INCREASING MOTIVATION OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT, STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT, AND CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT…… iii

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT…… 1

General Statement of the Problem……... 1

Immediate Context of the Problem…….. 1

Local Context of the Problem…….. 13

National Context of the Problem……. 19

CHAPTER 2: PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION……. 20

Evidence of the Problem…….. 20

Probable Causes…… 34

CHAPTER 3: THE SOLUTION STRATEGY…… 42

Review of the Literature…… 42

Project Objective and Processing Statements…… 56

Project Action Plan…… 56

Methods of Assessment……. 57

CHAPTER 4: PROJECT RESULTS…… 59

Historical Description of the Intervention……. 60

Presentation and Analysis of Results…… 74

Conclusions and Recommendations……. 83

REFERENCES…….. 85

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Survey……. 90

Appendix B: Parent Survey…… 91

Appendix C: Student Behavior Checklist……... 93

Appendix D: Gravity: The Apple of the Earth…… 94

Appendix E: The Southeast…… 95

Appendix F: The Need for Speed Project…… 96

Appendix G: Reflective Blog Log……... 97

Appendix H: Response to Learning…… 101

Appendix I: How Did You Do Self-Assessment……. 102

ABSTRACT

Students struggle with motivation to perform well in school. This study was designed to increase student motivation in the classroom setting. The targeted population consisted of one third grade classroom, one fourth grade classroom, and three periods of eighth grade science classes. There were 80 students included in the study. The interventions took place during the months of January, 2007, through May, 2007.

Behaviors recognized by the teacher researchers included inadequate homework completion, lack of focus during classroom activities, and low achievement on tests. The documented evidence of this problem was gathered through the following three tools: a parent survey, a student survey, and a classroom behavior checklist. Through the tools the teacher researchers ascertained areas of weakness that were motivationally driven; specifically, off-task behavior, directions not followed, and poor work quality.

A review of professional literature resulted in the action plan. Creative engagement, student self-assessment, and positive reinforcement were the solution strategies utilized. When it is used properly, creative engagement provides meaningful connections, hands-on activities, cooperative grouping, engaging content, and student choice (Walsh, 2003; Kesling, 2000; Schweinie, Meyer, & Turner, 2006; Berliner, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006; & Stiggins, 2001). Student self-assessment was another intervention utilized. Students actually acquire a higher degree of motivation when they connect personally to their success (Alderman, 1990). Student achievement is maximized when they feel competent about their abilities, have personal goals to achieve, feel they have control over their successes and failures, and when they are motivated intrinsically to learn (Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001). Positive reinforcement was used to help strengthen students' self-efficacy by providing support, praise, and encouragement. Teacher feedback is most effective when it is immediate and shows the relationship between successes and effort as well as points out improvement and mastery of a skill (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005).

Post-intervention data revealed minor, however, positive changes in students' attitudes toward school. There were noteworthy improvements in classroom behavior in the areas of on-task behavior, quality work, and classroom engagement. While the teacher researchers experienced positive results, it was evident that the successes were short-lived. This may be attributed to the timing of the intervention with regard to the overall school year. Therefore, the researchers would recommend beginning the school year with strategies in place and adjusting them when necessary.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

Students struggle with motivation in the classroom setting. This motivation problem has been related to low self-efficacy. This exemplifies itself through inadequate homework completion, lack of focus during classroom activities, and low achievement on assessments. The documented evidence of this problem was gathered through the following three tools: a parent survey, a student survey and a classroom behavior checklist.

Immediate Context of the Problem

The information in this action research project was the result of three teacher researchers from three different sites. Site A is an elementary school in which a third grade classroom participated in the study. Site B is an elementary school in which a fourth grade classroom was utilized for research. Site C is a middle school in which eighth grade science classes were used for data collection. Detailed information at each site can be seen in the subsections below; Site A, Site B, and Site C. Unless otherwise noted, the information in the following sections was retrieved from the 2005 Illinois School Report Card (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d. a.; Illinois State Board of Education, n.d. b.; & Illinois State Board of Education n.d. c.) and the 2005 Illinois School Profile per each respective Site.

Site A

The first teacher researcher is a third grade teacher. Site A is an elementary school, kindergarten through third grade, located in a northwest suburb of Chicago.

Table 1 identifies the ethnic backgrounds of the student body at Site A. As seen in this table, the majority (72.2%, n=366) of the student body at Site A consisted of Caucasian students.

Table 1

Racial/Ethnic Background by Percentage

	Caucasian	Hispanic	Asian	African American	Native American
School	72.2	14.6	5.7	5.5	2.0
District	72.7	15.0	5.3	5.3	1.7

Site A had a total enrollment of 508 students, with the district enrollment of 1,130. The enrollment of Site A included students from kindergarten through third grade. The low-income rates at Site A were 5.3% (n=25) compared to 6.1% (n=68) for the district. The Limited-English-Proficient Rate, defined as students eligible for transitional bilingual programs, was 7.5% (n=41) and for the district was 4.6% (n=57). The mobility rate at Site A was 26.7% (n=137) compared to 18.9% (n=215) for the district. Site A had an attendance rate of 94.5% (n=483) while the district had 94.8% (n=1,074), (p. 1).

The number of full-time teachers at Site A was not reported on the 2005 school report card. However, according to the teacher researcher calculations there were 21.5 full-time teachers during the 2005-2006 school year and 62 full-time teachers in the district. Caucasian females made up 100% of the teaching staff. The average teaching experience was 8.4 years for the district, with an average salary of $44,430. Teachers with a bachelor's degree made up 54.8% (n=34) of the district while those with a master's degree or above made up 45.2% (n=28), (Illinois State Board of Education. n.d. a., *2005 Illinois school profile: Site A).* The district student-teacher ratio was 17.9:1 and the student-administrator ratio was 282.5:1. The average class size in kindergarten was 21.5, first grade was 26.7, second grade was 27.1, and third grade was 25.6 during the 2005-2006 school year. Within this school, the percentage of male students

was 56 (n=284) and the female percentage was 44 (n=223) (School Secretary, personal communication, September 15, 2006).

The core subjects taught in kindergarten through grade three consisted of mathematics, science, English/language, and social science. According to the Illinois State School Report Card for grade three, time devoted to teaching core subjects in the targeted school included 60 minutes of mathematics, 30 minutes of science, 170 of English/language arts, and 30 minutes of social science per day. Kindergarten was the exception with 300 contact minutes devoted for students per week (Building Principal, personal communication, June 27, 2006).

The students in the district take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) yearly. Reading, writing, and mathematics are tested in grades three and five while science, in addition, is tested in grade four. The overall performance of third graders for the 2004-2005 school year reported that the targeted district had 68.3% of the students meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards in reading. This 68.3% compares to 66.6% for the state. In mathematics, 79.7% of students in the district met or exceeded the Illinois Learning Standards. This 79.7% compares to 79.2% for the state. In addition, students enrolled in a comprehensive English Language Learner (ELL) program took the Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English (IMAGE) exam. The overall performance for the 2004-2005 school year reported that the targeted district had 75% of the students meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards. This 75% compares to 49.3% for the state.

Site A had one superintendent who oversaw three schools. Serving under the superintendent were two principals. Site A was administered by one of the principals. Administrative support consisted of two secretaries, one food service coordinator, and one custodian. Academic support included one special education coordinator, one special education

teacher, three Regular Education Initiative teachers, one reading specialist, one ELL teacher, and two speech therapists. The local special education cooperative employees included one occupational therapist, one hearing itinerant, two social workers, and two psychologists. General education teachers included 3.5 kindergarten teachers, 7 first grade teachers, 6 second grade teachers, and 5 third grade teachers. As the population grows, it was projected that for the 2006-2007 school year, kindergarten, second, and third grades would be adding one classroom per grade level. Site A employed one special teacher for each of the following subject areas: computers, physical education, art, music, and library.

The targeted school also took part in an annual grade level standardized test developed by the Scholastic Testing Service, Inc. Table 2 below shows the breakdown on performance scores by grade level. The benchmark score for each grade level is: the grade level plus .8 (which indicates the month, April, of the school year when the test was administered). Thus, the benchmark score for first grade would be 1.8; for second grade 2.8; and for third grade 3.8. This table indicates that each grade level performed above grade level expectations.

Table 2

Benchmark Scores: Grades 1-3

	Language	Math	Science	Social Science
Grade 1	2.2	2.4	1.9	2.1
Grade 2	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1
Grade 3	3.9	4.2	3.9	4.1

Site A is unique due to a large nature center that is on school grounds. This nature center is an educational tool that is used to teach students about plant growth and animal habitats. Each classroom is assigned a garden area to observe and maintain throughout the school year.

Site A is located at the intersection of two rural streets on a large area of grassland purchased by the district many years ago. Construction was in progress during the research timetable and will be completed at the end of 2006; resulting in a beautiful, large campus that encompasses all three of the schools located in the district (one primary building, one elementary building, and one middle school building). Site A's building is a single story brick structure that housed over 553 students (K-3). The targeted site welcomes students and families into a large spacious office which includes a principal's office, work room, and nurse's station. The building is broken up by grade level pods where all grade level classrooms are clustered together and share a large common area where classes are invited to work with one another. Site A has a well-stocked library, two computer laboratories, a cafeteria with kitchen, conference room, teachers' lounge, music room, and an art room that is enclosed by a floor to ceiling glass wall.

Site B

The second researcher is a fourth grade teacher. Site B is a kindergarten through fourth grade building located in a northwest suburb of Chicago.

The total enrollment at Site B was 480 students with a district enrollment of 3,981. Table 1 identifies the ethnic backgrounds of the student body at this location. As seen in this table, the majority (67.9%, n=326) of the student body at Site B consisted of Caucasian students. Hispanics were the next highest percentage at 23.8 (n=115).

Table 3

Racial/Ethnic Background by Percentage

	Caucasian	Hispanic	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Multi Racial/Ethnic
School	67.9	23.8	2.7	5.0	.6	0.0
District	76.8	13.3	3.2	6.3	.2	.2

Among the student population, the Limited-English-Proficient Rate was 16.7% (n=82) and for the district 7.5%. Site B offered a free/reduced lunch program where 16.3% (n=77) of the students qualified. The attendance rate at Site B was 95.1% (n=456) while the district had 95.2% (n=3,782). The mobility rate was 11.4% (n=53) compared to 7.8% (n=318) for the district. A 0% truancy rate was reported for this Site while a 0.2% (n=8) was reported for the district (p.1).

The average teacher's salary in Site B's district was $50,624 compared to the state average of $55,558. The average teaching experience for certified district staff was nine and one-half years, including 47.6% (n=105) with a bachelor's degree and 52.4% (n=113) with a master's degree or above (p. 2). There were a total of 218 teachers in the district, with 11.9% (n=26) male and 88.1% (n=192) female. The ethnicity of the teachers was 97.4% (n=211) Caucasian, 2.1% (n=4) Hispanic, and .5% (n=1) Asian/Pacific Islander. The pupil-teacher ratio in this district was 25.3:1. The average class size was approximately 24, with the average fourth grade class size averaging 26.5 (p. 1). The gender break down within the school's population of students was approximately 45% (n=216) female and 55% (n=264) male (School Secretary, personal communication, September 8, 2006).

Site B focused on a traditional self-contained curriculum with heavy emphasis on the core subjects: mathematics, reading, writing, grammar, science, and social sciences. Technology was used to support the curriculum. There were three to four computers in each classroom, all of which were networked and had access to the Internet. The curriculum was aligned with the state standards. According to the Illinois State School Report Card, time devoted to teaching core subjects in the targeted school included 60 minutes of mathematics, 30 minutes of science, 120 minutes of English/language arts, and 30 minutes of social sciences per day (p. 1).

The average administrator salary was $105,657, which was above the state average of $97,051. The percent of the district budget spent on administration in 2004-2005 was 3.3% compared to a state average of 2.6% (p. 2). In 2004-2005, there was one principal, and 33 certified teachers; in addition, the building housed one speech therapist, one social worker, one psychologist, and nine classroom assistants. The facility was maintained by two custodians and the office staff included one secretary and two clerks.

The students in the district take the ISAT yearly. Reading, writing, and mathematics are tested in grades three and five while science, in addition, is tested in grade four. The overall performance for the 2004-2005 school year reported that the targeted school had 75.6% of students meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards. This 75.6% is compared to 79.3% for the district and 64.9% for the state. In addition, students enrolled in a comprehensive ELL program take the IMAGE exam. The overall performance for the 2004-2005 school year reported that the targeted school had 56.3% of students meeting or exceeding the Illinois Learning Standards. This 56.3% is compared to 57.6% for the district and 49.3% for the state (p. 3).

A school community was created through a Koality Kid program, which promoted good character traits. Students received awards, called “Gotchas,” when observed to display one of the seven good character traits. To promote literacy, the school subscribed to the Accelerated Reader program and students were allowed to select a book for their birthday to add to their home library. All students were bus riders in this school due to the major streets that needed to be crossed in order to attend the school.

Site B is a kindergarten through fourth grade building. The facility was built in 1950. It was first renovated in 1956, and again in 1960 to accommodate the growing community (Building principal, personal communication, July 17, 2006). It is a one-story building, located

on a major thoroughfare and not easily accessible by pedestrians. The parking lot for the building encompasses the entire western portion of the property and the front entrance is located there as well. Directly north of the building is a large grassy area used for outdoor activities such as baseball or football. To the east of the building lies a blacktopped surface used for recess activities. There is a basketball net and large piece of playground equipment for climbing and swinging. The southern portion of the property is primarily used to enter and exit the grounds. For the safety of the school community all entrances are locked. Visitors enter the building and sign in through the main office, where badges are issued for the extent of their stay. All faculty and students are required to wear picture identification badges. There were 17 regular education classrooms in the building, one gymnasium, one cafeteria, and one media center. Eleven classrooms were set aside for use by enrichment classes or support personnel. In addition to 17 regular education teachers, the school had a special education staff of five teachers. A social worker, speech therapist, and a school psychologist were also housed in the building. In addition, there was a full-time physical education teacher and part-time music and art teachers. Site B's office contains the office of the principal, who was assisted by one secretary and an office clerk. A health clerk also worked in the office and assisted the district's nurse with the care of students who became ill during the school day. The media center was maintained by two media specialists and one assistant and contained the library as well as a computer laboratory. This past school year, (2005-2006), the library circulated over 28,000 books (Media Specialist, personal communication, June 28, 2006)! There were 35 computers in the laboratory and access was available through reservation by individual teachers. A media specialist offered instruction in both the computer laboratory as well as the media center, though teachers offered their own lessons as well. All grade level classrooms were grouped together within the building.

Classrooms contain lockers for students and individual desks. Though the school was not as well equipped as other elementary schools within the district (e.g. air conditioning, cable access), the staff took great pride in the efforts of the janitorial staff to maintain such a clean and pleasant environment. Overall, the personality of the staff warms the building and welcomes all who enter.

Site C

The third researcher is an eighth grade middle school science teacher. Site C is a middle school located in a northwest suburb of Chicago. The total population of the sixth through eighth grade school was 761students with the district enrollment of 2,112. The racial/ethnic background is depicted in Table 4. The table shows that the majority (62.8%, n=479) of the students at Site C were Caucasian with a high percent (28.3%, n=213) of Hispanic patrons as well.

Table 4

Racial/Ethnic Background by Percentage

	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Multi Racial/Ethnic
School	62.8	3.2	28.3	5.4	0.1	0.3
District	59.1	2.6	32.4	5.0	0.1	0.8

Of the 761 students who attended Site C, 23.3% (n=175) came from low-income families compared to 26.1% (n=549) for the district. Low-income families are defined as “those receiving public aid; live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children; are supported in foster homes with public funds; or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches” (p. 1). The community’s mobility rate was 6.7% (n=53) compared to 11.4% (n=232) for the district. Site C reported an attendance rate of 94.9% (n=723) while the district had 95.3% (n=2,006). The

Limited-English-Proficient Rate, defined as students eligible for transitional bilingual programs, was 3.7% (n=30) and for the district 13.5% (n=296).

The average district-wide teaching salary, including Site C, was $43,620 compared to the state average of $55,558. The district's average years of teaching experience was 9.9. Of the 144 teachers in the district, 66.1% (n=95) held a bachelor's degree, while 33.9% (n=49) possessed a master's degree or above. The percent of teachers with emergency or provisional credentials was 3.7 (n=6). The district was comprised of 17.2% (n=24) males and 82.8% (n=120) females. Correlating to student ethnicity, the district teacher racial/ethnic background was also predominately Caucasian, 92.4% (n=132) with 6.9% (n=10) of Hispanic descent.

The average class size at Site C was 27.8. There were 58% (n=441) male students and 42% (n=320) female students in this site (Building Secretary, personal communication, September 20, 2006). The student to staff ratios for the Site C district averaged 16.9:1. Parental contact, which includes parent-teacher conferences, parental visits to school, school visits to home, telephone conversations, and written correspondence was 92%.

Site C adhered to the middle school philosophy. The required core curriculum at the middle school level was mathematics, English/language, science, social science, and physical education. Time devoted to teaching all core subjects was 44 minutes per day with the exception of English/language arts receiving 88 minutes per day. All core curriculum was aligned with the Illinois state standards. Related arts (specials), classes designed for enrichment, were also required on a term basis. Terms lasted for a period of six weeks, also for 44 minutes per day. Classes included art, Spanish, computers, technology modules, quest, and music composition.

The school district was composed of five buildings, one district office, one pre-kindergarten through second grade building, 2 third through fifth grade buildings, and 1 sixth

through eighth grade building. In the 2005 – 2006 school year, the district was run by one superintendent, who was new to the district that year. The average administrator salary for the district was $100,737, which was above the state average of $97,051.The expenditure of the district budget on general administration in 2004-2005 was 1.6% compared to the state average of 2.6% (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d., *2005 Illinois school report card: Site C*). Site C staffed one principal, one assistant principal, three secretaries, two social workers, one counselor, and one nurse. There were eight full-time Special Education teachers, two bi-lingual teachers for ELL, and one humanities teacher for the gifted program. Twenty-seven regular education teachers made up the teaching staff for grades sixth through eighth. There were seven related arts teachers for the six-week term classes. Five physical education teachers staffed the PE department. Site C also had one technology facilitator and one learning center director. Three full-time custodians took care of the general interior and exterior of the Site C school.

The students in the district take the ISAT yearly. Reading, writing, and mathematics are tested in grade eight while science, in addition, is tested in grade seven. The overall ISAT performance for Site C in 2004-05, as reported in the Illinois School Report Card, reported 78.4% of the students met or exceeded the Illinois Learning Standards. This 78.4% compares to 81.9% for the district and 69.2% for the state.

The middle school philosophy was well grounded at the Site C school. Each day began in homeroom where announcements were read, district and school propaganda distributed and collected, and students had time to adjust to the beginning of the day with a familiar face. Every Thursday, the homeroom teacher also served as an advisory teacher to facilitate the school-wide advisory program. This was an enrichment program using activities and discussion to promote positive self-esteem, positive citizenship, community awareness, and academic goal setting. Site

C was well respected by bordering districts for its multitude of extra curricular activities, which ranged from athletics to club membership. Some of these student opportunities included, volleyball (both genders), basketball (both genders), cheerleading, dance team, intramural football and soccer, quiz bowl, chess club, computer club, math club, drama club, community service, and homework club. To foster participation and student involvement, Site C had an activity bus picking up at 4:00 P.M. to safely transport students home. Teachers and support staff ran all of these activities to build a closer relationship between students and teachers.

Site C's facility was originally built in 1957. Two extensive additions were added in 1974 and 1998 to accommodate the growing community. It is a one-story building nestled in a quiet neighborhood between two major roads and is only two blocks from the high school. With the new addition, the building is comprised of three wings, one wing housing each grade level, for a total of 44 classrooms. The hallways are lined with lockers. Each wing leads to a main hall that leads to the school's focal point known as the multi-purpose room, which also serves as the lunchroom. There are three gymnasiums in the building; two smaller gymnasiums flank the northeast and south ends of the building while the large gymnasium encompasses the far north end of the building. There are two offices. One office services the main entrance, forcing all visitors to enter using a door bell, as all outside doors are locked during the day, to sign in and receive a visitor's pass before being allowed to officially enter the school. The second office is located at the direct opposite northeast end of the building. Across the hall from this office is the social work office. In the middle wing, housing the eighth graders, there are two computer laboratories. One of these laboratories is located in the library, a large inviting space taking up approximately one-fourth of the east side of the hallway. To foster school pride, as well as the middle school philosophy, there are multiple inspirational murals strategically scattered through

the building. The school mascot, a tiger, is the focal point with an inspirational phrase/message written around it. To all who wander the school, from students, to staff, parents and visitors, these murals provide a feeling of warmth, visual appeal, and welcome.

After comparing all the information from the school report cards, we believe students' lack of motivation affecting their self-efficacy can be attributed to cultural differences and socioeconomic status. One factor noted by the teacher researchers was lack of parental support for their child's education due to language barriers which prohibited communication between home and school. In addition, parents were also unable to assist their child with assignments. Often, low socioeconomic status requires a dual income which may result in the parents being unavailable physically and/or emotionally. Based on the teacher research in the classroom, lower socioeconomic status may further hamper the ability for parents to provide resources, be it technology or other educational tools/experiences (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyle, 2003; Williams &Oh, 2000).

Local Context of the Problem

All three sites are located in northeastern Illinois and are considered to be in the northwestern suburbs of the city of Chicago, Illinois. After reviewing the statistics of each community (City-Data.com, n.d. a.; b; & c.), we have concluded that Site C is most representative of all three sites. Therefore, all demographic information will come from Site C unless otherwise stated.

The population as of the year 2000 was 30,935 residents; this reflects a growth rate of 44% from the 1990s (City-Data.com, n.d. a.; b.; & c., *City, Illinois).* The median household income was $69,651. Three percent (n=928) of the families in this community were considered to be living below the poverty level (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *Economic characteristics).*

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the median population age was 31.7 years old. Table 5 shows that the majority (n=20,726) of the population was predominately Caucasian while Hispanics were the second highest in population (n=7,424). The relationship between the Caucasian and Hispanic percentages was a common thread for both Sites B and C. However, Site A had a lesser Hispanic population at 14.6% (n=76); the African American and the Caucasian populations were slightly higher at 5.5% (n=30) and 72.2% (n=366), respectively (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d., *2005 Illinois school profile: Site A*).

Table 5

Ethnicity by Percentage

Caucasian	Hispanic	Asian	Multi-racial	Filipino	African American
66.5	24.2	3.5	2.1	2.1	1.6

The median age of the community was 31.7 years. The average household size for 2000 was 3.12. Approximately 72% (n=22,273) of the population was in the labor force and 27.8% (n=8,661) were unemployed (*U.S. Census Bureau*, 2000, *General characteristics).* The percentage of individuals who were high school graduates or higher was 46.5% (n=14,539), and the percentage of those who went on to receive their bachelor's degree or higher was 39.9% (n=12,374), (*U.S. Census Bureau*, 2000, *Social characteristics).*

Table 6 is indicative of only selected industries within the community and is not representative of all the civilian employment (EPODUNK: the power of place, 2006). As shown, the majority (20%, n=4,455) of workers were in the manufacturing field with retail trade being the second highest percentage (10.9%, n=2,450).

Table 6

Types of Employment by Percentage

Manufacturing	Wholesale trade	Retail trade	Information	Finance and insurance	Professional, scientific and technical services
20.0	4.4	10.9	2.2	6.5	8.4

According to the 2004 Illinois State Police Crime Report for Lake County, the Site C crime rate per 100,000 was 1,516.2 with a total crime index of 489 (Crime in Illinois 2004, *Illinois state police, 2004*).

The area was first inhabited by the Potowatami Indians who were trading with French fur traders in the 1650s. In the 1800s, a group of English immigrants came to the region and established a farming community. The addition of a railroad station and a post office contributed to the growth of this community. In 1909 an educational entrepreneur built a school for sales techniques. This school was very popular and made a huge impact on the town; it folded several years after opening. Shortly thereafter, business and industry began to grow in the community and the population grew accordingly (Village, 2005, *Village of city history).* Improvements that were in the planning stage for 2006 include an outdoor concert series, electronics recycling drop off for residents, a Del Webb Active Adult Community, and extended Metra train service (Village, 2005). There are many recreational opportunities in the area. They include, boating, golfing, swimming, and visiting museums, theaters, and health and fitness centers (Village, 2005, *Recreational opportunities*).

At Site A, the district's middle school, as well as three other middle schools in the area, feed into one high school located in a separate district. The district's mission statement is "…to

foster excellence in education so that its students will be able to reach their full potential and enhance their quality of life in an ever-changing society" (Building Principal, personal communication, September 15, 2006). In the 2006-2007 school year, the district will comprise of one primary building (kindergarten through second grade), one elementary building (grades three through fifth), and one middle school building (grades sixth through eighth). The district was overseen by one superintendent. The local property taxes were 70.1% of the school's revenue. The 2002 total school tax rate per $100.00 was 2.31. The 2003-2004 instructional expenditure per pupil was $3,230. The operating expenditure per pupil was 6,419 (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d., a.). Between the school years 2001-2003, the school district attempted to pass three building referendums. In the fall of 2004 the building referendum finally passed (Illinois Association of School Administrators, n.d.). At the time of this report the district was building two additional buildings at the site of the primary building in order to make one campus to house students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Each of the buildings will be equipped with a computer laboratory as well as a technology instructor. Each classroom at the time of this report included one computer with Internet access.

Site B is a kindergarten through fourth grade building that, along with three other such buildings in the district, feeds into one fifth through sixth grade building, which then, in turn, feeds into one middle school. The mission statement of Site B is: "The mission of … is to create a positive environment which ensures continuous improvement, promotes responsibility, and facilitates life long learning for every child and adult" (Site B, School District Student Handbook, 2006-2007). The mission statement of the district is simply "To pursue excellence to shape the future" (Building Principal, personal communication, September 8, 2006). There were six buildings in this district and the district was run by one superintendent. Three directors

worked under the superintendent, and along with six building principals and three assistant principals, made up the administrative team. Local property taxes made up 58.8% of the district's budget and the 2002 total school tax rate per $100 was 3.84. The instructional expenditure per pupil fell below the state expenditure of $5,216, at $3,600; the operating expenditure per pupil also fell below the state average of $8,786, at $7,142. (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d., b.). Recent attempts to pass an educational referendum have failed in this district and budget cuts have resulted. The technology department in Site B was operating on limited or no funds; hence, equipment had not been upgraded to keep up with improvements in the field. The computer laboratory hosted 35 computers and there were at least three available in each classroom. Laboratory usage was determined by flexible scheduling, or on an *as needed* basis (Media Specialist, personal communication, June 28, 2006).

Site C is the middle school that the district's three elementary schools feed into. The mission statement is:

> … will develop inquisitive, compassionate, and responsible individuals who are active and respectful participants in their school, home, and global community. We (the school) will provide a stimulating and caring environment that will meet the diversified needs of our students. The students' academic and social experiences will equip them with the necessary tools, skills, and resources to realize their potential and achieve success in all endeavors. (Building Principal, personal communication, September 20, 2006).

The district mission statement is: "… will provide each student with the opportunity to obtain an education to the limits of her/his capabilities and to equip all students to shape a

changing world" (Site C, School District Student Handbook, 2006-2007). There is a district office building housing the district staff, three free-standing elementary buildings, and one middle school. There was one district superintendent, a district curriculum coordinator, a district gifted instruction coordinator, business manager, benefits manager, and a principal in each building. The current tax base was $3.52 per $100 and on its third attempt the district successfully passed a referendum in 2003. The technology program at Site C provided every classroom with a teacher computer, with the exception of language arts classes which had at least two or three. Site C had two computer laboratories, with 55 computers combined, as well as two mobile computer laboratories that were available to classes and students throughout the day. In addition, Site C had one classroom of computers devoted to its related arts (six week long term) computer class.

We, as teacher researchers, feel that lack of motivation impedes a student's learning process. This contributes to the student's inability to be successful. Evidence of this is demonstrated in the classroom through inadequate homework completion, lack of focus during classroom activities, and low achievement on assessments. The second highest grouping of students, based on the economic demographics of the research population, comes from "blue-collar" families. These parents are predominately factory and service industry workers with at most, a high school education. This means both parents are most likely working full-time. Due to the nature of their job requirements, many of these parents are working second or third shifts and are not able to be home to make sure their children are completing their homework much less provide help with it. They are also often unavailable during the school day for teacher communication or conference attendance. This lack of involvement can manifest itself into student motivation issues as the child's perception, from the parents, is that education is not

valued and poor academic performance is acceptable, thus the child carries an attitude of low academic expectations. This motivational problem occurs at all levels of education, as early as first grade, becoming more pronounced in the upper grades and often resulting in high school drop-out (Kaplan, Xiaoru, & Kaplan, (2001); Black, (2003).

National Context of the Problem

Low motivation often presents itself as withdrawal, procrastination, disorganization, and cheating (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). There is research that suggests gender may play a role in student motivation, with boys more likely than girls to fall apart when faced with challenges that require time management strategies (Martin, 2004). In addition, an economic connection can be tied into lack of motivation as students from a lower socioeconomic group tend to have more frequent absences from school, frequent tardiness, and off-task behaviors (Williams & Oh, 2000). Parental influence cannot be discounted in their connection to student's lack of motivation. When parental expectations are overly high and they pressure their child to perform at equally high levels, the result may be that the student responds with attention, learning, and concentration difficulties (Chan, 2004).

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Evidence of the Problem

The purpose of the research project was to increase student motivation in three separate classrooms; 1 third grade classroom, 1 fourth grade classroom, and 1 eighth grade science classroom, for a total of 80 students. The three ways the evidence was documented were a Parent Survey, a Student Survey, and a Student Behavior Checklist. During the last week of January 2007, a Student Survey (Appendix A) was administered to students to assess a variety of feelings they had towards school. A Parent Survey (Appendix B) was also administered that week to the parents of the targeted students to assess their perception of school and any work habits they may/may not instill in their children at home. Over the first two weeks of February 2007, a Student Behavior Checklist (Appendix C) was completed by the teacher researchers in their respective classrooms to gain insight on the problematic behaviors their students were exhibiting.

Student Survey

The Student Survey (Appendix A) was administered in class on February 5, 2007, to the 80 targeted students in grades three, four, and eight to gain insight into their beliefs and attitude toward school. The student survey included seven questions all consisting of likert scales. This survey was designed to measure students' attitude toward various statements; they recorded their opinion by indicating whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The teacher researchers collapsed the results of this survey into an affirmative (strongly agree and agree) and a negative (disagree and strongly disagree) reaction.

In question one, students were asked if they enjoy being in school. According to the student surveys, the majority (86%, n=67) of students agreed with that statement. Conversely, 14% (n=11) reported they did not enjoy school.

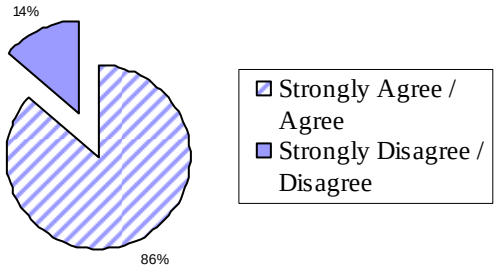


Figure 1: I enjoy being at school. (n=78)

Question two asked students if it was important to them to do well on assignments. An overwhelming percentage, 97% (n=76), of students felt it was important to do well on assignments. In fact, only two students, 3%, responded negatively.

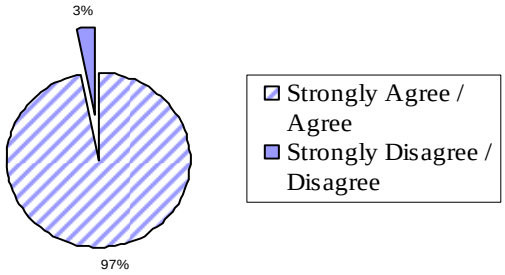


Figure 2: It is important for me to do well on assignments. (n=78)

The admiration students have for ones who do well in school was the focus in question three. Again, a marked number of students (86%, n=67) responded favorably, leaving only 14% (n=11) who deny feeling esteem for high achieving peers.

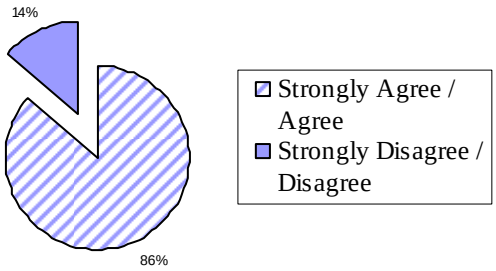


Figure 3: I admire students who do well in school. (n=78)

In question four, students were asked if they had encouragement from parents or guardians to do well in school. A noteworthy number of students (95%, n=74) felt support from home, where as only a small percentage, 5% (n=4), did not feel supported or encouraged to do well in school.

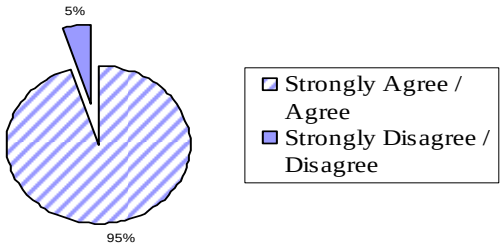


Figure 4: My parents / guardians encourage me to do well in school. (n=78)

Question five referenced whether students had a quiet place to go to concentrate on their homework. Eighty-two percent (n=64) of students responded affirmatively to this question. Eighteen percent (n=14) disagreed.

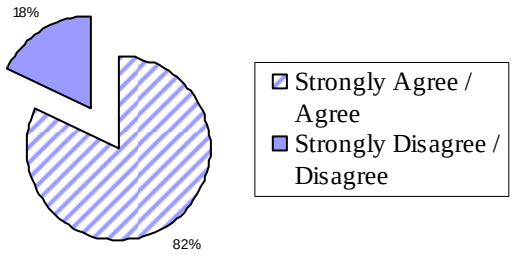


Figure 5: I have a quiet place where I can go to concentrate on my homework. (n=78)

The next question was in regard to parental assistance with homework. Eighty-seven percent (n=68) of students felt they were able to get help when needed. Students unable to receive assistance equaled 13% (n=10).

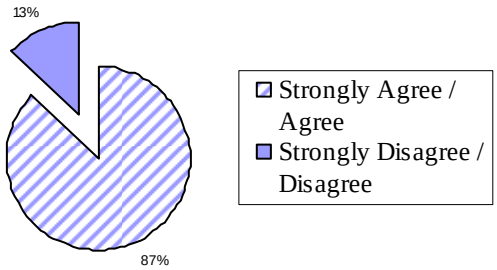


Figure 6: My parents / guardians help me with my homework when needed. (n=78)

The last question asked students if extracurricular activities took up a majority of their time after school. This question revealed the most even distribution of results from this student survey. Fifty-three percent (n=41) felt extra-curricular activities filled many of their after school hours, whereas 47% (n=37) did not feel over encumbered with after school obligations.

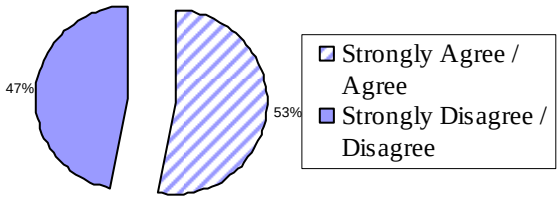


Figure 7: Extra-curricular activities take up the majority of my after school time. (n=78)

Parent Survey

The Parent Survey (Appendix B) was administered on February 5, 2007, to the 80 families who agreed to participate in the study. The survey was sent home with the students in sealed envelopes; included with the survey was an additional envelope for return of the survey. This evaluation was sent back with the student and placed in a box located in the classroom. The survey was designed to assess how the home environment supported the student's learning. Of the 80 surveys, 57 (70%) were returned. The parent survey included nine multiple choice questions.

Question one referenced the number of children in the home and of those, how many attended school between kindergarten and 12th grade. The majority (79%, n=112) of families have between two and three children at home and currently attending school.

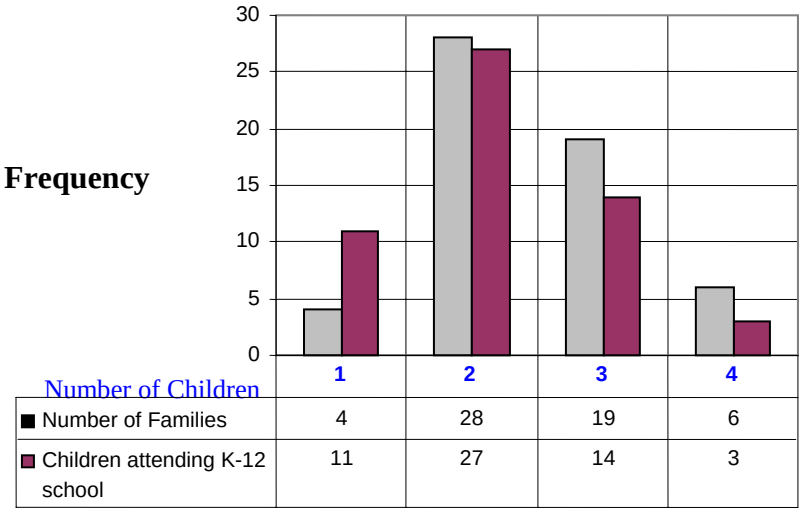


Figure 8: The Number of Children Living in the Home and/or Attending School (n=112)

Question two referred to the primary language spoken at home. Eighty-six percent (n=46) of the respondents spoke English as the primary language with their families.

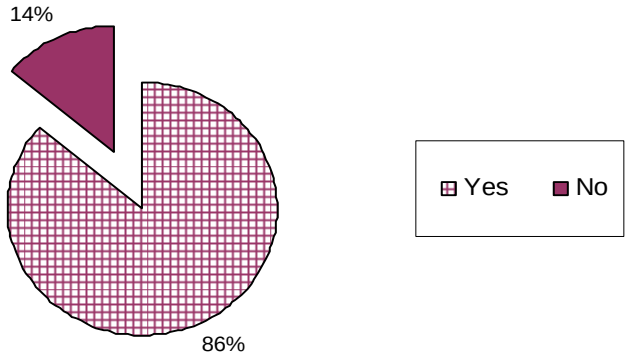


Figure 9: English is the Primary Language in the Home (n=54)

Question three asked if there was a predetermined time to begin homework; 74% (n=41) replied affirmatively.

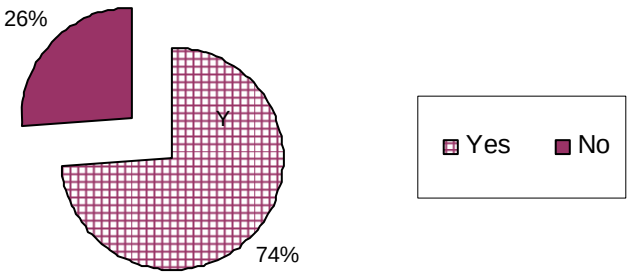


Figure 10: Time Designated for Homework (n=56)

With regard to the prior question, the majority (66%, n=33) used a predetermined homework time of either 3:00 or 4:00 pm.

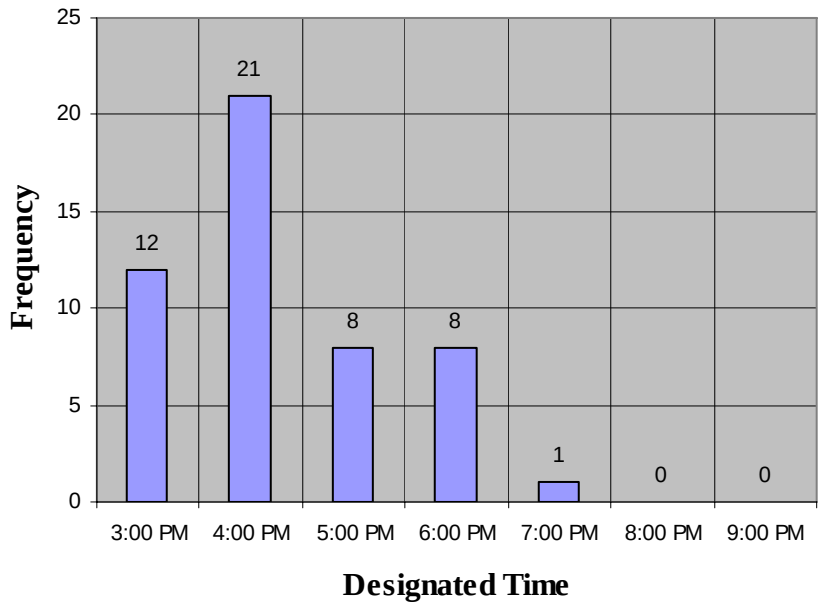


Figure 11: Designated Time for Homework Completion (n=50)

For question four, forty-nine percent (n=28) of the responding families reported that parents spent 10 – 30 minutes assisting their child with homework. Only a small percentage (5%, n=3) needed to support their child for more than an hour.

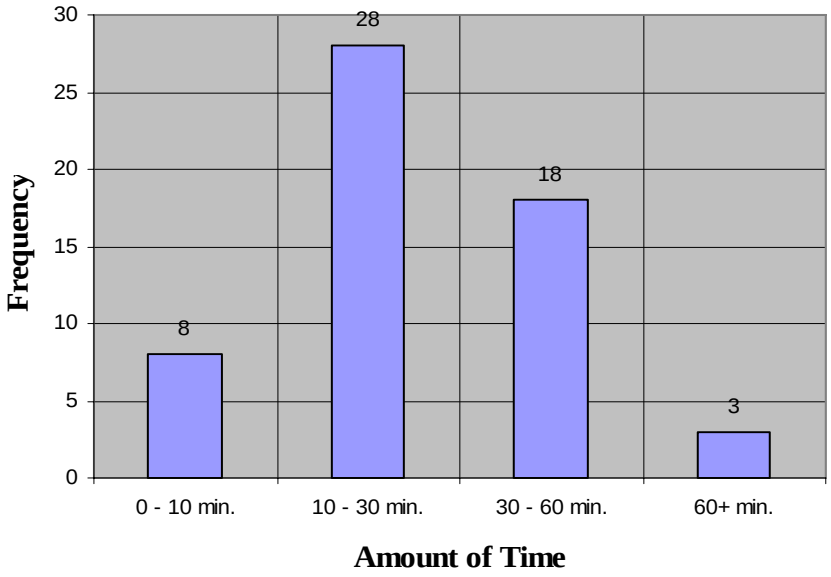


Figure 12: Support with Homework (n=57)

Question five pertained to the attitude parents have toward school, both past and present. The majority of responses showed that the parents felt positively toward school, both in their youth (n=43; 75%) as well as presently (n=54; 95%).

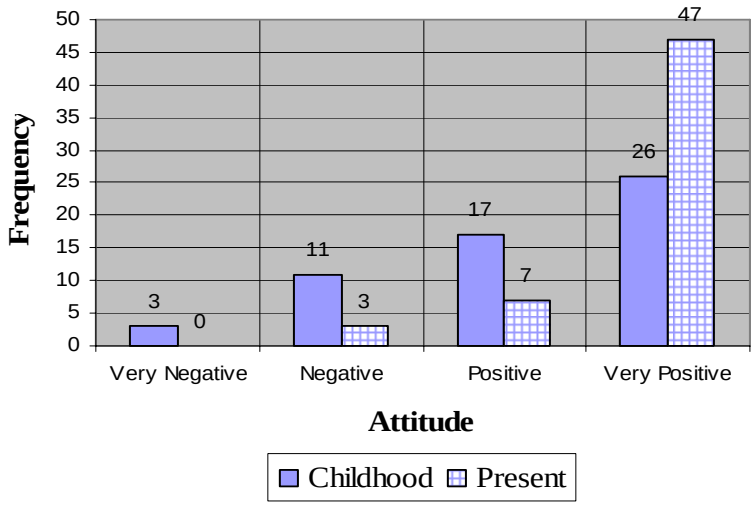


Figure 13: Childhood and Adult Attitude toward School (n=112)

The amount of time spent watching television per week was the focus of question six. More than half (58%, n=32) of targeted students spent between three to nine hours watching TV. It is also noteworthy that 36% (n=20) watch more than nine hours each week.

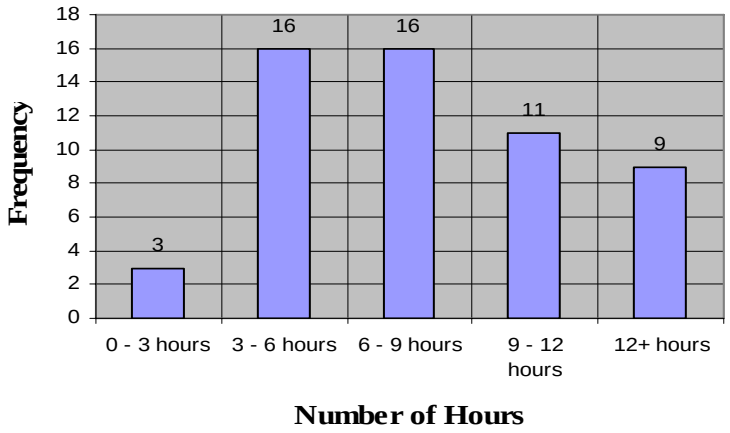


Figure 14: Hours Child Spends Watching TV (n=55)

Seventy-four percent (n=42) stated they limit their child's time spent playing video games and/or watching TV, according to question seven responses.

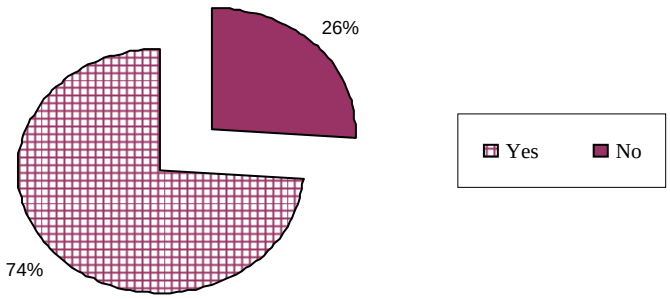


Figure 15: Video game and TV Time Limited (n=57)

In question eight, a marked number (72%, n=39) of respondents reported that they have no involvement in their child's school through the parent – teacher organization.

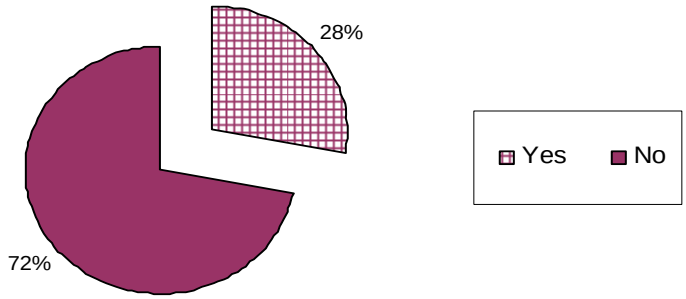


Figure 16: Involvement in School and Parent Organization (n=54)

The final question revealed the highest level of education attained by both parents. Fifty-one percent (n=56) graduated from college and/or furthered their studies. The next highest level attained (25%, n=27) was of those who had graduated from high school. An additional 20% (n=22) attended community college. It is noteworthy that out of the 110 respondents only 5% (n=5) did not graduate from high school.

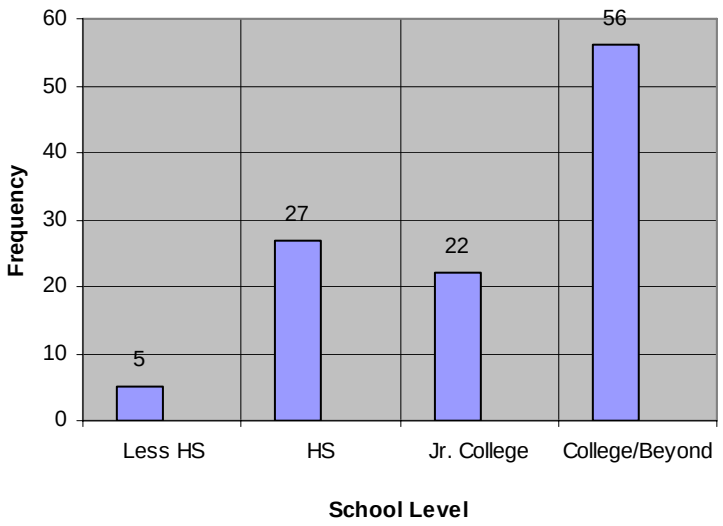


Figure 17: Parental Level of Education (n=110)

Behavior Checklist

The Behavior Checklist (Appendix C) was used to document problematic behaviors exhibited by students. Teacher researchers observed the targeted 80 students for one hour each morning and one hour each afternoon, making a tally mark for each observed instance of the six noted actions.

This data was collected during the week of February 5, 2007. Of the 546 total occurrences, 30% (n=165) dealt with off-task behavior and 28% (n=151) dealt with not

following directions. An additional area of concern was with assignments that were considered quality below standard; 16% (n=87) of noted incidents related to this area.

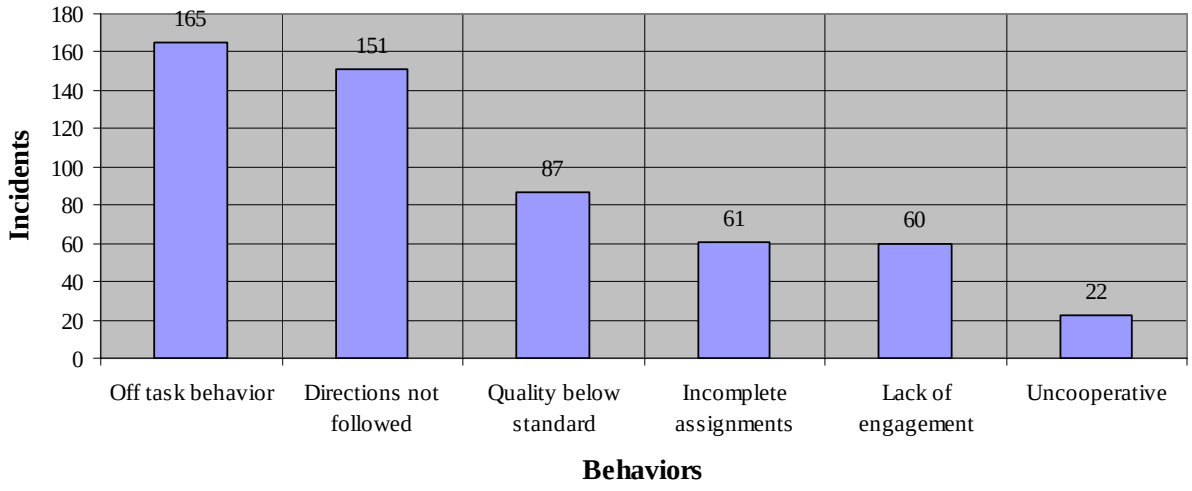


Figure 18: Behavior Checklist (n=546)

Summary

The Parent Survey shows that students were receiving a proper amount of support from home (see Figures 4, 6, 10, and 12) for their education as well as restrictions that deter them from things that interfere with their learning (see Figures 5, 9, and 15). The students themselves have a positive attitude toward their schooling (see Figure 1) and their perception of education is highly valued (see Figures 2 and 3). However, in direct contrast, the teacher researchers observed behaviors showing that students are not acting according to their reported standards (see Figure 18).

Reflection

Since we, as teacher researchers, do not see a correlation between observed classroom behaviors and responses to our surveys, we are lead to believe that students' answers may have

been influenced by the fact that they were trying to answer questions in a manner that would please their teacher. In spite of the anonymity promised by the parent survey, we also feel that parents were not forthright in their responses. The behavior checklist revealed areas of weakness that are motivationally driven as ascertained through our review of the literature (Oliver, 1995). This encourages us to implement the strategies we have in place. By providing creative engagement, self-assessment, and positive reinforcement, our students will improve in the areas of off-task behavior, following directions, and work quality.

Probable Causes

The literature revealed a number of explanations why students lack the motivation to succeed in school. These include not possessing self-efficacy, a poor classroom atmosphere, that may be a result of the teacher being ill suited to manage a classroom, or administrative mandates that control the class in a negative fashion. Other explanations comprise the needs of students not being met: a poor home environment, neither intrinsic nor extrinsic goals for stimulation, or simply gender differences that may impede the motive to learn. Understanding students and what motivates them is an ongoing problem especially in diverse groups of students. Student motivation and performance is largely influenced by classroom teachers, their parents and home atmosphere, as well as their own personal level of motivation. If these three factors do not mesh in a positive manner, student motivation declines (Oliver, 1995).

Students with a low concept of self-efficacy tend to give up easily (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). Self-efficacy is synonymous with confidence and refers to a person's judgment about his/her capability to perform a task at a specified level. Students who are not confident or perceive themselves incapable may avoid tasks that they see as challenging or difficult (Seifert, 2004). Self-confidence is a motivational issue. Younger children usually maintain their self-

confidence and believe they can succeed despite negative outside factors and repeated failures. However, older students easily lose self-confidence and attribute their failures to low ability believing that no matter how much effort they put forth, they will not succeed (Black, 2003). Seifert (2004) further explains that self-worth often enters into the mindset of those who are repeatedly unsuccessful in their academic pursuits. Self-worth refers to the judgment one makes about one's sense of worth and dignity as a person. A person who feels unworthy is a person who does not feel respected or valued by others and may feel unloved. This student is referred to as "failure-avoidant" (p. 141) and sees performance as a source of self-worth and ability as the foundation of performance. Often the failure-avoidant student is not able to perform well. To preserve self-worth, this student will strive to look competent or avoid looking incompetent. Perceived effort becomes important because the student believes that effort is a sign of ability. Failure that results from low effort may lead to feelings of guilt while failure resulting from low ability may lead to feelings of shame and humiliation. Given the choice between feeling guilty by not working, and feeling shamed by working hard and failing, this student would rather feel guilt than feel shame. Failure avoiding students expend a great deal of effort trying not to look stupid by engaging in failure avoiding strategies. These defense mechanisms used to preserve self-worth include such behaviors as effort withdrawal, procrastination, maintaining a state of disorganization, setting goals too high, setting goals too low, cheating, or asking for help. Students who feel they cannot do something successfully may also resort to feigning illness or inappropriate behavior in the classroom. They may also produce a carelessly created piece of work (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Low self-efficacy beliefs negatively impact academic achievement and create self-fulfilling prophecies of failure and learned helplessness that can devastate psychological well-

being. The resulting poor behaviors can worsen deficits and create additional school difficulties, such as poor grades, conflict with teachers, lower track placement, special education placement, failure on high-stakes tests, and retention (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). In addition, lack of student work habits lessens the possibility of success as an adult (Williams & Oh, 2000).

Students' self-concept with regard to academics develops within the first year of schooling (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). Repeated failures cause students to feel they are incapable and they give up trying, even assuming that any good results are a *fluke* (Stiggins, 2001). A *learned helplessness* results when a student develops low expectations of success, does not persist on tasks, and develops low self-esteem. These attitudes reduce motivation and create negative feelings about schoolwork (Oliver, 1995).

There are high numbers of at-risk middle and high school students in danger of dropping out of school due to academic failure; these students have shown long term patterns of underachievement and social problems (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Inattentive, withdrawn students are those who appear not to be in touch with what is going on in class. They may give off-topic responses to questions directed to them and appear to be preoccupied or even sleeping. They do not necessarily draw attention to themselves but rather try to hide in the classroom. This behavior allows them to be overlooked because they do not interrupt the flow of instruction within the classroom (Finn, 1998). Conversely, another dysfunctional student may seek his/her need for attention by creating chaos; the need for competence is met by being the biggest bully in class, the need for recognition is met by being a gang member and having other gang members look up to you (Wise, 2003). In either case, teachers need to find a way to connect with these students and motivate them to achieve. Finn (1998) notes that behavior that is deemed to be dysfunctional early tends to worsen and continue through the years. In addition, it is also noted

that academic achievement and performance in early grades, if poor, likely leads to students dropping out prior to graduation from high school (Finn, Gerber, & Boyd-Zaharias, 2005).

The emotional connection between learning and the classroom has largely been ignored (Schweinie, Meyer, & Turner, 2006). Understanding student motivation, why it breaks down and how it can be supported, is crucial to good teaching because motivating hard-to-reach students and improving negative beliefs about self-worth are formidable tasks rewarded by encouraging the potential of these students to learn and achieve inside and outside the classroom (Berliner, 2004). Unfortunately, many teachers have little knowledge about individual differences in learning preferences because they lack the diagnostic skills to identify preferences among students and often do not have the knowledge to match their teaching strategies/homework assignments to these preferences (Eunsook, Milgram, & Rowell, 2004). When challenges are low and skills are also low, apathy may occur; conversely when challenges are low and ability high, boredom may occur. Teachers who routinely offer praise for simple participation in a project send a message to the students who made little effort that they need not find motivation in doing assignments (Schweinie et al., 2006). Teachers, too often, demand rote learning and regurgitation of facts (Harada & Yoshina, 2004) without realizing that as soon as attentiveness fades, forgetting information follows in as little as 20 seconds after initial contact with the information. Many teachers just keep adding new information which only interferes with the recall of prior learning. The retention of new information is constantly challenged by a host of factors, such as a lack of interest, fatigue, time of day, and challenging content. In addition, school administrators and parents expect teachers to cover more information than can be adequately processed into long term memory (Walsh, 2003). Teaching style is a factor as well; Schweinie, et al. noted that controlling teachers contribute to diminished motivation by demanding deadlines, emphasizing

grades and performance, and having a single solution rather than multiple solutions to a problem. Addressing the needs of students as individuals with individual learning styles is a challenge to the most seasoned teacher but could be something as simple as offering alternative homework assignments which would allow the student to work in his/her preferred style and may increase the motivation of the student to complete the assignment. Some students actually do their homework in their preferred ways, but for most there is a gap between what they prefer to do and what they actually do. The greater the gap between preferred and actual conditions, the lower the achievement. Narrower gaps between preferred and actual homework conditions are related to higher homework achievement (Eunsook, et al., 2004). The mandates of state standards also dictate an atmosphere of urgency in the classroom as districts cannot afford to give up on the students who are unmotivated; they must find a way to keep them from losing confidence and rekindle their desire to learn (Stiggins, 2001). Unfortunately, such high stakes testing decreases student motivation and increases the likelihood of students dropping out of school early (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Large numbers of students leave school before they graduate (Lumsden, 1994).

High stakes testing causes teachers to take more control over the learning experience rather than allowing students opportunities to direct their own learning. The teachers concern deals with what is on the test and not with encouraging students to question and discover answers on their own (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). A lack of student empowerment in the classroom fosters an atmosphere of apathy (Obenchain & Abernathy, 2003). Students are rarely given the choice of when, where, or with whom they will study. They usually have little to no choice about the type of projects they are asked to complete, much less the methods used to do the project (Eunsook, et al., 2004). Bored students sit back and let education happen to them and students

who do well may do so only for a good grade; neither situation presents a good learning environment (Chan, 2004). Students are particularly unmotivated to learn material that appears uninteresting to them or unrelated to their own life experiences (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005). Other factors likely to decrease student motivation include: pregnancy or other family responsibilities, being behind in grade-level and having younger classmates (children held back a grade are up to four times more likely to drop out than those who haven't been held back), poor academic performance, dislike of school, detention and suspension, undiagnosed learning disabilities and emotional problems, and language difficulties (Oliver, 1995). In addition, students who believe that they have little control over maintaining success or avoiding failure are at risk of giving up and feeling helpless to overcome their difficulties (Martin, 2004).

The home environment also plays into the motivation that a student brings to the academic setting. Children from poor homes begin school with fewer scholastic skills than their more affluent peers and are at risk for academic failure. Poor achievement among this group may stem from low motivational factors as these children have lower levels of family and community support for academic success. Children's ability to maintain control and focus in a classroom setting depends on consistent parenting and opportunities to practice these behaviors which may happen infrequently in lower socioeconomic environments (Howse, Lange, Farran, & Boyle, 2003). Other attributes associated with a lower socioeconomic group include frequent absences and frequent tardiness, along with off-task behaviors (Williams & Oh, 2000). Students may perceive educational expectations from parents that are self-defeating; if parents feel negatively about themselves, their children may be less willing to accept their parents as positive role models or take their advice for academic behavior. Parents with high levels of education and high negative self-feelings may pressure their children to perform precisely as they demand

(Kaplan, et al., 2001). Pressure to get a good grade or to pass the course interferes with learning the material as memory, attention, and concentration are affected (Chan, 2004). Parents with low levels of education and high negative self-feelings may emphasize other areas besides academics in which they are likely to succeed. These parents may feel it is not necessary to be concerned about poor academic performance and thus communicate lower academic expectations (Kaplan et al., 2001). Student disengagement occurs at all levels of education from as early as first grade to high school seniors. Disengagement is more frequent and more pronounced in the upper grades because outside influences lure some high school students. Factors like unsupportive families and downtrodden neighborhoods can lessen kids' motivation and engagement in learning. In the early grades kids from such environments can be hard to reach and difficult to motivate. By middle school, their interest in schoolwork rapidly declines so that by high school, the seriously disengaged students completely lose touch with learning. Many end up dropping out for good (Black, 2003). While overly assertive parents can lead their children into rebellion, it is the lack of parental involvement and the lack of a supportive home environment that most negatively affects a student's learning (Finn, 1998).

There are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Grades, rewards, and social concerns are examples of extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is not always positive for students and its effectiveness is short-lived (Cheak & Wessel, 2005). To encourage students, teachers often use forms of extrinsic motivation such as pizza parties or free time, but research shows that these sorts of activities actually reduce students' desire to learn and lowers their achievement (Black, 2003). Intrinsic motivation, conversely, is the desire that comes from within an individual to do his or her best. Self-gratification is the reward for efforts expended. However,

when rewards are attached to tests, for example, students become less intrinsically motivated and less likely to engage in critical thinking (Amrein & Berliner, 2003).

Research also shows that gender differences may play a role in student motivation. Girls are more inclined than boys to adopt a learning or mastery goal, plan schoolwork, manage study time effectively, and persist when challenged. Boys are more likely than girls to self-destruct when faced with challenges or tasks that require a lot of time management (Martin, 2004).

There is no one factor that can be attributed to the lack of student motivation to learn, but rather a conglomeration of different causes. It is sadly noted that research shows that children's passion for learning seems to shrink as they get older (Lumsden, 1994) regardless of their school or home environment, personal needs, gender, and other motivating factors. Teachers need to do whatever it takes to make connections with their students and encourage them to be life long learners. There is no simple remedy to this dilemma of unmotivated students, but certainly a myriad of avenues open for trial.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

The literature review revealed a multitude of solutions to improve student motivation. The most frequently emphasized methods utilized changes in the classroom environment or in teaching styles. Attention given to the needs of students through creative engagement, self-assessment, positive feedback, goal setting, and grouping serve to improve motivation. Though not a long term solution, offering rewards to promote desired behaviors will also result in an increased effort.

Creative engagement received a lot of discussion as a potentially successful motivation strategy. In fact, Foster Walsh (2003) placed a lot of emphasis on the use of creative engagement in the classroom. Walsh's research shows that good teaching assists the brain's natural efforts to organize and retain information. The learning process is facilitated and sustained when teachers grab their students' attention, activate prior learning, select the essentials, and focus on meaningfulness. To grab students' attention, teachers may begin lessons with a startling statistic, an engaging picture, a current event, or any other change in the normal routine. To activate prior learning teachers need to strategically select previously learned concepts that directly relate to new information. This allows past learning to activate and enrich the present content because to learn something well, students must hear it, see it, ask questions about it, discuss it, and present it (Walsh, 2003).

Meaningfulness is emphasized in good teaching through meaningful connections. It is also a catalyst for learning. Learning thrives in a meaningful context and applied learning requires personal connections to the lives of students. Therefore, only the most motivated

students will be able to attach any significance to meaningless information (Walsh, 2003). To successfully use creative engagement, both teachers and students must take a personal interest and an active role in the strategy.

Teachers can increase student motivation through creative engagement by using stimulating tasks. Tasks that stimulate students to think in new ways, such as hands-on activities, have lasting effects on motivation and comprehension; however, it is important that stimulating tasks are connected conceptually to further knowledge (Guthrie, et al., 2006).

Using cooperative groups can help teachers in their efforts to use creative engagement. Grouping students within a classroom may offer positive results in achievement, productivity, self-esteem, and attitude toward learning (Kesling, 2000). Grouping students may be done in several ways depending on the desired outcome. In order to help students overcome a passive approach to learning, Chan (2004) suggests forming discussion groups for problem solving and open ended questions. To accomplish interaction and participation with shy and withdrawn students, teachers should assign small group projects where each member is assigned a *role* or *job* (Wise, 2003). Offering bonus points on projects helps create a group atmosphere where everyone helps in the group and is rewarded for outstanding contributions to the class (Kesling, 2000). Promoting social interaction and increasing motivation can be accomplished by having students working with peers, especially on assignments that may not be personally interesting (Schweinie, et al., 2006).

These grouping situations are suggestions on how to increase student involved communication. This allows for students to share information with others about their learning. Most will work very hard to share accomplishments rather than explain failures (Stiggins, 2001). Learning is supposed to be social and interactive. When grouping students it is important to

organize them in small heterogeneous groups or teams that mix students according to gender, culture, ability, age, and socioeconomic background (Black, 2003). Students also need to be engaged in activities that are neither too easy nor too hard, that promote ownership and self-expression (when students relate personal experiences to responses and allow their viewpoints to be shared), and allow for social interaction as well (Cole, 2002).

Teachers can further inspire students by using engaging content. Students are more interested in content when learning is interesting, meaningful, and at a level of difficulty that is challenging but within reach (Berliner, 2004). This means that lessons elicit self-expression and encourage students to share their opinions, experiences and feelings; students' cultures and experiences are acknowledged; students choose or create learning activities and are invited to demonstrate what they learned; lessons are designed to encourage positive peer relationships and develop problem solving and decision making skills; and the curriculum is structured into small units to be completed daily or weekly (Berliner, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Teachers also need to communicate the objectives of the lesson and promote autonomy and self-direction with positive classroom atmospheres because teachers who are perceived as nurturing, supportive, and helpful will be developing students with a sense of confidence and self-determination (e.g. strengthening self-efficacy) which will be translated into the learning-oriented behaviors of the intrinsically motivated student (Seifert, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Finally, teachers can foster creative engagement through high interest levels that motivate greater performance by allowing student choice. Students are more motivated if they feel they have some control over what they are learning. Capitalizing on student choice encourages high levels of engagement and is likely to cause students to expend more effort, thus learning will

result (Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Stiggins, 2001). Teachers can allow students to choose their assignments, books, start times, break times, grading strategies, and extra credit work (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). One suggested grading method is rubrics. According to Rose (1999), rubrics (as a form of assessment) can be a powerful motivational tool to do quality work on a project or assignment, especially when it is shared with the students prior to the assignment. It can be even more motivational when students are given the chance to contribute to its content, making it easier to hold them to its standards, but more importantly giving the students a sense of belonging.

The students' role in creative engagement is also a necessary piece of the puzzle. Students need to feel that what they are doing has relevance and importance to their lives (Harada & Yoshina, 2004). Therefore, student interest also plays a huge role in motivation. Using what students know in lesson presentation allows them to learn better because they can connect the new information to what they already know, to what is meaningful to them, and to their own personal knowledge, experiences, and interests (Glynn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005; Robinson & Kakela, 2006). Motivation is the key in getting students involved in their learning and in getting them to improve their level of academic performance (Oliver, 1995).

There are many things students need that have been found to be associated with motivating children to succeed in school. Having a role model, peer tutoring, and being allowed the opportunity to find mistakes or figure out problems on their own allows students to take control of their learning and motivates them to succeed. Students who have a role model whom they respect will develop a greater degree of self-efficacy when the role model acts as a *coach*, and believes in them (Glynn, et al., 2005). Peer tutoring offers positive outcomes such as improved basic skills, retention, motivation, attitude, and self-image for both the tutor and tutee

(Kesling, 2000). Offering a struggling learner the opportunity to observe a classmate modeling a task provides an excellent learning experience. The struggling learner is able to observe a skill as well as a learning strategy as the classmate explains what they are doing and thinking at each step. This modeling can help a struggling learner internalize strategies for task completion (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Providing students with the opportunity to retrace the steps of problem solving encourages them to find and correct where they went wrong instead of giving up (Lumsden, 1994).

Student self-assessment and organization are also important to student motivation. The research shows that students are more motivated to participate and produce quality work when they are directly involved in the learning and evaluation process. According to Alderman (1990), in order for students to acquire a high degree of motivation they must know how they personally contributed to their success, therefore, there must be a link between what the student did and the outcome. Four suggested links to helping the unmotivated student become more successful are: goal setting, identifying learning strategies, successful experiences, and attribution for success.

Goal setting provides the mechanism for self-assessment. When students identify learning strategies it helps them achieve their goals so that they will link their personal effort to a successful outcome; furthermore, with the teacher's encouragement, students are inclined to attribute their success to their personal effort or abilities (Alderman, 1990). Setting goals can also be used to motivate students by giving them a sense of control, purpose, and focus. Students who are focused on individual learning goals are more apt to improve individual performance and attribute their performance to effort (Self-Brown & Mathews, 2003). Encouraging students to set effective goals and showing them how to work towards these goals can also enhance students' task focus, organize their efforts, and help them persist longer at the tasks (Glynn, et al., 2005;

Martin, 2004). Goals should be set and pursued over a period of time, first with teacher guidance and support and then without the external reinforcement. During the goal setting process, students should be given the opportunity to help design their goals, which increases the probability that they will benefit from them. Goals can be either academic or social, students are motivated by both. Ultimately, the self-satisfaction occurs when the goals are fulfilled and the student feels a sense of achievement (Glynn, et al., 2005; Hall, 2003).

Self-assessment can also be motivational to students because they will perform better when they can make connections between their work/effort and the outcome or achievement on a task. Student achievement is maximized when they feel competent about their abilities, have personal goals to achieve, feel they have control over their successes and failures, and when they are motivated intrinsically to learn (Marchant, Paulson, & Rothlisberg, 2001).

Self-assessment can further help students focus on specific areas of weakness, helping them pinpoint where to focus their efforts to improve. Students need to know when to seek assistance. They need to be able to understand what part of the instructions or lesson did not make sense to them and therefore ask specific questions for help and clarification (Williams & Oh, 2000). There are several methods the teacher can use to aid student self-assessment. One is to give frequent, focused, task-specific feedback (e.g. journaling). “When teachers focus task feedback on what learners did correctly and on the steps necessary for improvement, they give learners a map for success, which often strengthens self-efficacy.” (Margolis & McCabe, 2006, p. 221). Journaling also allows the learner to communicate feelings of frustration, insecurity, confusion and anxiety, thus relieving his burden.

A second method is developing good work habits. The teacher and students identify what good work habits look like, and then these habits are modeled by the teacher in a classroom

environment that is conducive to focused learning. The teacher selectively rewards good work habits and the teacher and students self-monitor work behaviors (Williams & Oh, 2000).

A third method is student involved record keeping. This allows students to monitor their progression over time. They learn to evaluate their own work and reflect on the changes they see. This charting can be a powerful confidence builder, as well as other forms of positive reinforcement (Stiggins, 2001).

Timothy Seifert's (2004) attribution theory sums up the idea of positive reinforcement. It states that:

> Students who attribute success and failure to internal, controllable causes are more likely to feel pride, satisfaction, confidence and have a higher sense of self-esteem. These students will choose to work on more difficult tasks, persist longer in the face of failure, display higher levels of cognitive engagement, and produce work that is of higher quality (p. 140).

Therefore, positive reinforcement touches on the students' feelings of self-efficacy. Students experience self-efficacy when they develop the skills to achieve, believe that they will succeed, and receive affirmation from significant others; not only that they have skills but also that they are expected to use those skills to succeed. When students feel good about themselves and their ability, they will be more motivated to learn (Hall, 2003).

Positive feedback is used to help strengthen the student's self-efficacy by providing support, praise, and encouragement. Teachers have a great deal of influence on a student's self-efficacy. By communicating high expectations and offering praise for effort and success the student tends to perform better and use more effort on tasks (Glynn, et al., 2005). Teacher feedback is most effective when it is immediate and shows the relationship between success and

effort as well as points out improvement and mastery of a skill. This increases intrinsic motivation (Schweinie, et al., 2006). In addition, teachers need to provide meaningful activities that will increase a student's feeling of self-efficacy, which will enhance a feeling of confidence in their abilities (Cole, 2002). Stiggins (2001) suggests that teachers must take their students to the edge of their ability and foster confidence in themselves and their teachers so that they will go farther than they think they can. Stiggins also suggests that students will be motivated when the teacher encourages them to put forth effort to show themselves that hard work can pay off with academic success.

Offering personal feedback, support, and verbal praise are keys for success and encouragement to continue; therefore teachers should focus on teaching in a way that students feel intrinsically satisfied in the classroom. Internally motivating students allows them to decide for themselves if and when they will engage in the learning process (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003; Glynn, et al., 2005; Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005; Martinez-Pons, 2002). Intrinsic motivation includes involvement in an activity based on a personal interest in the activity itself. Intrinsically motivated individuals tend to persist in the face of challenge and have the desire to attain mastery of a skill (Cheak & Wessel, 2005). Capitalizing on intrinsic motivation will foster better learners and yield high productivity (Lumsden, 1994; Downey, 2002). Students who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, adjust better to school, apply more effort, feel more confident about their ability to learn, use more decision-making strategies, persist and complete difficult assignments, retain information and concepts longer, avoid need for remedial courses and review, work on more challenging tasks, and value life-long learning (Black, 2003). Rewards have been found to be a driving force when it comes to motivating

students within a classroom. While intrinsic rewards are proven more successful in the classroom, rewards can also be offered extrinsically.

Extrinsic rewards, in the form of trinkets, computer time, certificates, and positive phone calls home can raise assignment completion remarkably. Ultimately, for positive reinforcement to be effective and motivational, it is imperative that teachers understand that motivation is the internal state or condition that activates, guides, and maintains or directs behavior (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005).

Classroom atmosphere is a pivotal point in having a motivational classroom. In fact, it is the most important predictor of student motivation is the classroom. Teachers can show humor, positive emotions, sensitivity, and kindness. These foster learning by creating a safe, nurturing place for all students and therefore increases the positive motivation of students (Lumsden, 1994; Schweinie, et al., 2006; Platz, 1994). Furthermore, Alderman (1990) states that the classroom structure must support student goals, efforts, and use of effective strategies. A supportive classroom emphasizes learning and progress over performance and ability. Errors are viewed as a natural and important part of the learning process, not as an indication that one lacks ability.

To engage unmotivated students and turn them into interested, confident, higher-achieving students it is suggested the teacher build a trusting, positive learning environment. Said environment allows students to realize that they have a voice in the class and feel as though they have something to contribute. The students are invited to think about how they prefer to learn and in what kind of environment. They are invited to help develop rules that are respectful, reasonable, and reinforce personal responsibility. The teacher looks for and gives regular and authentic reasons to offer congratulations and encouragement and de-emphasizes competition (Berliner, 2004; Robinson & Kakela, 2006).

Kostelecky and Hoskinson (2005) offer a similar strategy. They focus on the importance of sparking a child's curiosity to help him engage in new ideas that may take on greater meaning for him. Using this, the teacher can create a climate where students want to work hard, by showing students that each step along the way in the learning process in the classroom is worthy of their time and effort, and also showing students standards for their work in order for them to put forth their best effort. When students understand what they have to do to succeed and then accomplish those goals, they take great pride in knowing they performed well (Kostelecky & Hoskinson, 2005). Obenchain and Aberathy (2003) sum up the importance of creating a positive classroom community that empowers students with three simple suggestions: facilitate a sense of inclusion: create a community where the students feel they belong and are welcome, facilitate a sense of influence: allow the students to have some control and choice, and facilitate a sense of openness: allow the students to have a voice. The classroom environment facilitates good learning and teachers can do much to make this happen.

Teachers, both in terms of their lesson plans and development of the classroom environment, have a crucial role in establishing motivation within their students. In terms of planning lessons, teachers should regularly assess their students' present levels of achievement and plan accordingly. Whenever students work independently, the materials should be at their level (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Glynn, et al. (2005) state that too low of an activity level can lead to boredom. A moderate level of anxiety is good to motivate learning. To help student motivation, teachers can ensure that certain behaviors are fostered in the instructional lesson plans they create. Examples of such behaviors include providing student choice, build in success for students, scaffold student learning, present appropriate challenges, support risk taking, help students to expect a challenge, and encourage students to attribute their success to their efforts

(Cheak & Wessel, 2005). Providing sufficient time for task completion, breaking down long units into smaller tasks, making connections between learned material and new material, developing rhymes, jingles, or songs to help recall, and treating mistakes as opportunities to learn are all encouraged to promote success, thus keeping the motivation level high (Pettus & Blosser, 2002). Teachers should also provide an adequate time for questions. Questioning is at the center of the learning experience. A student's own curiosity should drive them (Harada & Yoshina, 2004).

Aside from motivating students through lesson plans, teachers should utilize their classrooms on a daily basis to provide a blue print of what learning looks like. Whether through examples, role playing, discussions, or involving parents, teachers should wrap students' minds around what learning looks like and feels like. The development of a school climate that recognizes students individually, encourages creativity, and allows both teachers and students a high degree of autonomy have been suggested to improve student motivation (Black, 2003). Black also suggests that teachers create a school culture that supports and sustains student achievement, demonstrates the value and inherent satisfaction of lifelong learning to students, and adopts student-centered learning. Offering appropriate learning activities, opportunities for student reflection and self-assessment, monitoring policies and practices; such as homework and grouping, and involving parents all help to motivate students.

Teachers need to help parents understand the power of their influence and how they can foster their children's achievement. Accommodating students' home learning preferences by manipulating environmental conditions will make homework completion more meaningful and productive. If these are provided, students may have a more positive attitude toward homework

and learn from doing it (Eunsook, et al., 2004). This requires a commitment by classroom teachers and parents.

The teacher's approach to learning and teaching play a vital role in determining a student's level of motivation. If teacher characteristics are comparable to authoritative parenting behaviors it can positively relate to student motivation and feelings of academic competence for that student (Marchant, et al., 2001). Before a teacher attempts to increase motivation directly through his/her lessons, there are several strategies that can be used as a classroom whole on a daily basis. Teachers need to display enthusiasm in order to create a positive learning environment so that students can be inspired to draw on their own energy and talents (Chan, 2004). A trusting environment should also be established for both teaching and learning. In such an environment students realize that they have a voice in the class and feel as though they have something to contribute. Students should be invited to think about how they prefer to learn and in what kind of environment (Robinson & Kakela, 2006). Teachers can help advance students' motivation to learn by discussing beliefs that learning is simple and takes place quickly. Students who are able to understand the rigor in the process of learning are less likely to give up (Paulsen & Feldman, 1999). Teachers who teach various techniques dealing with relaxation, socialization, and self-regulation implore their students with ideas of how to overcome feelings of inadequacy and discouragement (Lumsden, 1994; Martinez-Pons, 2002). Teachers are encouraged to let learners know how they will succeed on specific tasks, and then follow up the success with discussion about what the learner did that produced the positive outcome. By teaching some of these various strategies, teachers help learners understand when and why to use specific strategies and have them over-learn it so they successfully apply it when working alone (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Motivating at-risk students can have success both inside and outside of the classroom. Students who are determined to be at-risk, but still find ways to succeed, are considered to be resilient. They see themselves as successful because they have made the choice to be so. Resilient students find support within schools. They find teachers who understand them and can push them forward and at the same time, support their goals (McMillan & Reed, 1994). McMillan and Reed also state that within the classroom, activities need to be designed to encourage confidence, success, and positive reinforcement. Positive experiences in school create a sense of belonging for the student. Meaningful work jobs were also said to be a contributing factor in the motivation of at-risk students within the classroom. Every child considered at-risk should be given a job, often alongside popular, successful students. This provides them with a sense of identity and strong motivation to succeed (Wise, 2003). Wise suggests examples of meaningful work jobs that may include flag-raising, door unlocking, office assistant, answering phone technician, and lunch ticket deliverer. Improvement of self-esteem independent of academic tasks has also shown to lead to improved academic performance (Chapman & Tunmer, 2003). Involvement in extracurricular activities in and outside of school seems to reinforce the "can do" attitude of resilient students. It increases a sense of belonging. Volunteering seems to be a factor as students see the benefit from helping others (McMillan & Reed, 1994). Family support is another contributing factor for resilient students found outside of the classroom. Most have a deep, caring relationship with at least one caregiver who provides love and support (Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

A student's home atmosphere and parental support play another role in the motivation of students to succeed in school. Home environment shapes the initial motivation to learn. When parents are involved with their child's learning, ask questions, and encourage exploration, they

are sending the message that learning can be a fun experience (Lumsden, 1994). Parents with a developed, healthy level of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and coping skills for dealing with adversity will have positive parenting skills that foster supportive, warm parent-child interactions that make a positive difference in their child's social, emotional, and educational development (Kaplan, et al., 2001).

Parents should be encouraged to help their children achieve age-appropriate, present-and future-oriented skills, which translate into specific goals that are set at a challenging, yet attainable level. Once children succeed at these tasks, they will have an increased confidence in their ability to succeed at other carefully constructed tasks that will enable them to progress toward their goal (Hall, 2003). Kaplan, et al. (2001) state that children of parents who feel relatively good about themselves will be more likely to accept the expectations of their parents and will be more motivated to perform in accordance with those expectations.

Parental involvement in school has been shown to positively impact children's achievement regardless of its form (Marchant, et al., 2001). Parent training by teachers on how to help their child, both in school and at home, is beneficial to the success of their child. Self-monitoring is a skill whereby teachers can teach parents how to model, encourage, facilitate, and reward their child for practicing such learned skills. Parents can learn how to help their child set specific goals for homework assignments, create a recording sheet for inserting goals for each assignment, and then reward their child's goal setting by examining their recording sheets and praising their child for studying in such an effective way (Martinez-Pons, 2002). Parent training is focused on parents understanding their child's learning and studying preferences. In this training, parents are asked to describe particular homework difficulties their children have. The child's motivation source and homework preferences are discussed along with the differences

between the child's and parent's responses. This helps parents understand and respect the differences in the ways their child learns and studies (Eunsook, et al., 2004).

Project Objective and Processing Statements

As a result of providing creative engagement, self-assessment, and positive reinforcement, during the periods of February 5, 2007, through May 18, 2007, the students of the teacher researchers at Sites A, B, and C were to improve in the areas of off-task behavior, following directions, and work quality.

The following educational tasks had to be accomplished before the implementation of the interventions:

- The teacher researchers at each site will research differentiated lessons to improve creative engagement
- The teacher researchers at each site will create tools for students self-assessment

Project Action Plan

The following project action plan outlines the steps of data collection and intervention implementation necessary to complete the proposed action research project. It lists necessary tasks to be accomplished each week from two weeks before the study begins through two weeks after the completion of the study.

Week 1: Pre-Documentation: February 5 – 9, 2007

- Site A, B, and C teacher researchers distribute parent and student surveys
- Complete responsibility checklist
- Begin planning differentiated lessons to improve creative engagement, student self-assessment, and positive reinforcement
- Introduce student-teacher blog/journal dialogue

Week 2: Pre-Documentation: February 12 – 16

- Continue collecting and analyzing parent and student surveys
- Analyze responsibility checklist

- Continue planning lessons for creative engagement

Week 3: February 19 – 23, 2007

- Begin student/teacher dialogue
- Begin implementing lessons to improve creative engagement, student self-assessment, and positive reinforcement
- Introduce learning performance standards evaluation checklist

Weeks 4 – 12: February 26 – May 4, 2007

- Continue student/teacher dialogue
- Continue lessons to improve creative engagement, student self-assessment, and positive reinforcement
- Continue using learning performance standards evaluation checklist
    - Weeks 4 – 6 focus on creative engagement
    - Weeks 7 – 9 focus on student self-assessment
    - Weeks 10 – 12 focus on positive reinforcement

Week 13: Post-Documentation: May 7 – 11, 2007

- Complete responsibility checklist
- Distribute student survey

Weeks 14: Post-Documentation: May 14 – 18, 2007

- Analyze responsibility checklist results
- Analyze student survey results

Methods of Assessment

Prior to the implementation of the various interventions, February 5, 2007, through February 9, 2007, the teacher researchers at each respected site used a behavior checklist to chart students' behavior. The behavior checklist was used to document problematic behaviors exhibited by students. Teacher researchers observed the targeted 80 students for one hour each morning and one hour each afternoon, making a tally mark for each observed instance of the six noted actions. Upon completion of the intervention strategies, May 7, 2007, through May 11, 2007, the teacher researchers revisited the behavior checklist to chart students' behavior. The

results recorded were then compared to the pre-documentation data to denote any changes in student behavior.

In addition to the behavior checklist, student surveys were administered for pre-documentation purposes on February 5, 2007, to the 80 targeted students in grades three, four, and eight to gain insight into their beliefs and attitudes toward school. The student survey was then re-administered on May 11, 2007, in order to compare to the pre-documentation data to document any changes in student beliefs or attitudes.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

This research project was designed to increase student motivation in three separate classrooms; 1 third grade classroom, 1 fourth grade classroom, and 1 eighth grade science classroom, for a total of 80 students. The need to increase student motivation was based on the targeted students' inadequate homework completion, lack of focus during classroom activities, and low achievement on assessments. To accomplish this objective, the researchers chose and implemented lessons that involved creative engagement, self-assessment, and positive reinforcement. The interventions were implemented for a 10 week period, February 19, 2007, through May 4, 2007.

The desired behaviors targeted dealt with students' improvements in the areas of off-task behavior, following directions, and work quality. To establish the existence and degree of these behaviors, the researchers developed a Behavior Checklist (Appendix C) that was charted both pre- and post intervention. A Student Survey and Parent Survey (Appendices A and B) were used prior to the intervention to gather the students' and parents' opinions concerning schooling. The Student Survey was used post intervention as well.

Prior to the beginning of the interventions, we prepared and copied the Behavior Checklist, both the Student and Parent Surveys, and consent forms. The consent forms, which explained the purpose of the research, were sent home with students for parental consent, returned, and collected. Upon collection of the consent forms, the Student Surveys were administered and the Parent Surveys sent home with students in sealed envelopes. At this time we also began using the Behavior Checklist to chart targeted problematic behaviors. Charting took place for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon for a one week period of

time. The researchers noted the three distinct behaviors previously mentioned as being the most prominent and those ultimately became the focus of our interventions.

During week two we tabulated the results of the Behavior Checklist, along with the results from the Student and Parent Surveys. This gave us an indication of which behaviors were most problematic and which interventions would be the most effective in improving the desired behaviors. The process of categorizing the results from the surveys went well due to the fact we limited our questions to focus only on the behaviors we were most interested in and that would be most beneficial to helping improve motivation. The results provided the researchers with pertinent information about both students and parents that helped guide the researchers in the right direction of determining which behavior issues needed to be addressed in order for student motivation to improve.

Historical Description of the Intervention

Creative engagement was so highly toted as a student motivational tool in the literature review, we felt it necessary to use it as one of the interventions for our research. When it is used properly, creative engagement provides meaningful connections, hands-on activities, cooperative grouping, engaging content, and student choice (Walsh, 2003; Kesling, 2000; Schweinie, et al., 2006; Berlinger, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006; Stiggins, 2001). Therefore, to improve the creative engagement of our individual classrooms, we agreed to try three new strategies/activities we brainstormed and created together. Each activity was a classroom focus for one to one-and-one-half weeks, for a total of the first four weeks of the research implementation. However, it should be noted that while each activity was a classroom focus for the above mentioned specified time, we did continue to use them throughout the entire 10 weeks of implementation. This is true for all the implementation activities remaining to be mentioned as well.

Speed Data was the first creative engagement strategy we used to improve motivation. This strategy was used during weeks three and four. Along the lines of speed dating, the students were rotated from group to group to discuss a content topic. Our students were placed into groups of four and given a *consider this question* worksheet based on the current content to discuss (Appendix D). The group had to reach a consensus on the answer and fill in one reason to support it, but they had to do so within a time limit of three minutes. In addition, the students were not able to use any notes, books, or textbooks to help them. The groups were then rearranged using prompts such as, what color of paper they drew from a basket, what suit or number they drew from a deck of cards, what month they were born, which was the oldest in the group, etc. Each time the groups were rearranged, the students had three minutes to discuss their original answer, trying to persuade others to agree with them and produce another reason to support their answer. Due to this, it was possible for a student to change their mind, more than once, on what they believed the correct answer was as they heard arguments and reasons with each group switch. When the groups were rearranged four to five times, the class was regrouped as a whole for a discussion and a final conclusion to the correct answer. During the discussion, students volunteered their reasons gained through the speed data.

This strategy proved quite successful. The majority of each class, even most of the identified unmotivated students took an active participation in the activity. The cooperative grouping was important to this success as it allowed the students to interact and participate in a more comfortable atmosphere. Some students even became passionate and driven to prove themselves correct. It was interesting to observe the students' behaviors as they rotated groups. Some had very definite opinions about the question's answer and remained true to their first decided answer, adamant about proving their point. Other students went back and forth, changing their

answer as they heard new evidence and different points of view. Also, the focus of the task was preserved as the three minute time limit eliminated the usual group work chit-chat, so the emphasis remained on answering the question. On the down side, it was difficult to evenly rotate the students into new groups. New groupings did not always have four students, some ended up with six, others three, etc. In addition, a new group did not guarantee that students wouldn't overlap, so in some cases the same students ended up in a group together two, or even three times. Finally, it is important to check the students' background knowledge. To make sure everyone has a chance to contribute and actually understands the content of the question, some foundation discussion, reading, research, etc. should be done first.

Student Choice was the second creative engagement activity we implemented during weeks four and five. Allowing students the opportunity to choose their projects is not a common occurrence in our classrooms, so to give them some freedom of choice we created a "menu," (Appendix E) of choices for them to pick from. When presented with said menu, the students were instructed to pick one choice from each column, for a total of four requirements. The menu is arranged so that as one travels across the columns, the choices become more challenging. This way, the students were not able to simply pick only what would be easy, but had to make choices that would also be challenging, yet interesting to them. Each box had a specific task design so the students would be able to demonstrate their learning in the content area through the various tasks.

The most positive point with this intervention was that it promoted a lot of individual, self-directed learning. The students were anxious to fill in their boxes with a check (to mark completion) and for the most part, began their choices with zeal. However, because it was intended to be self-directed, the students who have low self-confidence did struggle with some

choices, especially those in the more challenging columns. This activity took them out of their comfort zone and they needed prodding to move forward. Yet, what these students did manage to produce was above the norm, which we attribute to the ability for them to choose what they wanted to do. Lastly, assigning grades to each project was a lot of work and rubrics had to be created for each assignment. This was initially a lot of work on our part, but is something that can be used again in future years.

Open court was the third and final creative engagement strategy we used for improved student motivation. Open court gives students a chance to appeal with the judges' (teachers') decisions regarding their assignments, assessments, and projects. Twice a month, during weeks six and again in weeks nine and twelve, we held "open court" during lunch or after school. During this time, the students were free to approach us to discuss their grades on any assignments, tests, or projects. The students were able to argue their point of view regarding why they should have earned more points or why a grade should be changed. This defense could include discussing individual answers on a homework assignment or test, personal points on a group project, an overall grade on a project, or a laboratory grade (this applied only for Site C). As the judge, we listened to the student's explanation and, based on how well they articulated their argument, as well as showed an understanding of the content and material, we either granted or denied additional points or a higher grade.

There were many positive attributes to this activity. For one, it gave the students a chance to have a voice to clarify and show what they knew, especially if the format of the assignment did not allow for it. For example, a student could clarify a written answer on a test, which may be an area of weakness for him/her. This activity also forces the students to take or accept responsibility for their actions and preparedness, as well as require them to take the time to think

through their defense to form clear, reasonable, and educated explanations. The students definitely needed to show motivation to attend to this activity. While a pleasing number of them did, unfortunately, it did not reach the students we were targeting. We experienced a high attendance from good students, but a disappointing low attendance from those who were at-risk and should have taken advantage of the one-on-one contact. Another kink was that several students waited to attend court until the end of a grading period where, upon realizing their grade was low, they showed up to court in a last attempt to simply save the grade. The novelty seemed to wear off quickly, also. Court attendance steadily decreased during weeks nine and twelve. To try to combat this, we thought it would be interesting to add a slight spin to the activity each session, such as using a jury of peers to listen to the student's defense. Or, allowing the student to bring in a witness to speak on his/her behalf. We also felt it would be helpful to tie in some type of parent participation.

Student self-assessment was the second intervention we implemented during weeks 7-9. According to our research, students are more motivated to participate and produce quality work when they are directly involved in the learning process. Students actually acquire a higher degree of motivation when they connect personally to their success (Alderman, 1990). Again, we implemented three strategies for this intervention.

Journaling, in the form of electronic blogging, was the first strategy we planned to use to elicite our students' self-evaluation. Unfortunately, we experienced some disappointment with this right out of the gate. It was our intention to set up a blog website to communicate via the computer with the students. During the selected weeks of the project timeline, we planned to post a journal prompt for the students to respond to. Each of us would then read our respective student responses and write a personal response back, evoking a line of communication. The students

would be encouraged to write back to us as often as desired, with the exception that they must post at least one initial response to each journal prompt. However, this idea had to be altered due to the inability of our individual schools to set up a blog site outside of the school network. Reasons being: too much red tape in terms of attaining parent permission, setting up individual student accounts, security for the accounts and, even worse, the inability of our schools' computer technology to handle such a website, either in or out of the school network. Therefore, instead of using the computer, we implemented the strategy using journal notebooks.

During weeks seven, eight, and nine, we passed out a journal prompt that both coordinated with our individual classroom curriculums and focused the students to evaluate their performance, their study habits, their behavior, etc. To spruce up a tired assignment the students are resistant to, as well as to keep with the idea of motivation, we called it the "reflective blog log". By the end of the research project, the students had a small journal notebook. For example, a journal blog would ask the students to evaluate how well they felt they prepared for a chapter test, to describe how they prepared for the test, or to discuss any changes they made from the teacher feedback. Examples of some of the prompts are provided in Appendix G. The students were given one day to write their responses. Depending on each teacher's timing, the students were either given class time to write or had to complete the assignment as homework. We collected the journals the following day and within the next two days, wrote a personalized response to each student. Our written responses were kept positive and encouraging offering praise, advice, and empathy for any of our students' concerns. This was not a tool for discipline, chastising, or expressing disappointment. It was important to keep our responses up-lifting to coordinate with another of our interventions, positive reinforcement.

While we experienced some initial disappointment with this strategy, we did have some positive points. Journaling is a great format for student/teacher communication. It allows students the ability to correspond with their teacher in a very non-threatening manner, as well as doing some intrapersonal reflection in order to do so. This process also gave us some excellent insight into our students' study skills and habits and a chance to offer support or suggestions to them. While the individual communication with each student was positive, hand-writing each response with meaning was incredibly time consuming. Again, we found that our best, most honest responses came from our higher performing students. Those we had hoped to reach (the at-risk students) didn't really take the activity seriously. It was also clear that others only wrote what they felt the teacher wanted to hear. We do believe that we could have had more success if the electronic aspect had been feasible, even possibly capturing more of those at-risk.

The Response to Learning strategy was initiated during week eight to allow students to interact with peers and share thoughts about the lesson taught. After a lesson, students were issued a form (Appendix H) on which they were to write down the four most important points they learned from the lesson. Following this, they were to find a partner and each share their lists. From the eight points between them, they decided which two were the most important, and then narrow the selection to the most important aspect of the lesson.

A positive note for this strategy is that students always enjoy the opportunity to move around the room and converse. Many students were very insightful with their points and eager to debate why they were able to capture the most important points of a lesson. However, without teacher direction for pairing choices, some students chose poor partners (those based on friendships) and did not engage in meaningful dialogue. It was interesting that the most argumentative of students really enjoyed this opportunity and rose to the challenge of paying

closer attention to teacher directed activities in anticipation of being asked to formulate four important points.

The third strategy we tried for self-assessment was an Individual Self-Assessment. We specifically targeted the ISAT test for the students to use as the topic for their individual self-assessment (Appendix I). The students were asked to rate themselves on a likert scale of one to five on how well they felt they performed on each separate test of the ISAT. Following this, the students were then directed to write a brief comment on what they felt their strengths and weaknesses were on each test and how they could possibly improve upon the following year's test.

In comparison to the journal responses, we had better success with all students' responses on their personal self-assessment. This is most likely attributed to the use of likert scales because it is much easier to circle a number than take the time to write an honest response, especially if writing is an area of weakness. Students who are cognitively aware can easily reflect in a truthful manner, however, those students who lack self-awareness tend to only respond positively to all aspects, thus making the responses invalid. Limiting the assessment to a standardized test or a quarterly report card is not the best path. In retrospect we would have used the evaluation more for classroom tests, projects, and other various assessments. Using it this way would most likely yield a better success rate as well.

Positive Reinforcement was the third intervention used in our research for weeks 10-12. Positive feedback is used to help strengthen student self-efficacy through praise, encouragement, and support. Teachers have a great deal of influence on a student's self-efficacy. When a teacher communicates high expectations and offers regular praise for effort and success, students tend to

perform better and put more effort into their work (Hall, 2003; Glynn, et al., 2005). We, once again, implemented this intervention through three different strategies.

Mystery Person was the strategy used during week 10. Each morning, prior to student arrival, a student's name was selected, by the teacher, as the mystery person for the day. The students are unaware of the selected individual and therefore need to be on their best behavior in case they, themselves, are the mystery person. In order for a prize to be awarded, the chosen student must at all times throughout the day make good choices, follow rules and directions, and set a good example for all others. If at the end of the day the mystery person has been successful, they are awarded a prize. If not, a statement is made that the person selected did not excel in either making good choices, following rules and directions, or setting a good example. No names are released if the mystery person is not successful.

We were pleased that this activity helped the students focus on their behavior. In not knowing if one is the mystery person, the students were more aware of their actions and behavior patterns, so much so that they were often reflective at the end of the day stating that certain actions they had taken during the day may have contributed to the mystery person not being revealed. Observing the students taking responsibility for their behaviors and actions was certainly refreshing. However, we again were disillusioned that more students were not reflective on their possible negative behaviors. Because of this, we found that when a less motivated student was the mystery person, we had to bend the rules a bit to allow some success for him/her. If we had not made these adaptations, the same good students would have always been revealed, while those students we were trying to reach would continue to go unnoticed and would continue to be unaware of their personal behavior patterns.

High Fives was the focus of week 11. High fives consist of cutout paper hands that are used as an incentive for students to keep their desks cleaned and organized. They are administered to students if their desks are cleaned and organized, clutter free, and all papers are stored in folders. Each hand has an award written on it. For example, a trip to the prize box, no morning or spelling seat work, or be the teacher for the day for a specific subject. Throughout the day there were random desk checks and if the student's desk passed, he/she was awarded a high five. Site C had to put a small spin on this strategy as the students were in eighth grade. Middle school students do not have personal desks, so we altered the expectation so that students would come to class with the required materials, i.e. pen or pencil, paper, folder, textbook, and calculator. The students' folders or binders had to be clean and organized. If students met the guidelines when the checks were made, the reward was to pick from the "five-finger box". In the box there was candy, certificates for five extra credit points, and free homework passes.

Our high fives really helped the students focus on their organizational skills and we noticed a marked improvement in the organization of their desks, folders, and general preparedness. Unfortunately, we continued to stumble into the same road block with our at-risk students. Those who were mildly unorganized seemed to buy into the strategy and put effort into becoming more organized, but our more difficult students showed little interest in trying to improve themselves, regardless of the possible prize. Of course, our non at-risk students had great success with this strategy, as with all the others.

The last strategy we used, during week 12, was general positive reinforcement by using positive comments and stickers on daily work. Applying stickers or positive comments to papers sounded to us like a strategy more suited for primary students, but when we implemented this in our classrooms, we were all surprised by the positive student response. It took a few days of

returning papers with a few stars, “WOW!” stamps, smiling faces, or other such notations for students to begin to buzz about whether they received such on their own papers. We were soon fielding questions about what students needed to do to make sure that they could get something positive back on their papers.

This strategy was very positive in its implementation as it was an easy thing to do and did generate increased effort. It was pleasantly surprising that such a simple gesture could grab the students’ attention to the point that they were actually taking the time to review their grades and comments on their work and reflect on it as to why they received the marks they did. For many students, even those at-risk, it became almost a personal crusade to receive a smiling face after earning several frowning faces. The pattern did continue, however, with our at-risk students. While several of the more mildly unmotivated students were trying harder on their work, those who were most severe remained unfazed by the strategy. This pattern of not seemingly reaching our most unmotivated students led us to reflect, individually, on the success of our implementations.

I, Teacher Researcher A, enjoyed implementing this project and learning, overall, if students can, in fact, be motivated to perform better in school. Our group chose this topic based on the common problem we all share in our classrooms, lack of motivation to perform well in school. We all had students who we felt did not perform to their true capabilities, and we wanted to see if we could motivate them, both intrinsically and extrinsically, to show us that they could improve on their behavior and/or academics. I am pleased that I did see some improvement in my problematic students, but it seemed to be on a very short term basis. Where I saw the most improvements were with my higher achieving students, those who worked well even before the strategies were implemented. I am not quite sure if the time of year could have affected the

results, so I do want to continue these strategies next year to see if the results are more consistent. Using creative lesson plans, allowing students to self-assess themselves, and offering positive reinforcement whenever possible enables students to take part in their education and to feel good about their accomplishments. By implementing these motivational strategies it has forced me to step away from the teaching path that has become so familiar and routine to me and has forced me to get more involved, creative, and empathetic to my students and their needs. I feel that as an educator's years of teaching increases they find themselves teaching year after year the same way whether it is out of comfort, ease, less time consuming, or boredom with the curriculum. I am fortunate to have witnessed some success because it has encouraged me to continue to pursue motivating my students in the years to follow using the strategies implemented in this project.

I, Teacher Researcher B, feel that my students benefited from this project, but more importantly, future students will benefit as well. I have been enlightened about the many different formats I used during this intervention to increase motivation in my classroom. The overwhelming result, from my vantage point, is that anything new and creative will spark interest for a period of time, but the resulting good behaviors will begin to wane. It seems to be of utmost importance to have a huge "bag of tricks" to utilize throughout the school year and by using a variety of interventions, students will maintain their interest much longer. Through the research phase, I was introduced to many imaginative ideas that could be utilized within a fourth grade classroom. In fact, there were masses of ideas to try and plenty of variations on each of them. With that in mind, I know that when I implement a new strategy in the future, I need not continue it for a long time if I am not receiving the desired effects. I can find something else to try in its place. It was also interesting to recognize that results do depend on the make-up of the

class. I have used stickers in past classes and found them to be routinely panned as silly; but this group of students appeared to be fired up by receiving some sort of graphic on their work. This does not mean that this intervention will work next year, merely that it is worth trying.

I am far more encouraged about my ability to engage students for future curricular activities as I have witnessed a level of enthusiasm not often seen at the time of year that these interventions were implemented. In addition, I must reluctantly accept the fact that those students who most need to demonstrate independent skills, often did not respond favorably to any change in format; recognizing this was a sort of freeing experience for me as I did not feel so much guilt for not being able to move them forward. There are many factors that contribute to the ability to be a good student, and what happens within a classroom is only one of them. It is, however, the only one that is within the control of the teacher. With that piece, I feel quite capable!

I, Teacher Researcher C, feel that implementing this project has not only been beneficial for my students, but for me as well. Motivation is an especially high concern at the middle school level and I have personally struggled with how to address it the past couple of years, which is why implementing the motivational strategies was bittersweet. On the sweet side, I did witness some improvement in my students with mild motivational issues and improved efforts from those who did not struggle with this issue. These students did become more aware of their self-efficacy, behavior patterns, and organization. They did step up their game and make a true effort to improve themselves and become better students. I also became a better teacher. Implementing the intervention strategies forced me to rejuvenate my creative flow, an area that had gone a bit stale the last couple of years, and helped me reconnect with my classroom. However, on the bitter side, I was disappointed that my most problematic students were not fazed by the interventions. I do not believe this was due to the interventions failing, but rather the

fact that many students, particularly those whom are unmotivated, come to school with an attitude/expectation of being entertained. It seems the way to attract student attention is by being a “reality” host versus a good teacher. There was a time, when students were expected to go to school with the motivation to learn. Organization and proper behavior was never a question, but a basic rule. This stemmed from the home and the parents and was continued in the classroom, but does not seem to be the case anymore. It seems in today’s society, parents are less involved in maintaining this expectation, be it due to cultural differences, work schedules, or education level. Personally, I believe if this trend were to change back to the previous expectation, every one of the interventions would have been successful, especially for those most in need of realizing their own self-efficacy. Creative lesson plans, student self-assessment, and positive reinforcement are not new concepts to the world of teaching; they have been successfully used for decades. It seems the continued success is dependent on the spin the teacher puts to each one, how many different tricks are in the proverbial bag and how willing or receptive the students are to use them to learn. It is with this in mind, as well as my success with these interventions, that I will continue to forge ahead in future school years to use them to impact my students and motivate them to value their education.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

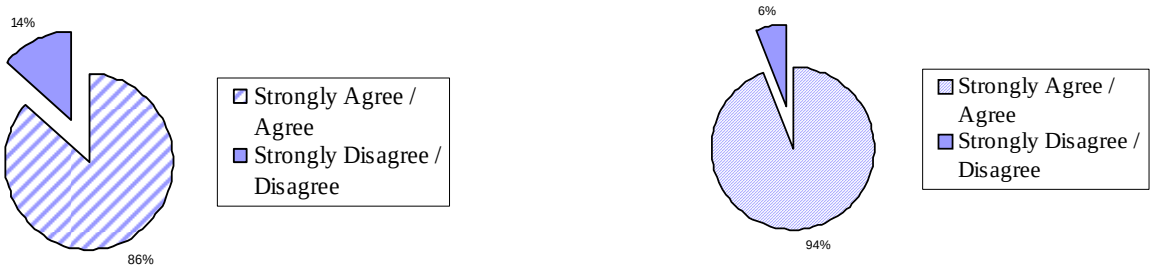
The purpose of the research project was to increase student motivation in three separate classrooms; 1 third grade classroom, 1 fourth grade classroom, and 1 eighth grade science classroom. The three ways the evidence was documented were through a Parent Survey, a Student Survey, and a Student Behavior Checklist. During the week of February 5, 2007, a Student Survey (Appendix A) was administered to students to assess a variety of feelings they had towards school. A Parent Survey (Appendix B) was also administered that week to the parents of the targeted students to assess their perception of school and any work habits they may/may not instill in their children at home. A Student Behavior Checklist (Appendix C) was completed as well by the teacher researchers in their respective classrooms to gain insight on the problematic behaviors their students were exhibiting. Again, at the conclusion of the project, the Student Survey and the Student Behavior Checklist were implemented to compare the results from the beginning to the end of the intervention.

Student Survey

The Student Survey (Appendix A) was administered in class on May 11, 2007, to the 80 targeted students in grades three, four, and eight to gain insight into their beliefs and attitude toward school. The student survey included seven questions all consisting of likert scales. This survey was designed to measure students' attitudes toward various statements; students record their opinion by indicating whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The teacher researchers collapsed the results of this survey into an affirmative (strongly agree and agree) and a negative (disagree and strongly disagree) reaction.

In question one, students were asked if they enjoy being in school. According to the post-documentation student surveys, the majority (94%, n=75) of students agreed with that

statement. Conversely, 6% (n=5) reported they did not enjoy school. The figure below shows the results of both the pre and post data collection.



Pre Post

Figure 19: I enjoy being at school. (n=80)

The above figure shows that school was enjoyed by 8% more students following the intervention phase than before the intervention phase.

Question two asked students if it was important to them to do well on assignments. One hundred percent of the respondents (n=80) agreed with this statement. The below figure is documentation of these findings.

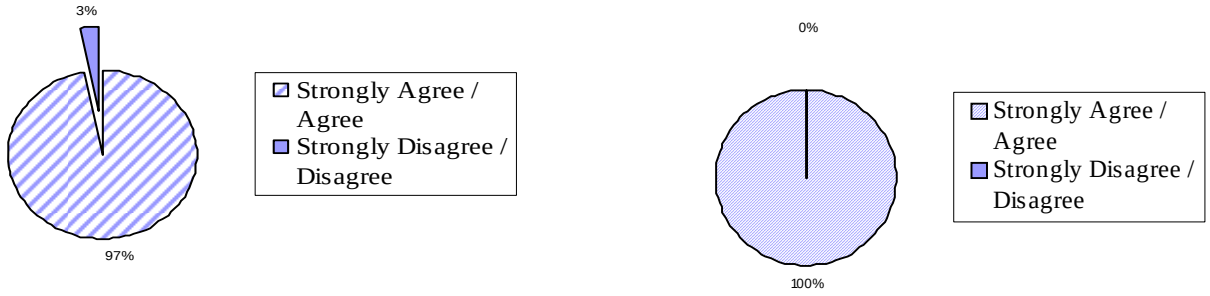


Figure 20: It is important for me to do well on assignments. (n=80)

Although a high percentage of students felt positively about this statement in the initial survey results, it is impressive to note in the above figure 100% of the students, a gain of 3%, felt the importance of doing well on assignments at the end of the intervention.

The admiration students have for ones who do well in school was the focus in question three. Again, as shown in Figure 21, a marked number of students (76%, n=61) responded favorably, leaving only 24% (n=19) who deny feeling esteem for high achieving peers.

Pre Post

Figure 21: I admire students who do well in school. (n=80)

These results shown above differed by 10% as those who admired high achievers lessened in the post-document survey.

In question four (see Figure 22), students were asked if they had encouragement from parents or guardians to do well in school. A noteworthy number of students (97%, n=78) felt support from home, where as only a small percentage, 2% (n=2), did not feel supported or encouraged to do well in school.

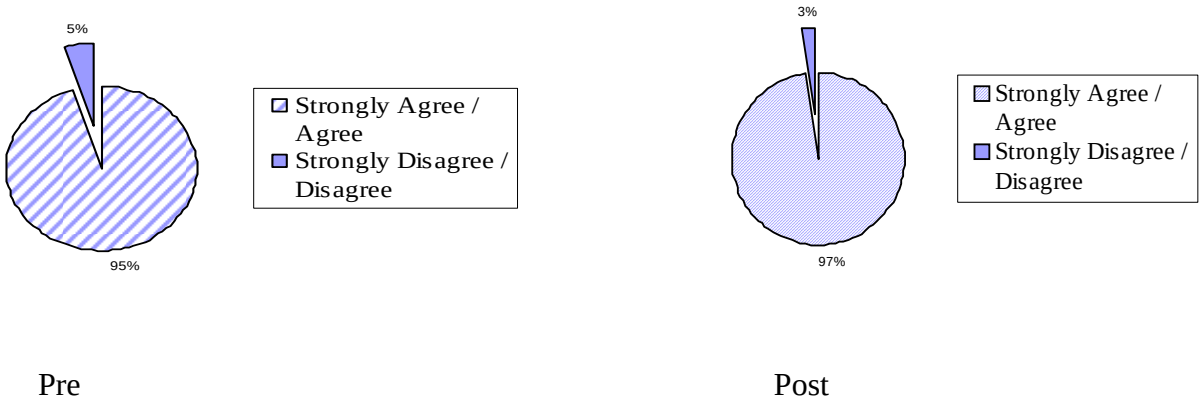
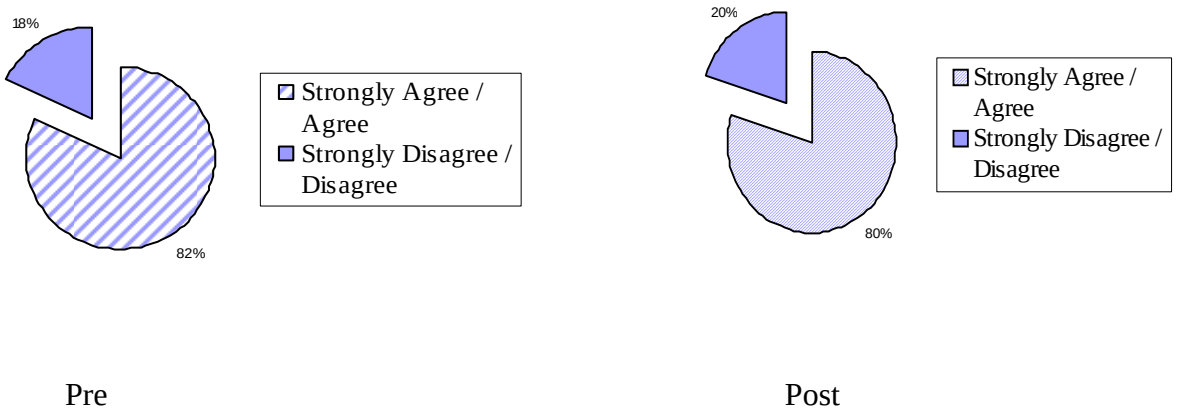


Figure 22: My parents / guardians encourage me to do well in school. (n=80)

Following the implementation of interventions, the students' opinions of parental support showed a 2% (n=2) gain, as evidenced in the above figure.

Question five, as displayed in the figure below, referenced whether students had a quiet place to go to concentrate on their homework. Eighty percent (n=64) of students responded affirmatively to this question. Twenty percent (n=16) disagreed.

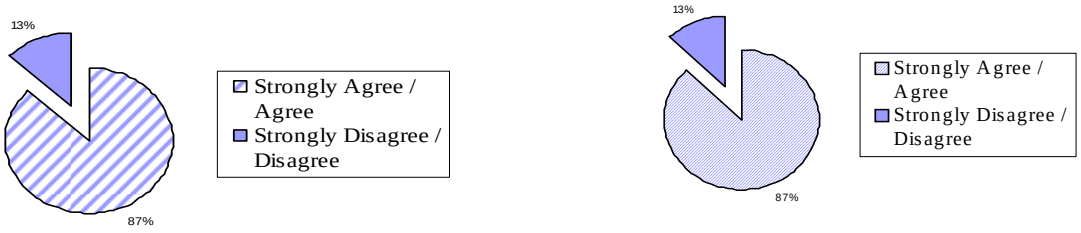


Pre Post

Figure 23: I have a quiet place where I can go to concentrate on my homework. (n=80)

As evidenced in the above graphs, the change from the first time this survey was issued to the last was not significant, merely 2% (n=2), concerning the issue of having a quiet place to work on school work at home.

The next question, as represented in the figure below, was in regard to parental assistance with homework. Eighty-seven percent (n=70) of students felt they were able to get help when needed. Students unable to receive assistance equaled 13% (n=10).



Pre Post

Figure 24: My parents / guardians help me with my homework when needed. (n=80)

The results from this particular question concerning help with homework from parents or guardians remained unchanged from the time preceding the intervention to the reissue of the survey at the conclusion of the intervention.

The last question, reflected in the diagram below, asked students if extracurricular activities took up a majority of their time after school. Fifty-one percent (n=39) felt extra curricular activities filled many of their after school hours, whereas 49% (n=41) did not feel over encumbered with after school obligations.

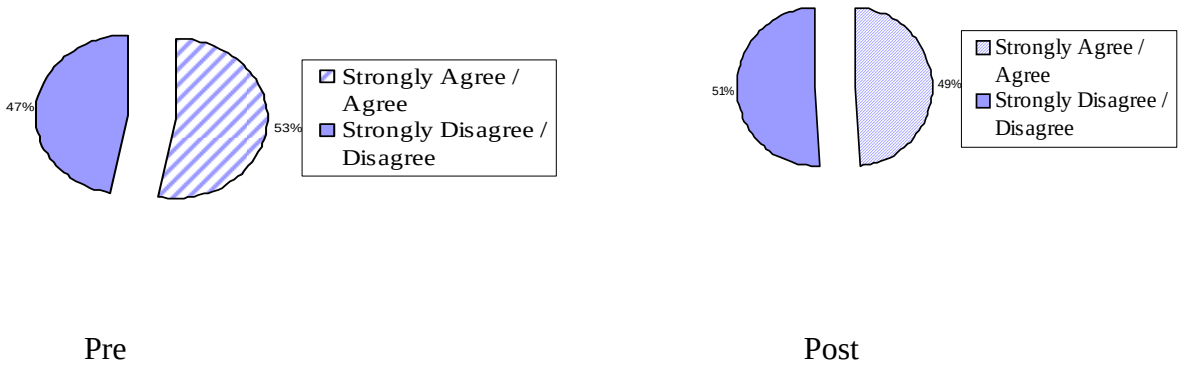


Figure 25: Extra-curricular activities take up the majority of my after school time (n = 80)

The results from the question regarding after school activities did not prove to change substantially from the initial survey to the final one. There was a 4% (n=4) decrease in the number of students who felt other activities monopolized their after school hours. The above figure illustrates the responses to both surveys.

Behavior Checklist

The Behavior Checklist (Appendix C) was used to document problematic behaviors exhibited by students. Noted behaviors include: being off task, not following directions, producing poor quality work, turning in incomplete assignments, not engaging in classroom activities, and being uncooperative. Teacher researchers observed the targeted 80 students for one hour each morning and one hour each afternoon, making a tally mark for each observed

instance of the six noted actions. This post intervention data was collected during the week of May 7, 2007, through May 11, 2007.

Of the 494 total occurrences, 30% (n = 148) dealt with not following directions and 28% (n = 137) observations reflected off-task behaviors. Another area of concern was with incomplete assignments as this was discerned in 15% (n = 74) of the instances. The figure below is evidence of these results.

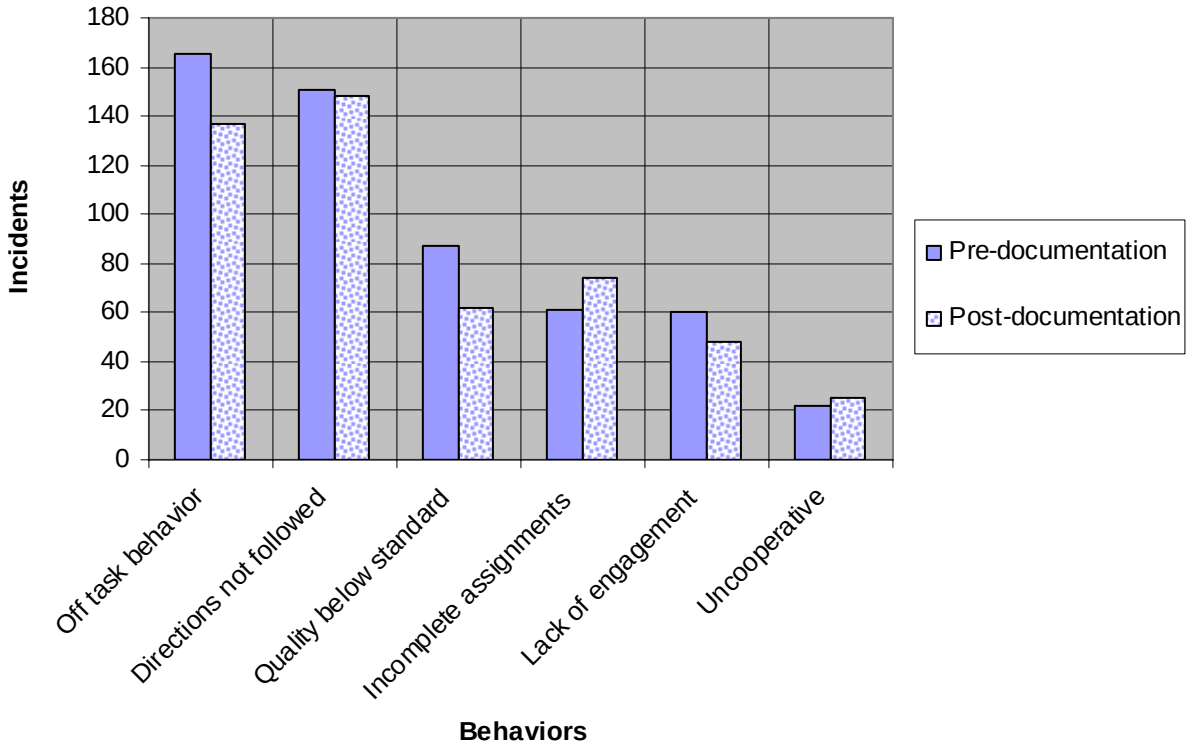


Figure 26: Behavior Checklist (n = 1040)

The above figure reveals a decrease of 10% in the number of students who were off task as well as a decrease of 16% in the number of instances of poor quality work from the inception of the intervention to the close of the process. By the end of the process, 12% more students were

demonstrating a level of engagement in classroom activities. The number of incomplete assignments rose by 10%, and the reports of not following directions lessened by 3% while uncooperative behavior rose by 3%.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the student survey (Figure 19), there was an increase in students' opinion of enjoying school. This can only be attributed to the interventions imposed because generally, we have experienced Spring as a time of year when students are unfocused and antsy about summer vacation while trying to get out of school as much as possible.

Even though the change in percentage was minimal, it is noteworthy that we were able to captivate the initial 3% of the students who began this survey with negative feelings about doing well on assignments (Figure 20). Given this statistic, we felt that we were successful in the following area as well. As evidenced in Figure 21, more students ended the intervention with a lack of concern about admiring others who did well in school. This would suggest that students became more intuitive about their own self-efficacy and were not comparing themselves to others.

We found little, or no change, with regard to the home environment of the students. This is understandable because implementations were within the classroom and did not extend to the home (Figures 22, 23, & 24).

It was a surprise to note that students felt less consumed by after school activities in the post-documentation (Figure 25). We would have assumed that the percentage of those participating in after school activities would rise in the Spring as more opportunities are available for outside interests.

In terms of overall classroom behavior, more students were on task, produced quality work, and engaged in appropriated classroom behaviors following our interventions. In contrast, there was a slight increase in the areas of incomplete assignments and uncooperative behavior. We attribute this to the time of the year as more students lose focus as the end of the school year nears.

It is clear the interventions were effective in motivating all students to some degree; however, those students who were not considered problematic are the ones who showed most interest and success. While the actions did reach those difficult students within each of our classrooms, their effect was short lived.

Knowledge of self-efficacy increased through these proceedings, but it is doubtful that this cognition will continue through future years. It would be interesting to follow up on the performance of these targeted students in future academic endeavors to witness whether these practices will lead them to become more self-directed and motivated.

It is our recommendation to continue using the knowledge gained through this project. We hope that by beginning the school year with strategies in place, we may reap greater rewards though our students' accomplishments. Because we noted that the luster seems to fade so quickly, we recognize the need to implement interventions sporadically and change to another format when the effectiveness wears off.

Due to the constraints of the implementation period being limited to 10 weeks, it was difficult to determine the exact strategy that was effective/ineffective, as well as which garnered the most student interest. With an entire school year ahead, we will have more time to draw such conclusions about our interventions.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Student Survey

Are you male or female? **Male** **Female**

Rate the following statements. Please circle the number that applies.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I enjoy being in school.	4	3	2	1
2.	It's important to me to do well on assignments.	4	3	2	1
3.	I admire students who do well in school.	4	3	2	1
4.	My parents / guardians encourage me to do well.	4	3	2	1
5.	I have a quiet place where I can go to concentrate on my homework.	4	3	2	1
6.	My parents / guardians help me with my homework when needed.	4	3	2	1
7.	Extra curricular activities take up the majority of my after school time.	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Parent Survey

Circle your response.

1. How many children live in the home? 1 2 3 4/more
   How many attend school (k-12) 1 2 3 4/more

2. Do both parents live in the home? Yes No

3. Is English the primary language spoken in the home? Yes No

4. Is there a predetermined time to be working on homework? Yes No
   What time? 3pm 4pm 5pm 6pm 7pm 8pm 9pm/later

5. How much time do you spend assisting your student-child on school work?
   0-10 min 10-30 min 30-60 min 60/more min

6. What was your attitude towards school when you were a child and now?
   (1-negative and 4-positive)

   Childhood attitude 1 2 3 4
   Current attitude 1 2 3 4

7. How much television does your student-child watch in a week?
   0-3 hours 3-6 hours 6-9 hours 9-12 hours 12/more hours

8. Are you involved in the PTO or your school's parent involvement group at your student-child's school? Yes No

9. Do you limit the amount of time spent watching TV & playing video games?
   Yes No

10. What is the highest level of school completed by you? Your spouse?

You:	less than High School	High School
	Junior College	College/Beyond
Your Spouse:	less than High School	High School
	Junior College	College/Beyond

Appendix C

Student Behavior Checklist

1. Did not complete assignment in allocated time
2. Quality of work is below standard (as directed or demonstrated)
3. Did not follow directions
4. Uncooperative with group members
5. Not engaged in classroom discussion
6. Off task behavior including daydreaming, talking out of turn, work avoidance

Date	1	2	3	4	5	6

Appendix D

Gravity: The Apple of the Earth!

Consider this:

If you drop a bowling ball and feather at the same time from the same height, will they land together? Give reasons for your answer.

Answer:

Yes/No (circle one) Because...

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

Hints:

- What could make them land together or separate?
- Is there anything to prevent or help the objects fall?
- What makes objects fall in the first place?
- Mass does not effect time.
- Would both objects act the same in a different situation, such as on the moon?

Appendix E

The Southeast

Write a diary from the viewpoint of a child your age who is on the Trail of Tears. You must reflect the hardships and emotions that your tribe is experiencing.	Create a word search puzzle using terms related to the Southeastern region of the United States. You must use a minimum of twenty words.	Design a poster about one of the Southeastern states. This will be a poster designed to attract tourists to various areas in the state. Make it colorful and enticing. Use expressive language to make it more appealing.
Draw and explain (with captions) the life cycles of a peanut plant and of a cotton plant.	**Free Choice!** Is there something you would like to research about this region? A format you would like to prepare? A recipe that comes from this region that you are anxious to try? Just clear your idea with your teacher and you may use it as one	Write an essay about the life of a famous person from the Southeastern United States. Explain why this person is remembered and the significance of his/her contribution to mankind.
Identify the latitude and longitude of 15 important cities in the Southeastern Region of the United States.	Craft an acrostic poem about three of the Southeastern states. Creativity, neatness and relevance to the state are criteria by which this will be assessed.	Make a relief map of the Southeast region of the United States. All significant geographical features must be included.

Appendix F

The Need for Speed Project

Your Goal: To measure the speeds of various objects around your home, school, neighborhood, etc.

The Rules:

- You must measure the speed of three items in the menu. Pick one choice from each column. You can measure objects not on the menu, but you must get teacher approval first.

- For each section of your display poster, for each speed you measured, you will include:

  - A title
  - A diagram showing your measurement method
  - A data table of your three trials
  - A written procedure of your test
  - The math calculations for each speed

The Need for Speed Menu

Appetizers	Entrees	Desserts
You walking, running, crawling or hopping	A toy vehicle moving on a track or across a floor	A point on the rim of your bicycle wheel
A pebble falling in a glass of water	The scent of ___ moving across a room	The tip of a minute or hour hand
A walking, running or slithering pet	The rising water level in a bathtub	The growth of grass or other plant
A falling feather, tuft of down, or snowflake	Water moving through a hose	The tip of your dog's wagging tail
	A bird flying by	Sound moving across a playground or football field

Appendix G

Reflective Blog Log: Chapter 1Chemistry Test

Student Reflection:

A) How well do you feel you prepared for the chapter 1 test? Explain.

B) What did you do different to study for this test compared to how you studied for the physics chapter 3 test? Explain.

C) Did you use any of the study strategies or suggestions your teacher offered from the chapter 3 blog? Explain.

Teacher Response:

Reflective Blog Log: Chapter 2 Project

Student Reflection:

A) How did you like the freedom to choose your project style? Explain.

B) What pitfalls (if any) did you have in completing your project? Explain.

C) What suggestions would you make to improve this assignment for future classes?

Teacher Response:

Reflective Blog Log: Chapter 3 Test

Student Reflection:

A) How well do you feel you prepared for the chapter 3 test? Explain.

B) Describe what you did to prepare yourself for the test. (How did you study?)

C) After reviewing your test, what changes would you make in your study habits to better prepare for the next test?

Teacher Response:

Reflective Blog Log: Summative

Student Reflection:

A) How effective or useful was the teacher/student journaling for you? Explain.

B) In what ways did the journaling experience help your academic motivation?

C) What suggestions would you make to improve the process? Explain.

Teacher Response:

Appendix H

Name_____

Response to Learning

I learned:

1. _____
   _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
   _____
3. _____
   _____
   _____
4. _____
   _____
   _____

We learned:

1. _____
   _____
   _____
2. _____
   _____
   _____

The most important thing is:

_____
_____

Appendix I

How Did You Do?

How do you think you did on the ISAT tests?
Rate yourself in the following areas, 1 = low, 5 = high

Reading 1 2 3 4 5

Math 1 2 3 4 5

What do you think were your strengths?

Reading;

Math:

What do you think were your weaknesses?

Reading:

Math:

What do you think you could improve on for next time?

How would you improve?

How Did You Do?

How do you think you did on your report card for third quarter? What do you feel you earned in each subject area?

Reading	3	2+	2	2-	1
Writing	3	2+	2	2-	1
Spelling	3	2+	2	2-	1
L.A.	3	2+	2	2-	1
Math	3	2+	2	2-	1
Science	3	2+	2	2-	1
S.S.	3	2+	2	2-	1

What do you think were your strengths?

What do you think were your weaknesses?

What do you think you could improve on for next quarter?

How could you improve in those areas?