The Frustration of Motivating an Unmotivated Student: How Implementing Well-Known Motivation Strategies Impacted an Unmotivated Student and My Own Teaching Practices

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Radio Park – 4th Grade
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Context</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Wondering</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry Plan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims and Evidence</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Wonderings</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature and/or Experts</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

There are many classroom management strategies that teachers and experts advocate in managing and motivating an unmotivated student. Motivation in the classroom has also been linked to teaching to the different multiple intelligences. Is motivation linked to creating lessons that address particular multiple intelligences or to different classroom management strategies? Motivating a particular student in my 4th grade classroom has often proven to be a difficult task. This inquiry analyzes the different approaches I explored in order to motivate an unmotivated student, and what I have learned in the context of this particular classroom.
Introduction

Throughout the school year, I have noticed many different things in my fourth grade classroom that has forced me to ask myself the question “Why…?” These have had to do with many different occurrences, such as classroom happenings, the curriculum, my own teaching practices, and specific students. One wondering that has plagued me throughout the entire school year has to do with a specific student in my classroom. He is a very bright student, yet he does not work up to his potential. He has also proven to be one of few students in the classroom who require consistent intervention for his behaviors in the classroom. I began wondering why he isn’t working up to his abilities and why he is a classroom management issue, and if these two seemly unrelated things were somehow related. I first considered this wondering early in the school year and have developed my wondering further as the school year went on and over the course of this inquiry. I began to look at the different classroom management strategies that were being used in the classroom as well as different approaches to presenting content in the classroom to see if these would have any effect on this student’s motivation in the classroom.

Teaching Context

My fourth grade classroom is a very mixed environment for student learning and engagement. It is one of three fourth grade classrooms in Radio Park Elementary School. Radio Park is a suburban school in the State College Area School District that has a wide range of diverse students from kindergarten to fifth grade, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status. Free and reduced lunch is served to approximately 12% of the students attending school at Radio Park. No two students in my classroom are exactly the
same, which makes my classroom a place for growth and individuality. Each of my students differs in terms of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, home life, academic abilities, and classroom behavior. These differences have allowed my students to grow and learn from each other in the classroom every day.

In my classroom, there are twenty students: twelve boys and eight girls. Although fifteen of my students are Caucasian children, there are many different ethnic backgrounds represented in the remaining five students. Two boys and one girl come from an African American background, one boy comes from a Korean background, and one girl from an Iranian background. Although I am not sure of the religion of all students in my classroom, I know that the majority of them are Christian and Catholic, and at least one girl practices the Jewish faith.

Socioeconomic status and home life are two other factors that affect students in the classroom. In my classroom, there seems to be a noticeable gap between students who come from a lower socioeconomic status or a lower middle class, and a more privileged or higher middle class status. There seems to be no middle ground between the two economic classes. Although the majority of my students come from privileged backgrounds, there are at least five (all boys) who do not. The home lives of my students also differ. Many of my students live with both of their parents. There are very few students in my classroom who come from separated or divorced families, although one student lives with a legal guardian instead of his biological parents. The parents’ professions also vary widely, which seems to affect the length of time parents are able to spend at home and the socioeconomic status in which these families live.
Academic abilities are also areas of diversity in my classroom. Two students from my class, one boy and one girl, receive learning support for the majority of the school day every day. Two boys in my classroom receive Title I support four days a week in addition to writing support with two other boys three days a week. One of these boys who attends writing support also receives occupational therapy one day every other week. One female student in my classroom is considered gifted due to the fact that she excels in every area of the academic curriculum. She is the only 4th grade student who receives math instruction in the fifth grade advanced math class in addition to math enrichment with three of my other students once a week. She has often been chosen to participate in other enrichment opportunities offered throughout the school year. The highest reading level in my classroom is a late sixth or early seventh grade level, while the lowest is a first grade reading level. There are four or five students who read at about a late second or early third grade level, and about two or three others who read at a late fifth or early sixth grade level. The rest of the class reads at or slightly above grade level. The student that I focused on in this inquiry is one of the students who is at or slightly above grade level. Because there are so many high readers in my class, his parents suggested during a conference he be moved to the higher reading group in order to motivate him to keep up with these students. For a period of time, Michael was grouped with these high readers. We were interested to see if he would be motivated to keep up with the group and if this would influence his engagement in reading lessons.

Although most of my students demonstrate appropriate behaviors throughout the school day and respect all classroom rules and classroom community members, there are some students who display unacceptable behaviors in the classroom. One student in
particular is a very difficult challenge in terms of behavior. This student needs emotional support, and although he receives help for this, he presents ongoing behavior problems. I have another student who also has behavioral issues due to emotional needs, however not to the extent of the other student. I also have one male student in my classroom that has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). He can sometimes be a classroom management issue, but more often than not, he does not exhibit problem behaviors when he remembers to take his medication. There are also a few boys, the student in my inquiry included, who can present behavioral problems from time to time, although not to the extent of the student in need of emotional support.

All of these factors taken together make the classroom an exciting and diverse place for students to grow and learn. Since the students are different in many ways, they have so much they can learn from each other. This diverse classroom has also provided a very interesting context for my inquiry.

**Rationale**

As an intern in this fourth grade classroom at Radio Park Elementary School, I have been noticing and questioning many different happenings throughout the school year. There are many classroom occurrences that make me say, “I wonder why…” each day. One wondering that has constantly come up at least every day this school year pertains directly to a student named Michael. Michael is a very bright student, yet he is completely happy with average performance and seems very resistant to the idea of working hard for knowledge and life-long learning in the classroom.

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1 Michael has been used to protect the student’s identity.
Michael is a Caucasian student who comes from a very stable family background. He lives with his mother, father, and younger brother in a financially secure household. His parents both work for the Pennsylvania State University and his younger brother is a second grade student at Radio Park Elementary. Outside of school, Michael enjoys playing soccer, skiing, and spending time with his close friend Zeke\(^2\), who is also a member of my fourth grade classroom.

Michael is one of the brightest students in my classroom. He is quick to pick up on concepts that other students require more time to internalize, and he is very sophisticated in his explanations when he is motivated to respond thoroughly. He is not diagnosed with any kind of a learning disability, nor does he exhibit any symptoms that would suggest that he has any kind of learning disability. He has the potential to be a high A student, yet he settles for being a B student. On his second report card, he did receive an A in Writing and an A in Social Studies, however, they were very low As. He also received a B in Reading and a B+ in Science. These grades, although good, do not reflect Michael’s abilities in the classroom. He has the skills and abilities to receive high As in all areas of the curriculum.

Michael has also proven to be a classroom management challenge each day. Although his behavior is not as extreme as the student in my classroom in need of emotional support, it is consistently a distraction to him and other members of the classroom. His disruptive behavior ranges from simply distracting himself with an inanimate object such as a pencil, to calling out and acting silly in an attempt to gain attention from his classmates at inappropriate times. These behaviors often result in nearby on-task students transitioning into off-task mode. Michael also has a tendency to

\(^2\) Zeke is also a pseudonym.
be attracted to other students who have strong personalities that prove to be inappropriate at times. As a result of this, my mentor teacher and I often have a hard time creating new seating charts each month because Michael can become such a distraction to other students in the classroom.

Although Michael has appeared to be disengaged in many of the school lessons, he is interested in a variety of other things. He is especially interested in history, more specifically in the many different wars our world has faced. He has checked out and read all of the books relating to this topic in our school library. He is also very interested in science and discovery. He enjoys discovering things in nature and building things at home.

Not only are my mentor teacher and I noticing this gap between classroom performance and abilities, but his parents are also aware of what has been happening with Michael in the classroom. We have all sat down to discuss Michael as a group on more than one occasion, yet little has changed. Since the end of the school year is quickly approaching, I am wondering if this behavior is something he is going to exhibit for the remainder of his school career, or if there is a way to motivate Michael to participate more in his schoolwork and lessons.

There may be many factors that are causing Michael to perform below his ability level in the classroom. However, I am wondering what is causing Michael’s lack of motivation to do his best work in the classroom. I feel I should point out that for the sake of this inquiry, I intend motivation to mean: *a willingness to attend to and engage in the lessons that students encounter daily in the classroom*. Could this gap between abilities and performance be attributed to the fact that the multiple intelligences to which Michael
responds best, are not being addressed in the classroom? Is Michael’s behavior in the classroom getting in the way of his work ethic? Are there classroom management strategies that Michael responds better to and will keep him on task? Although I am not searching to find exact answers to these questions in order to solve this problem, I am looking for insight into the factors that are causing Michael to perform below his abilities in the classroom and how that could inform my future teaching practices. Motivating an unmotivated student will likely always be a classroom issue, and by taking the time to look at a student such as Michael, I will hopefully become more knowledgeable and better prepared to handle this type of situation in my teaching career.

**Main Wondering**

What is/are the contributing factor(s) causing Michael to perform below his abilities in school?

**Sub-Questions**

1. How will Michael respond to well-researched and accepted classroom management strategies?
2. Will presenting lessons aligned with the different intelligences engage or disengage Michael?
3. Which multiple intelligence(s) will Michael respond to, and will this be consistent?
4. Will seating Michael with positive role models in the classroom improve his behavior and engagement?
Inquiry Plan

I have been engaged in this inquiry project since the middle of February 2006. I began the process by first considering all of the things in my classroom, in the curriculum, and in the school that I had been wondering about. I realized that since I would be working on this project extensively for the rest of the semester, I would need to pick a wondering that interested me and I would be willing to work on diligently. I eventually decided on inquiring about Michael, a bright student in my classroom who seemed to lack motivation when it came to schoolwork and participation.

After deciding on a topic, I wrote an inquiry brief that would serve as a tentative plan for the next several weeks. I considered the wonderings and sub-questions that I had developed at that point in time and came up with a schedule that would give me some kind of structure when completing my project over the next several weeks. I also considered what types of data I would collect, how I would analyze this data, and what literature and/or experts I would consult.

After deciding upon this plan of action, I began researching multiple intelligences and classroom management strategies in order to better understand the content I would be addressing in my inquiry. Using a multiple intelligences questionnaire that I developed by combining two multiple intelligences questionnaires that had been previously created, I surveyed my students to determine not only Michael’s intelligence strengths, but also the strengths of my students as a whole (Fleetham and Multiple Intelligence Questionnaire) (see Appendix A).

Integrating multiple intelligences into classroom lessons is a fairly new yet exciting idea in the field of education. Although Charles Spearman and L.L. Thurstone
considered the idea of multiple intelligences in the 1920s and 1930s, the theory was revolutionized by a man named Howard Gardner (Santrock 289-290). In 1983, Howard Gardner proposed the theory of multiple intelligences in his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. This theory is one of the most influential and popular theories in education today. Gardner asserted, “all normal human beings develop at least eight forms of intelligence to a greater or lesser degree as an interplay between their genetic makeup and the cultural and environmental constraints at work” (Bertrand and Stice 13). The eight intelligences he has proposed are: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist (see Figure 1). Howard Gardner argued that rather than just seeking intelligence; we must understand that human behavior is rich in selective talents or abilities. We must accept a theory of multiple intelligences rather than just one general form of intelligence (Nairne 392). This seemed especially interesting to me, because I can see this coming across in my students during lessons. Students, Michael included, have their own areas/intelligences in which they excel, making me wonder if students might learn more meaningfully in these areas.
This theory of multiple intelligences has become very popular in education because it “advocates developing children’s innate potential rather than requiring them to master extraneous academic information; allowing children’s natural talents, intuition and interests to guide them toward learning through comprehension; and providing an environment in which children can learn to think rather than memorize” (Dunn, Denig, and Kiely 10). These eight intelligences work together in different ways unique to each individual. Some people may appear to be highly skilled in all of the intelligences, while others may appear to lack all but the most basic aspects of each intelligence. Most people, however, seem to fall somewhere between highly developed in some intelligences, mostly developed in other intelligences, and relatively underdeveloped in the rest (Stanford 81).

In order to have a well-rounded knowledge of the multiple intelligences, I decided to research objections to Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences proposed by Robert Sternberg. Sternberg believed that Gardner was really talking about multiple talents and not intelligences. Although Sternberg accepts the theory that there may be many different types of intelligence, he proposed a different approach. He believed that humans learn in multiple ways based on a triarchic theory. Sternberg developed this

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**Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences**

Santrock 290

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<th>Intelligence</th>
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<td><strong>Linguistic</strong>: ability to think in words and use language to express meaning.</td>
<td>Authors, journalists, speakers</td>
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<td><strong>Logical-mathematical</strong>: ability to carry out mathematical operations.</td>
<td>Scientists, engineers, accountants</td>
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<td><strong>Spatial</strong>: ability to think three-dimensionally.</td>
<td>Architects, artists, sailors</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bodily-kinesthetic</strong>: ability to manipulate objects and be physically adept.</td>
<td>Surgeons, athletes, craftspeople</td>
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<td><strong>Musical</strong>: a sensitivity to pitch, melody, rhythm, and tone.</td>
<td>Composers, musicians</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal</strong>: ability to understand and effectively interact with others.</td>
<td>Teachers, mental health workers</td>
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<td><strong>Intrapersonal</strong>: ability to understand oneself.</td>
<td>Theologians, psychologists</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Naturalist</strong>: ability to observe patterns in nature and understand natural and human-made systems.</td>
<td>Farmers, botanists, ecologists</td>
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theory in 1986, only three years after Gardner proposed his theory of multiple intelligences. Sternberg believed that intelligence is divided into three parts: analytical intelligence, the ability to process information analytically; creative intelligence, the ability to cope with novel tasks; and practical intelligence, the ability to solve problems uniquely posed by cultural surroundings (Nairne 394).

“In Sternberg’s view of analytical intelligence, the basic unit in intelligence is a component, simply defined as a basic unit of information processing. Sternberg believes such components include the ability to acquire or store information; to retain or retrieve information; to transfer information; to plan, make decisions, and solve problems; and to translate our thoughts into performance…. According to Sternberg, creative people…have the ability to solve new problems quickly, but they also learn how to solve familiar problems in an automatic, rote way so their minds are free to handle other problems that require insight and creativity…. Sternberg describes practical intelligence as all of the important information about getting along in the world that you are not taught in school” (Santrock 292).

Sternberg advocates giving students new experiences that “require them to relate new to existing ideas” (Eggen and Kauchak 130).

Learning about these different views of multiple intelligences made me wonder how I can implement these many different intelligences into daily lessons. By aligning my lessons with these multiple intelligences, would the students in my classroom, particularly Michael, become more engaged or disengaged in the lessons? It seems very plausible to me that these ideas of multiple intelligences in the classroom are accurate, and that students should be given the opportunities to learn in ways that come naturally to them as well as refine the methods of learning they need to improve.

Since classroom management is also a variable that I will be working with during my inquiry, I took some time to research the many different types of classroom management strategies discussed in the book Principles of Classroom Management: A Professional Decision-Making Model by Levin and Nolan. I would be using nonverbal
interventions and verbal interventions. Not only do these interventions range from less disruptive to more disruptive, but they also range from student-centered to teacher-centered (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

**Hierarchy of Classroom Intervention**

**Nonverbal Interventions**
- Planned Ignoring – completely and intentionally ignoring a behavior.
- Signal Interference – any type of nonverbal act that sends a message to a student without disturbing other students.
- Proximity Interference – any movement toward a disruptive student.
- Touch Interference – a light, non-aggressive physical contact with a student that communicates disapproval.

**Verbal Interventions**

**Hints**
- Peer Reinforcement – publicly complimenting a student who is behaving appropriately.
- Name Dropping – redirecting a student to appropriate behavior by calling on a student or inserting his/her name.
- Humor – humor directed at a teacher or situation to alleviate classroom tension and redirect off-task behavior.

**Questions**
- Questioning Awareness of Effect – making disruptive students aware of their behaviors and effects of these behaviors.

**Requests/Demands**
- I Message – communicating a disruptive behavior, effects of that behavior, and teacher’s feelings to a student.
- Direct Appeal – politely asking a student to stop a misbehavior.
- Positive Phrasing – stating the outcomes of a desired positive behavior instead of a negative one.
- “Are Not For’s” – restricted for when students misuse property and/or materials.
- Reminder of Rules – reminding students of rules that they agreed to follow.
- Glasser’s Triplets – asking a student (1) What are you doing? (2) Is it against the rules? and (3) What should you be doing?
- Explicit Redirection – an assertive order from a teacher to immediately stop a misbehavior and return to acceptable behavior.
- Canter’s Broken Record – continuously repeating a redirection and avoiding verbal battle with a student.

Levin and Nolan 167-185

The nonverbal management strategies I used throughout this inquiry were planned ignoring, signal interference, proximity interference, and touch interference. These interventions are the first tier in the hierarchy of classroom intervention, and they become more aggressive as a teacher moves up this tier. The verbal interventions I explored for my inquiry project were: hints-- peer reinforcement, name-dropping, humor; questions--questioning awareness of effect; and requests/demands-- I-messages, direct appeals, positive phrasing, “are not for’s”, reminder of rules, Glasser’s Triplets, explicit redirection, and Canter’s Broken Record. These verbal interventions compose the second
tier of the Hierarchy for Management Intervention, and also become more confrontational and disruptive as you move up the tiers (Levin and Nolan 179).

Hints are student-centered and less confrontational than other verbal management strategies in the hierarchy. Questions are also used as a classroom management strategy. They are less student-directed than hints, yet less teacher-directed than requests/demands. Levin and Nolan suggest that sometimes students who demonstrate disruptive behavior are genuinely not aware of how their behaviors affect the learning environment. Students should be directed to acknowledge both their positive and negative behaviors, and the effects of those behaviors. The final classroom management strategies in the hierarchy are requests/demands. These strategies are the final strategies before logical consequences must be given, and are the most teacher-centered management techniques in the hierarchy.

Researching these classroom management strategies provided me with the knowledge and background to begin implementing these interventions into my inquiry. Since I would be using these strategies every day of my inquiry, and by extension, every day of my teaching career, I felt it was important to internalize these interventions in order to quickly recall them. When using these strategies, however, I do not use any intervention that is more disruptive than the inappropriate behavior.

After concluding my research on the different multiple intelligences and the different classroom management techniques, I felt as though I was ready to begin collecting my data. Although I taught and observed lessons that focused on all the different multiple intelligences and that employed all of the different classroom management techniques, I tried to focus on one or two multiple intelligences and three or
four different management styles each week. I chose to do this so that I would have a range of experiences and data that related to each of the different multiple intelligences and management techniques and to give me a chance to sort out how different approaches may or may not affect Michael’s motivation.

Data Collection

Anecdotal Records and Observations

Since day-to-day occurrences were the prime pieces of data that I would use to begin analyzing the effects of the different strategies I was employing on Michael, I collected anecdotal records and observations throughout the course of this inquiry project. I developed a data collecting sheet that included the components: Name of Lesson, Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed, Student Involvement/Engagement, Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used, Student Response to Management Strategies, Student Off Task Behavior, and Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors (see Appendix). I used this data sheet to collect and keep records of Michael’s motivation, engagement, and response to management strategies. During lessons my mentor teacher was teaching, I collected the data. At times when I was teaching a lesson, either my PDA would collect the data for me or I would keep this data sheet with me and keep notes as I was teaching.

Student Work Samples

Student work samples serve as concrete examples of Michael’s motivation. Not only are they direct evidence of Michael’s interest and engagement during a lesson, but they also indicate the level of effort he was willing to put forth in his work. I began
collecting this data by looking back to work samples that Michael had produced at an earlier time during the school year. I collected examples, such as reading comprehension activities that showed a contrast in the work that Michael produces. I also began collecting work samples that Michael had produced throughout the span of my inquiry project. I did this whenever possible to supplement my anecdotal records and to again show the contrast in the work that Michael is capable of and the work that he often produces.

**Multiple Intelligence Questionnaires**

In the early stages of my inquiry, I provided each of my students with a half an hour of class time to complete a multiple intelligence questionnaire (see Appendix). The multiple intelligence questionnaire asked students to place a mark next to any statement that sounded like them in the areas of verbal, mathematical, musical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and naturalist intelligences. They were then instructed to add up the totals in each area. The areas with the most markings would indicate strength in a particular intelligence. The students were then asked to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses they found in their results, and discuss whether or not they were surprised by these results.

**Video and Pictures**

Although I did not use these types of data extensively throughout my inquiry, I did include a few samples. I chose to include a video clip of Michael during Morning Meeting one Monday morning in February. This piece of data shows Michael’s tendencies to disengage. I also have a few pictures of a variety of students’ work on a
spatial lesson. I chose to take pictures of projects during this lesson because it clearly showed Michael’s lack of engagement during a particular lesson.

*Seating Charts*

The students in my classroom change seats each month. Since they are arranged at tables in groups of four, changing the seats provides the students an opportunity to sit with and work with the many different students in the classroom throughout the school year. When arranging a new seating chart, I always try to balance each table of students. By balance, I mean that I try to seat students who struggle in one aspect or another with students who will be a positive role model and support in that area. For the months of February, March, and April, I have tried to seat Michael with students who I believed would be a positive role model for him in terms of on-task, appropriate behavior during lessons. I was attempting to use these seating charts to see if Michael’s behavior was affected by the behavior of students around him.

*Data Analysis*

*Anecdotal Records and Observations*

Since anecdotal records and observations are one of the primary forms of data in my inquiry, I spent a good amount of time analyzing them. They are probably the most informative and compelling pieces of data I have to support this inquiry. I began analyzing this data by looking for patterns in Michael’s behaviors and motivation. I first looked at classroom management, and then devised a system to analyze Michael’s reactions to certain classroom management techniques.
I began by gathering each sheet of notes and observations that I had concerning Michael’s behavior during lessons. I also thought back to debriefing sessions that I have had with my PDA after observations in the classroom. I then made a chart that listed each type of classroom management strategy in hierarchical order. Looking through my data, I began to mark Michael’s reactions on the chart to different classroom management strategies as immediately responsive for an extended period of time (✔+), immediately responsive for only a brief period of time (✔), and not responsive to classroom management strategy (✔−). After completing this chart, I went back to look for patterns within the responses. I looked for patterns in the strategies that Michael responded best to and what he was not responsive to, and also looked to see if these responses had any correlation to the intelligence being addressed in a particular lesson. Halfway through the inquiry, I discussed these results in a journal entry. I then reread the journal in order to compare my findings at the end of the inquiry to my findings halfway through the inquiry in order to look for any similarities or differences in results.

*Student Work Samples*

I analyzed student work samples as a supplement to my findings after analyzing the anecdotal records and observations. I looked for any correlations between the work Michael produced, the multiple intelligence the particular lesson addressed, and the classroom management strategies used. I also looked at samples of Michael’s work from earlier periods in the school year to see if any patterns became evident in those samples.

*Multiple Intelligence Questionnaires*

After my students completed their multiple intelligence questionnaires, I immediately began analyzing the results. I began by making a chart listing each of the
eight multiple intelligences. Looking through each of the students’ multiple intelligence questionnaires, with the exception of four students who were out of the classroom at the time we completed them, I began tallying how many areas of strength were shown in which intelligence. After tallying, I wrote the numerical number for number of students who showed strength in each of the intelligences. This showed me the range and frequency of each of the intelligences in my classroom (see Graph 1). I then ranked the intelligences in descending order to see clearly which intelligences my students are strongest in, and which intelligences are less favored. After analyzing how the class ranks with the intelligences, I then looked to see if Michael was among the majority or minority classroom strengths.

Video and Pictures

Although I had only one video clip to analyze, the information I was able to determine from this video clip helped me greatly throughout my inquiry. While looking at the video clip, I watched Michael for off-task behaviors that he seemed to engage in frequently. I also began looking at who he was sitting near, and used that information to
pay attention to who he often chooses to sit near at the back carpet. I also noticed many
of Michael’s mannerisms that often lead him to off-task behavior. This awareness
allowed me to be more attentive to behaviors at the back carpet that I may not have
noticed at earlier times.

The pictures that I used as data were also used to supplement data I collected from
anecdotal records and observations. I took pictures of samples of Michael’s work that
was too big to photocopy. I also took pictures of other students’ work in the classroom to
compare with Michael’s work. I was then able to compare Michael’s work with his own
work, and with the work from a range of other students in the classroom. This allowed
me to see the effects of Michael’s time spent on a specific task, and begin to look for
correlations between his engagement and motivation during these tasks, his behavior, and
the specific classroom management strategies used during these tasks.

*Seating Charts*

When analyzing my seating charts, I considered many variables and how they
may have influenced Michael’s behavior and motivation in the classroom. I looked at the
specific students seated near Michael. I looked at their personalities, whether they had
strong personalities or were more introverted. I also looked at who he is friends with
outside of school as well as inside of school to see if that had any effect on his behavior.
Finally, I looked at the areas he needed to work on in terms of motivation and behavior
and I then tried to seat him with students who are strong in these areas. I looked to see if
he was motivated by these positive role models to stay on task, or if he was able to
influence the on-task students to become off-task.
Claims and Evidence

Based on the multiple forms of data that I have collected and analyzed, I have developed several claims supported by evidence that I believe only begin to address the wonderings that I initially considered when beginning this inquiry.

Claim: Michael’s performance in the classroom is inconsistent in terms of his responses to lessons aligned with the different multiple intelligences.

After analyzing the multiple intelligence questionnaires that I gave my students, I found that Michael’s intelligence strengths are the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and the naturalist intelligence. Interestingly enough, Michael falls within the majority of the class, who also responded that the bodily-kinesthetic and naturalist intelligences are their strengths as well. I was not surprised to find that Michael showed strength in these two intelligences, because he is very active in soccer and has a very scientific mind that is wired to discover and learn about new things. Although his strengths are in these two areas, I still planned lessons to address all of the multiple intelligences in order to check for engagement and motivation in all areas. Originally, I believed that Michael was not motivated during lessons possibly because they did not address his intelligence strengths. I wondered if he would become more engaged during lessons that addressed his intelligences. Although he did respond better in some instances, this was not true every time. The same is true for the intelligences that he did not show strengths in. Sometimes he would perform very well in lessons designed to address these intelligences, yet sometimes he showed an opposite response.
Evidence: (see Appendix B)

*My Place in the World* is a spatial social studies lesson I did with my students to begin the Pennsylvania Unit. We began by reading aloud the book *My Place in Space* by Robin and Sally Hirst. The students then had the opportunity to create a visualization of their own place in the world with watercolors and drawings. Michael’s work was rushed and did not reflect his best effort. I chose to include a picture of his work compared to a student who receives occupational therapy for a visual impairment biweekly and a learning support student.

The second pieces of evidence I chose to include are samples of Michael’s writing that show his inconsistency. The first two pieces are journal entries that the students write every Monday morning, which addresses the intrapersonal intelligence. They are provided prompts but are encouraged to write whatever they want. As you can see, Michael is inconsistent in the length and detail he puts into his journal. The second two pieces of writing are samples from reading comprehension packets that the students had to complete after reading a set of chapters from an assigned book. These comprehension packets address the linguistic intelligence, not one of Michael’s strengths. Again, Michael’s writing proves to be very detailed at times, yet lacking at others.

As a beginning to our Geology science unit, my mentor teacher and I planned lessons that allowed the students to sort various things, such as jelly beans one day and rocks another day. These lessons addressed the naturalist intelligence, which happens to be one of Michael’s strengths. I have chosen to include the data sheets that I kept during each of these lessons to again show Michael’s inconsistency. During one lesson, he was very motivated and engaged, yet very off-task and distracted during the other.
Claim: Michael seems to respond better to requests/demands in terms of classroom management strategies employed in the classroom.

After analyzing anecdotal records and observations, it became evident that Michael inconsistently responded to nonverbal management, verbal hints, and verbal questions. He did, however, respond well to requests/demands. It appears as though he only realized the effects of his behavior once it was directly brought to his attention. While I advocate giving students responsibility of their own behavior, Michael makes it difficult when he fails to acknowledge the effects of his behavior on himself, the lesson, and the rest of the class. The requests/demands that he has responded best to have been explicit redirection and direct appeals. It appears that, currently, an authority figure needs to clearly point out to Michael the behaviors expected of him before he will control his actions.

Evidence: (see Appendix C)

The evidence I chose to include to support this claim is anecdotal records based on observations of Michael during lessons. During these lessons, I was focusing on explicit redirection and direct appeals. However, other forms of classroom interventions were used although they were not the focus. Based on these data sheets and many others like it, I began to realize that Michael responded better to requests/demands than any other management technique.

Claim: Arranging seating charts so that Michael is seated with at least one positive role model yields inconsistent results in behavior.
Michael’s behavior is also inconsistent in terms of whom he sits with in the classroom. During the months of February, March, and April, we have gone through three different seating arrangements in my classroom. Michael has had the opportunity to sit with eight different members of his classroom community, each time sitting with two girls and one boy. He has only sat with one girl more than once during this time period. While creating these seating charts, I have always tried to seat Michael with a positive role model at his table who offers a good work ethic and positive behavior.

During the month of February, Michael was seated with two girls, one of whom he is friends with outside of the classroom. During this month, Madison³ and Michael seemed to get along very well, and I am wondering if this is because they do have a friendship that extends outside of the classroom. When Michael would begin to behave inappropriately, he would alter his behavior when he saw what Madison was doing, or she would redirect his behavior.

During the month of March, Cameron⁴ was Michael’s positive role model. By seating Michael with a positive male role model, I was hoping that Michael would begin to become friends with Cameron and begin demonstrating his positive behaviors. This seating arrangement actually had the opposite effect. Michael and Cameron did become friends, however Cameron began picking up Michael’s off-task behaviors. When we switched seats again in April, Michael was again seated with Madison. I was hoping that by seating them together again, Michael would return to appropriate classroom behaviors. April is now halfway over, and Michael still has not demonstrated very appropriate behavior in the classroom. I am wondering if this has to do with the other students that

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³ Madison is also a pseudonym.
⁴ Cameron is also a pseudonym.
have been added, if his behavior will improve with the next seating arrangement, or if he
will continue to act disruptively no matter who sits with him.

Evidence: (see Appendix D)

In order to provide evidence to my final claim, I am including my classroom
seating charts for the months of February, March, and April. The students names are not
used, however characteristics of these students are used to identify them. I have reflected
on daily conversations with my mentor teacher, my PDA, and my own observations when
developing this claim. These comments were made in day to day interactions that we
have had numerous times, although I do not have a record of such conversations.

Conclusion

Michael has proven to be very inconsistent in his behavior and motivation in the
classroom. Although he does appear to respond best to requests/demands, I am
wondering what I could do to help make him aware of subtle management strategies so
that he will become responsible for his own behavior without waiting for a teacher to
bring it to his attention. Lessons aligned with his multiple intelligence strengths did
engage him more at times, but this was also inconsistent. At times he appeared to be
extremely engaged in lessons, and at others he was very off-task. Seating arrangements
also showed inconsistent results in Michael’s classroom behavior and engagement.

Although this inquiry did result in some findings and claims, I feel as though I
could have done more to seek answers to my wonderings. I could have had more one-on-one
discussions with Michael about his behavior and performance in the classroom to try
to discover the root of the problems. Although I did question him from time to time
about his work and motivation, I never really sat down with him for an extended period of time to discuss the issues I was seeing in the classroom. I also feel as though this inquiry may have been stronger and yielded stronger claims if I had been able to engage in it throughout the entire course of the school year. My final claim about seating arrangements does show weak evidence, because I only analyzed the effects of three months of seating. If I had been able to look at seating arrangements over the course of the entire school year and/or had more discussions with members of Michael’s seating teams, I would have been able to provide stronger support for my final claim.

In conclusion, I have found that using well-known motivational strategies to motivate an unmotivated student in my classroom has given me many insights into my teaching practices. Throughout the course of this inquiry, I have come to believe that there may be many students in my classroom that I will have to work hard to motivate everyday. There is not one method or one strategy to employ that will engage each of my students every second of every school day. There are many other variables that I was not aware of that are probably at work on each of the students in my classroom. I have come to realize that variation in well-known strategies may be the most effective way to reach each of my students in the classroom, not just one who appears to be unmotivated.

**New Wonderings**

1. Would Michael’s motivation improve or decline during specials: library, music, art, and/or P.E.?

2. Is there a correlation between Michael’s motivation and feelings of social awkwardness and/or maturity?
3. Will Michael become more engaged or more disengaged as his school career continues?

4. How would different conceptualizations of multiple intelligence questionnaires by different authors change student responses and results?

5. Are Michael’s areas of strength and weakness better defined in terms of Sternberg’s triarchic theory or Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences?

Final Thoughts

Upon completing this inquiry, I have come to realize that I may never find an answer to my initial wondering: What is/are the contributing factor(s) causing Michael to perform below his abilities in school? There are so many different variables that may be working on Michael that I am not aware both inside and outside of the classroom. As a direct result of this, I may never be able to pinpoint exactly what is causing Michael, or another student like him that I may encounter in the future, to perform below his abilities in school. Although I went into this inquiry looking for insight into this query and not an exact answer, I feel as though it has only led me to more wonderings, wonderings that I hope to explore in various other classroom contexts through many years of teaching.

Literature and/or Experts


Eggen, Paul and Don Kauchak. Educational Psychology: Windows on Classrooms. 5th ed.

Fleetham, Mike. MI Profiles. Aspiro. 1 Feb. 2006.


Multiple Intelligence Questionnaire. The Learning Network Inc.


<http://bll.epnet.com/ezproxy.libraries.psu.edu/>
Appendix A

• Multiple Intelligence Questionnaire
| Place an X next to any statement that you think sounds like you. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Naturalist Intelligence</th>
<th>Naturalist Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to closely examine what I find in nature.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a good memory for names, dates, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am concerned about the environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy collecting bugs, flowers, or rocks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the great outdoors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence</th>
<th>Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can recognize, name, and express my feelings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People often come to me for help and advice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to collect things that have special meaning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can anticipate how another person will react.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I manage my time effectively.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more very close friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how I will react in a certain situation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can feel people's emotions very well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep my own journal or diary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can read people's emotions very well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am self-motivated and independent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I love playing with my friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal Intelligence</th>
<th>Interpersonal Intelligence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm happier when I understand the reason for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can find logical flaws in the things people say.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like solving puzzles and brain teasers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like music and science in school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can call a noise is off key.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I explain.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can play a musical instrument.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I really love one or more lyrics of music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can play a musical instrument.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can keep time to a piece of music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep up with the latest developments in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can keep time to a piece of music.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/Logical Intelligence</td>
<td>Mathematics/Logical Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I keep up with the latest developments in</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I can keep time to a piece of music.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can keep up with the latest developments in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/Logical Intelligence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Visual/Spatial Intelligence:**
- Enjoy puzzles, mazes, and other visual puzzles.
- Prefer TV to the radio.
- Read maps, charts, or diagrams more easily.
- Enjoy art and like to doodle and draw.
- Have clear dreams at night.
- Can see and manipulate objects in my head.

**Bodily/Kinesthetic Intelligence:**
- Play on a sport team.
- Move my hands and body when I talk.
- Move my legs while seated for a long time.
- Have a tough time learning about them.
- Like to be on the move.
- Enjoys thinking through my body.

**Interpersonal Intelligence:**

**Intrapersonal Intelligence:**

**Mathematical/Logical Intelligence:**

**Musical/Rhythmic Intelligence:**

**Naturalist Intelligence:**

**Verbal/Linguistic Intelligence:**

**TOTALS — count up the number of Xs you placed in each box:**
I found these results to be surprising because:

OR

I found these results to be not surprising because:

My area(s) of weakness are:

My area(s) of strength are:

Reflection:
Appendix B

• **My Place in the World Student Work Samples**
  - Michael’s Work
  - Visually Impaired Student’s Work (VI)
  - Learning Support Student’s Work (LS)
  - High Achieving Student’s Work (HA)
  - Average Student’s Work (Av.)

• **Michael’s Journal Entries**
  - 3/13/06 Journal Writing
  - Fall 2005 Journal Writing

• **Michael’s Reading Comprehension Activities**
  - Written Response – *Guests* Ch. 4 & 5
  - Written Response – *Guests* Ch. 6 & 7

• **Data Sheets**
  - 3/22/06 Naturalist Lesson Notes
  - 3/28/06 Naturalist Lesson Notes
MY PLACE IN THE WORLD

Earth

North America

Pennsylvania

Orange

United States

Earth

Blue
I went to Greek Peak to go ski.
I had a good time. I can't wait to go again.

michael
3/13/06

[Diagram of two skiers]
I make juice gas.

Then you have a full jar of this process about 5 times. Water on the fruit, repeat. Let's every minute or so pour some berries in a jar. Take the speckle and mash the mash until it's smooth. Then you put a sister full of berries in the jar put it on the ground. Then you take about 15 berries. Then you take one jar of garbage juice gases. I finally finished filling up.
What are some of the expectations of the girls and boys in Moss's village? How are these the same or different from the expectations we have now for boys and girls in State College?

Use the space below to write your answer. Be sure to use specific examples from chapters 4 and 5.

The girls in Moss's village are expected to cook, do chores, sew, and take charge. In State College girls will normally take charge of the house (at least in my house). The boys are supposed to hunt, plant, and build. Most boys in State College like to build.
Reread the story of “How the People Lost Each Other” on pages 94-99. Describe the characters Can’t Say No and Never Enough. Be sure to include each character’s weakness. How does Can’t Say No’s weakness come to harm Never Enough? What advice would you give each character to help them change their weaknesses?

Use the space below to write your answer. Be sure to use specific examples from pages 94-99.

Can’t Say No and Never Enough
have many troubles. Can’t Say No’s weakness is found when Never Enough asked for something. She always lets her have it even if it isn’t supposed to teach like when she lets Never Enough attempt to take the bull horn. Never Enough’s weakness is that she wants everything. So when Can’t Say No allows her to pull out the buck antler and crack the ice, she almost kills herself. So that’s Never Enough’s weakness.

Can’t Say No hurt herself and
Never Enough. When she told her that she could take the antler. When Never Enough tugged on it the Ice split and Can’t Say No jumped onto it. Soon they were stuck in the ice. So that was the end. Some Advice I would give Never Enough is not to be greedy. Because everyone who is greedy always ends up unhappy. Some Advice I would give Can’t Say No would be do not to give Never Enough everything she wants. Other wise you will both end up in pain. So

Those are some reasons of Can’t Say No and Never Enough’s weaknesses.
Data During Lessons

Name of Lesson: Jelly Bean Sorting
Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed: naturalist

Student Involvement/Engagement:
- The student is extremely engaged, leading group discussion
-Following key to decide which beans belong in category
- Separating beans easily with help from N.

Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used:
- Name dropping, signal and proximity

Student Response to Management Strategies:
- The student responds well and returns to appropriate behavior

Student Off Task Behavior:
- The student becomes silly during tasting

Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors:
- N and the student lead discussion
- A and C can become silly and off-task
- Other students in the class are engaged, on-task, and interested
Data During Lessons

Name of Lesson: Sorting Rocks

Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed: Naturalist

Student Involvement/Engagement:
~ The student is a bit off task to begin with.
~ The student is participating in the discussion a bit.
~ The student is not extremely engaged in the lesson, he is becoming off task and silly easily.
~ nonverbal cues, name dropping, proximity control

Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used:
~ I am sitting near him and a classroom para is working with Clara at times, reminder of rules
~ The student is off task at most moments, but is not distracting others.
~ Since the student continued doodling and began distracting his team, I subtly removed his notebook. I took the picture and gave the notebook back only if he can control himself with it touch int.

Student Off Task Behavior:
~ The student is distracting himself by staring at and messing with a magazine, other team members on task.
~ The student becomes off task by Clara who sits next to him.
~ The student begins doodling (remind rules)

Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors:
~ The students are all engaged in sorting their rocks and forming their own duck keys.
~ Alyssa is creating a duck key for Team 1.
~ Team 3 (Ky, Ke, Er) are very engaged.
~ Nol and Alyssa check key - the student, & Clara don't parti
Appendix C

• Data Sheets
  o 2/23/06 Christopher Columbus: A Great Explorer Lesson Notes
  o 3/14/06 Columbus Encounter Lesson Notes
  o 3/20/06 – 3/21/06 My Place in Space Lesson Notes
Christopher Columbus: A Great Explorer  2/23/06

Data During Lessons

Name of Lesson: Christopher Columbus Discussion and partner reading.

Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed: ?? Lesson deals with history of Columbus and the Tiano people.
Verbal/Linguistic (the students will be reading three books of different perspectives)
Interpersonal? (the students will be partner reading and working together)

Student Involvement/Engagement:
The student is very engaged. Has participated a lot. He is very knowledgeable about the topic. He raises his hand to answer each question. Knows the ships Columbus has sailed on. Believes Columbus was more powerful and he knows more about him than the Tiano people. He is very eager to participate.

The student is now partner reading with Zeke. They are seated at a table with Madison and Larran. The students are getting along very well, and I am wondering if this is because they are such good friends outside of school as well as in school (Michael, Zeke, and Madison live near each other and play together a lot). When the student is not reading, he is paying attention, yet doing other things such as cutting paper, playing with his pencil, etc.

Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used:
-I asked the student to please sit up. “Michael, can you sit up please?”
-Mentor says, “Michael, are you ok? Then can you please sit on your bottom?”

Student Response to Management Strategies:
-The student sat up without an argument. ✓✓
-The student says he is ok and sits back up immediately. ✓✓

Student Off Task Behavior:
-The student becomes distracted by his pencil as the teacher is giving directions on the lesson.
-The student is also acting very silly at some times, but in a joking manner that is not distracting to the teacher or other students.
-While the teacher is giving directions about reading the three books, he lies down.
-The student again is sitting inappropriately.
Data During Lessons

-During partner reading, the student is cutting his eraser with scissors and is playing with his lead, but is engaged with the reading as his partner is reading.

Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors:
All of the students are on task and very engaged during the entire discussion. One student is instructed to stop doodling by me and quickly stops. The students become off task and begin talking to each other as the teacher is finding books, but return their attention as the teacher is giving directions.
Data During Lessons

Name of Lesson: Columbus Encounter read aloud

Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed: verbal/linguistic, auditory skills

Student Involvement/Engagement:
- At the beginning of the lesson, the student accurately answers the question “What is the difference between an encounter and a discover?”
- As the read aloud begins, the student gets up and leaves for the bathroom.
- The student is making faces and is easily distracted, but comes back when the teacher calls attention to illustrations in the book.
- The student is not distracting the entire class or any other students, but he is distracting himself for the majority of the read aloud.
- The student correctly answers a question about what type of weapons were being used during this time and was eager to contribute.
- By the end of the read aloud, the student is fully engaged.
- The student volunteers to respond to the question “Why were they interested in the gold?”

The student continues to volunteer to answer questions after the read aloud.
- When the student returns to the back carpet after getting his Literature Detective worksheet, he chooses to sit by Gavin, and Zeke also comes and sits next to him.
- The student is at first distracted by his pencil, but is not distracting anyone else.
- The student is now making silly faces at Zeke and is distracting him, but stops on his own.
- As the book discussion continues, the student pays attention to other students as they are speaking.
- The student lies down at the back carpet.
- The student is engaged in what the discussion of the book.
- The student answers a question correctly.

Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used:
- name dropping – the teacher says the students name and then asks him a question to check for attention and understanding
- The teacher does not respond to the students who are lying down.
- The teacher asks the student to please move beside Kaitlin. ex. red.
- “Michael, please stop doing that.” direct appeal

Student Response to Management Strategies:
Data During Lessons

- The student responds to the management strategy well, he responds to the question correctly.
- The student responds to the management strategy and moves.
- The student stops his misbehavior.

Student Off Task Behavior:
- The student becomes easily distracted by himself – playing with his hands and making unusual facial expressions.
- The student lays down at the back carpet during discussion, which prompts two other female students to also lie down.
- PM session – the student is again sitting next to Zeke, but continues to talk to him.
- The student is distracting himself with his pencil.
- The student continues to distract himself with his pencil by taking it apart.

Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors:
- The student has again chosen to sit beside Zeke at the back carpet for the read aloud.
- The other students in the classroom are engaged and paying attention to the read aloud.
3/20-3/21  done during pssa week

Data During Lessons

Name of Lesson: My Place in Space

Multiple Intelligence(s) Addressed: spatial

Student Involvement/Engagement:
The student did not seem at all interested in this lesson. He did volunteer some answers during discussion yet continuously talked to Zeke during the read aloud. His project is extremely messy, and he talked loudly during his work time Tuesday morning he was quiet, but his work was careless.

Classroom Management Strategy/Strategies Used:
1) Name dropping
2) Explicit redirection
3) Direct appeals

Student Response to Management Strategies:
The student stopped his misbehavior (talking to neighbor, making faces, etc.) for a brief period of time, but soon moved on to another distracting act.

Student Off Task Behavior:
1. The student talks to Zeke at the back carpet.
2. Becomes silly (making faces, etc.) during read aloud
3. Loudly talking to group members during work time, distracting himself and others.
4. Careless and sloppy work

Additional Notes/Other Student Behaviors:
1. Other students are on task and working on projects diligently.
2. Team 1 is completely distracted by Michael and are among last students to finish

At end of day on Monday, all students become noisy
Appendix D

• Seating Charts
  o February
  o March
  o April
LA-Low Achievement
HA-High Achievement
PRM-Positive Role Model

Mrs. Reed's Desk

Miss Kryrim's Desk

Av.-Average Student
ADHD-Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
Title I R-Reading, M-Math

February