy scouts meeting _____ 3:00 until 5:00 today.
4. My house is located _____ the park.
5. I made a card _____ my mom's birthday.

B-3: Visual Week Spelling Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Spelling Review

1. I _____ one cat and one dog.
2. Will you _____ at the meeting after school for soccer?
3. _____ you on the computer last night?
4. _____ is our boy scouts meeting?
5. I will drink a cup _____ hot chocolate when I come inside from the cold.

~~~~~

### *“No-excuse” words!*

1. I am sitting \_\_\_\_\_ my best friend.
2. The football game is \_\_\_\_\_ 3:00 until 4:00 today.

# B-4: Auditory Week Spelling Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## *Spelling Review*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is your favorite sport?
2. I have \_\_\_\_\_ pet.
3. Do you want water \_\_\_\_\_ juice with your lunch?
4. My friend is coming \_\_\_\_\_ me to boy scouts.

~~~~~

“No-excuse” words!

1. Here is a cup _____ hot chocolate.
2. I _____ at school all day.

B-5: Choice Week Spelling Assessment

Name: _____ Date: _____

Spelling Review

1. _____ went to the baseball game on Friday.
2. The boy asked his mom, “_____ are we going to Pizza Hut, I’m hungry!”
3. It _____ finally getting warm outside!
4. _____ is going to be fun.
5. _____ book is my favorite!



“No-Excuse Words”

1. _____ is your name?
2. _____ are my friend.
3. _____ you at the birthday party.

Appendix C:

Observations

C-1: Student Comments/Quotes

C-2: Teacher Observations/Quotes

C-3: Interview

C-1: Student Comments/Quotes

2/27

Joe asked me enthusiastically before beginning book time, “Are we going to be spelling our words with shaving cream again!!”

3/8

During a spelling lesson, Jason said “these are easy, give us something harder Miss Esposito!”

3/14

Jason was so proud of himself during guided reading one day that he came up to me with a BIG grin and waved with book in hand. He was SO proud of his accomplishments that he wanted to share it with all of his teachers.

3/21

Mrs. Cowan “How do you know the word “they” so well?”
Mike smiles, points, and says, “Miss Esposito”

4/5

Jason- “Miss Esposito, I know how to spell “one” because I just wrote it during math class” (He was making connections between these two subjects.)

4/6

Jason-“Are we going to use play-dough today, that’s my favorite!”

4/20

Mike asked a boy in our classroom if he could read his instructional book to him during D.E.A.R.

C-2: Teacher Observations/Quotes

2/27:

Mrs. Cowan: During an instructional book, Jason was sounding out the word, “because.” He knew “be” was one of the spelling words, so he told Mrs. C. that the beginning said “be”...he was able to take the “be” and chunk with “cause” to sound out “because.” He was very proud and looked over at my direction smiling to tell me!!

3/1

Miss Esposito: “During magic hat, a primarily visual activity, Mike and Jason were very successful, however, Joe had difficulty. He could not remember what any of the words were.”

3/19

Miss Esposito: “Joe was very proud when he came into the classroom. He wanted to show me what he did over spring break. He copied pages from the chapter book, the adults in room 21 have been reading to him, into a notebook. He used neat handwriting! Way to go Joe!”

4/3

Miss Esposito: “During DEAR Jason practiced reading his instructional book 2 times, before he found me to read to. He read it fluently!”

4/3

Miss Esposito: “As a group, the three boys wrote sentences using three of their spelling words with limited support. The sentences include:

They went to school.

What are you doing?

Were you going to play basketball?

Once finished, they were all so proud, that they rushed over to Mrs. C. so they could show her the sentences they wrote down at my station.”

4-12

Susan Lunsford (Student Teaching Supervisor)

When I worked with “the boys” at the beginning of the school year, they lacked emotion during Book Time Stations. They were easily distracted. Ms. Esposito and Mrs. Cowan had to work hard to keep them focused on the tasks at hand.

It was clear they lacked self-confidence and pride in their work.

As I watched the boys’ progress throughout Ms. Esposito’s inquiry project, their performance, their motivation for learning, as well as their enthusiasm for Book Time increased significantly. Without exception, all three boys were eager for Book Time. Their lack of attention turned to smiles of engagement. Their participation changed from trying to pry discussion from them to all three speaking at once. Most importantly, they expressed pride in their work. I’ll never forget the day Jason ran up to me when I came into the room, anxious to read a book to me *all by himself!*

C-3: Interview With My Cooperating Teacher

4/13

Miss Esposito: “How long did it take for you to see a change in these students’ spelling abilities and feelings about themselves as spellers?”

Mrs. Cowan: “Two weeks into the project it became evident through conversations with the children when they came to my station that they could make connection between the guided reading and spelling stations. They would say, oh, we have this word over in Miss Esposito’s station.””

Miss Esposito: “How has my inquiry affected the students’ self-esteems?”

Mrs. Cowan: “The students are much happier now, they sit up with taller postures and smile and laugh more. Now, it is evident on a daily basis whether reading, writing, or dictating that they have made a connection and don’t have to sound out the words to know them. This has given the boys pride about their language arts abilities. They are even beginning to build some fluency that they never experienced before. They are taking more risks in front of their peers because of increased self-esteem. In the middle of the year, all three boys signed up to popcorn read, one of their instructional books during read aloud. A few weeks ago, Jason signed up to read a book in front of the class that he got from our classroom library. He was not as comfortable reading this book, because he only spent time practicing during Drop Everything and Read (DEAR). But Jason took a big risk! The other day, when the boys began a new instructional book, they read the title, *Deep in the Forest*. They were able to take one of the sight words, “for,” and add the “est” ending when sounding out the word “forest.””