WHY DO MY STUDENTS NEED SO MUCH REASSURANCE? HOW CAN I BEST HELP MY 3RD GRADERS BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT WORKERS?

BY CARLEY MULLIGAN
THIRD GRADE INTERN
HOUSERVILLE ELEMENTARY
Context
Houserville Elementary is a very rural community, and it is located in State College, Pennsylvania. The elementary school consists of grade levels 3-5. The primary school (Lemont Elementary) has a K-2 Fail Safe program where a paraprofessional aid is placed in each classroom. My third grade classroom consists of eleven girls and six boys. Students range in age from eight to nine years old. Of these seventeen children, one female child is enrolled in Title I for reading. In the beginning of the year, one student (female) “tested out” of Title I for reading. The seventeen children in the class range between the “Basic” and the “Proficient” reading stages based on the assessment that they took in the beginning of the year. Four male students are part of the learning enrichment program.

When looking at the various social relationships that take place in the room, there is a similar number of leaders, pleasers, and followers. There are five leaders, three females and two males. There are a group of seven pleasers, five females and two males. And finally, there are six followers, which consist of three females and three males.

Main Wondering
Why do my students need so much reassurance? How can I best help my 3rd graders become more independent workers?

Sub-Questions
· How might students do more self-monitoring during activities/assessments?
· How might check-ins benefit the students before they begin activities/assessments?
· In what ways do students seek reassurance from parents?
· What is the developmentally appropriate stage for children in third grade and what is expected of them?

Rationale
Over the course of the school year, I found that there are several students in the class who consistently seek reassurance from one of the classroom teachers. For
example, during a math assessment some students would just ask, “Is this okay?” Other
students would come up and ask, “Is this good?” It reached the point where some
students would ask over ten questions during one activity or assessment. I began to
wonder why students felt the need to “double-check” with an adult when they clearly
knew the answer to their questions.

I decided that I needed to do further research to figure out the underlying meaning
behind children’s dependence on an adult in the room. I began thinking about all the
different topics that could justify why students act in a certain manner during independent
lessons/assessments. I came up with various ideas for why this may occur. Also, I
wanted to find out whether all of my students needed reassurance or if only certain
children sought it.

Data Collection

Observations
I began my inquiry with various observations. The main focus in the beginning
observations was to identify the students who needed the most reassurance. I did this by
using a checklist (Appendix A). Then I recorded how the teacher stated the directions for
a specific task or assignment. Throughout the observations, I wrote the child’s name, the
number of questions that particular student asked an instructor, and I also recorded the
specific questions the child inquired about. After three weeks of observing, I analyzed my
data by putting a check beside a child’s name on a class list each time he or she asked a
question. I reviewed the class list and discovered that there were seven students (out of
seventeen) who frequently sought reassurance from the instructor. The other ten students
in the class asked less than five questions that dealt with reassurance during a three-week
period. I analyzed the data concerning the seven students who asked more questions.
These students not only asked questions that dealt with reassurance, but they also asked about directions that were already made clear by the instructor. I tallied the types of questions (reassurance-type questions or direction-related questions) each child would ask in order to better understand how I might help my students during independent work.

Once I collected the baseline data, I introduced an intervention (Appendix M) to various students in the classroom. I made the intervention voluntary, but chose the seven students who needed help with their reassurance during independent work time (luckily they all volunteered). Also, I completed the intervention on three other students in the class to compare their results with the other seven students. The children kept track of the number of questions they asked the teacher by marking Column A or B on his or her note card (located on the desk) when the instructor told them to do so. Column A represented reassurance questions, while Column B symbolized direction-related questions. I used a different observation sheet (Appendix B) to record the reactions of students when they were asked to mark a column on their note card. I analyzed my intervention observations by comparing the tallies on the student note cards to the tally marks I made prior to the intervention. I wanted to see whether there was a change in the number of tallies that appeared over a one-week period.

During the Wednesday of interventions, I decided to have a discussion (Appendix J) with the students in my classroom. I observed and recorded statements made by students on the discussion sheet. I made it clear to students that it was okay to ask questions if they did not understand material during a lesson or if they needed clarification (as long as they were listening to the directions presented by the instructor). I clarified the meaning and consequences of receiving a check. I questioned the children
on what they thought would happen if they had to mark a lot of checks. I ended the discussion by encouraging students to think about the types of questions they ask during independent practice before asking someone else for assistance. I continued to observe the interventions for the rest of the week.

Anecdotal Records

During my intervention with the students, I used anecdotal records to help identify whether check-ins before and during independent practice would help students to work more independently as well as limit the amount of reassurance/direction questions that were sought during that time. The chart (Appendix C) consists of an aerial view of the classroom with the student’s initials placed in a rectangular box (representation of their desk). Before students began their independent work, the teacher called on the seven students who consistently sought reassurance to see if they could relay the directions back to the instructor. If a child successfully completed this task, the instructor placed a check in the child’s box on the anecdotal record sheet. If the child were unsuccessful, he or she would receive a minus sign. I compared the anecdotal records to the intervention observations. I analyzed whether the number of questions dealing with listening and following directions decreased as a result of the check-ins before the independent practice.

Surveys

During the second week of the inquiry process I created a parent survey (Appendix E) with a letter home (Appendix D) (explaining about my inquiry) to see if there was a connection between the school and the home in terms of the need for reassurance. The survey consisted of eight questions in which parents were asked about the child’s personal responsibility and the resulting consequences. Also, it addressed the
topic of homework and the amount of assistance a child received while at home. I created this survey to see if there was a connection between the amounts of reassurance a child needed at school to what he or she needed at home. Also, I wanted to discover whether students with a lot of personal responsibility and consequences at home sought less reassurance from the instructor while at school. I sorted the parent surveys to make a pile of answers with *always* and *sometimes* that dealt with completing chores, receiving consequences, and providing assistance to his or her child with homework. I compared these students to my prior observations to see if the parent surveys matched the various child observations. If they did, I stapled his or her parent survey to the observation sheets and placed them in a red folder.

I provided my third graders with individual surveys (Appendix F) to determine the types of self-monitoring students completed during an individual activity. The survey consisted of nine questions eight of which provided children with the option to choose ☺, ☻, or ☼. ☺ signified *often*, while ☻ represented *sometimes*, and ☼ symbolized *rarely* or *never*. I closely examined student surveys if the child had indicated (on question three) that he or she did not self-monitor. I compared the student surveys to the children on the class list who consistently seek reassurance.

**Interviews**

After the interventions were introduced, I decided to conduct individual interviews (Appendix G) with the students who participated in the note card activity. During the interview, I asked students to provide me with their birth order (youngest, middle, oldest), their birthdays (age 8 or 9), and finally, I wanted students to tell me if they were more aware of asking questions when the note card was present on their desks. I sorted the data collected during the interview first, by birth order, second, by birthdays,
and third, by note card awareness. After I did this, I looked for various patterns.

**Research**

Before beginning the inquiry process, I wanted to learn more about the developmental characteristics of children ranging in the ages of eight and nine. “As third grade students enter the classroom in September, they are full of ideas, but cannot always recall what has been said in terms of listening to and following directions (Wood, 1997).” “Students begin to build confidence by being successful, but only in small doses. By doing this, children begin to develop and grow cognitively. In the third grade, students are turning nine years old. At this stage in their development, children become more anxious and as the year continues, students limit the risks that they take in the classroom (Wood, 1997).”

**Explanations of Findings**

**Claim 1:** *Third grade students are aware of the reassurance they seek or other students in the class seek when provided with opportunities to collect concrete data.*

**Evidence A: Observations during intervention**

During the note card intervention (Appendix N), I observed several students approach the instructor with a question. Before asking it, Student B would say something like, “I know I am going to have to check my card, but…” before making a statement which sought some form of reassurance. For example, on Wednesday, April 9, 2008, a student made the statement above followed with the question, “Can I wash my hands,” during an art clean up, where students already knew that this was a time to wash their hands and put away materials. On April 9, 2008, Student B approached me with a similar statement to the one made above, but followed it by asking if she could sharpen her pencil. There is no pencil-sharpening rule in our classroom. It was made clear during the first two weeks of school that students can sharpen their pencils at any point throughout
the school day. These two above observations show how students sought reassurance, but identified that they were aware of it by using a statement similar to “I know I am going to have to check my card but…”

On April 10, 2008, I observed Student A state, “Where do I put the paper when I am done?” This followed a statement made by the instructor two minutes earlier; “When you are done with your writing, please place it in the bin on my desk.” When this student asked where to put the completed materials, I observed three students state that he needed to place a check on his card because the instructor had already made students aware of what to do when done. This is evidence of how students were aware of how their classmates sought reassurance from the teacher during a school subject.

Evidence B: Student Interviews
During student interviews following the note card intervention, all seven interviewees answered yes when asked if he or she was more aware of asking questions that they already knew the answer to. During one of the interviews, Student G stated that she asks questions that she already knows the answer to because she enjoys talking with the instructor.

Evidence C: Observations during Discussion
During the last week of the note card intervention, the teacher had a discussion with students about how they can question the teacher about something they may not understand, etc., but to try to be conscious of whether they already know the answer to the question first. During this time, Student E stated how the note card on his desk made him more aware of the number of questions he asked that were unnecessary. When Student A and D made this comment, two other students stated, “Yes,” in agreement.

Claim 2: Check-ins before independent work limit the number of direction-related
questions asked during an activity/assessment.

**Evidence A: Observations during intervention**
During the last two weeks of the note card intervention, I had students restate the directions before independent practice. I observed students working more independently when I provided a check-in compared to when I did not provide one. For example, on March 17, 2008, during a math lesson, Student F stated, “What do we do when we’re done?” This child was referring to a worksheet that the class was told to complete and place in the basket on the instructor’s desk. During a math lesson on April 9, 2008, the students were instructed to place a worksheet in their math folders. Then, the teacher asked the students, “Where should I put this worksheet?” The teacher deliberately called on the child who did not follow directions on March 17, 2008. This child answered, “In our math folders.” I observed this particular child follow through with these directions without asking for any extra assistance.

**Evidence B: Anecdotal Records**
When comparing the number of direction-related questions asked before and after the intervention, I recorded a decrease in the number of questions asked when the teacher provided students with a check-in for all seven reassurance-seekers in the classroom. For example, Student A went from asking seventeen questions in a one-week period to asking only seven.

**Claim 3:** There is a direct connection between school and home in the amount of reassurance a student seeks.

**Evidence A: Parent Survey**
When looking at the seven students who regularly seek reassurance from instructors, all of the parents circled, “Sometimes” or “Often” on questions 3-6. The other ten surveys (those students who do not seek as much reassurance from adults) had
questions 3-6 answered with “Rarely” or “Never.” These results exemplify how students seek reassurance in the home setting.

**Evidence B: Observations prior to intervention**

When looking at the observations before the note card intervention, the seven students who seek reassurance asked a total of eighty-nine questions (both direction-related and reassurance-related) in a given week. This exemplifies how students seek reassurance in the school setting.

**Claim 4: Students who do not self-monitor seek more reassurance than students who do self-monitor during independent work.**

**Evidence A: Student Surveys**

For question #3 on the student surveys, seven of the seventeen students (those who completed the note card intervention) all circled ☐ or ☐ on their sheets when asked if they immediately ask the instructor when they come to a question they do not know during independent work. All seven students (who received intervention) circled ☐ or ☐ on question #4, which asked if students read over the question before asking the teacher for help. In comparison, the other ten students in the class circled ☐ or ☐ for question #3 and circled ☐ or ☐ for question #4.

**Evidence B: Observations throughout—before and during interventions**

During the writing assessment on February 21, 2008, Student E approached me and stated, “Can I write about my parents?” I responded by stating, “Did you read the prompt?” I stated this because the prompt stated the answer to his question. The boy answered, “Yes, but can I?” During various observations before the note card intervention, I found that the boy would question the instructors during independent work. Numerous times I asked if he read the questions again and he stated, “No.” Throughout the note card intervention, I observed this child ask a direction-related
question three times over the course of a week during the intervention period. In comparison, this child asked seven questions over a weeklong period prior to the note card intervention.

**Evidence C: Research**

The following two quotes come from educational journals. This research supports how children benefit from self-monitoring during lessons.

“In order to foster independence it is important for students to self-regulate or self-monitor during lessons, assessments or other activities (Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, 2007).”

“If teachers want to inspire independent learning, they must emphasize the importance of monitoring individual learning to students (Rafoth, 1999).”

**Reflections and Future Practice**

I learned three important things from the inquiry process. First, all students are individuals and I should not generalize a whole class as needing to become more independent. Second, I need to be clear on my expectations during independent work time. And third, teachers need to make sure that students are not afraid to ask questions, and to “teach” self-monitoring.

In the beginning of this inquiry, I attempted to figure out reasons behind why my students needed so much reassurance during independent work time. I discovered that only a handful of students needed reassurance and not the entire class. Students are individuals and different from one another. This diversity makes it possible to see how much reassurance each individual student seeks from teachers and other adults. In my inquiry, I discovered that some of the students did not necessarily need an intervention when it came to reassurance, but instead needed an intervention when it came to listening and following directions. In the end, I needed to decide on ways I could help an individual student become more independent in the classroom. Going into this inquiry, I
did not know that I would focus on a group of seven students. After I have gone through this process, I realized that I should not generalize the whole class as needing lots of reassurance because in the end only 41.2% students needed to work more independently.

In my future classroom, I will be very clear in the expectations my students will be held accountable for during independent work time. I think it is important to establish what is expected of your students early on, particularly during the first few weeks of school. I will emphasize good listening skills in my future classroom (especially when giving directions) by using check-ins and other self-monitoring strategies in order to decrease the amount of reassurance students seek from the instructor.

During this inquiry process, the students became aware of the number of questions they asked during independent work time, which was positive because of the decrease I saw in the number of questions asked before the intervention compared to during it. At one point, students did not want to ask questions because they did not want a check on their cards. I realized that this positive intervention plan was beginning to turn negative. The goal was to foster a classroom full of students who can be independent during specific work times. I did not want children who were afraid to ask questions when they didn’t understand something. It is important for teachers to find a median (between these two extremes) for their students. After having a discussion with my third grade class, I helped them realize that questions are great when they need clarification (especially when they are following directions and being good listeners). I had to explain to students that some questions are not necessary to ask such as, “Can I sharpen my pencil,” in a classroom with an open pencil sharpening policy. In my future teaching, I will discuss with my students that it is important to ask questions, but
encourage them to be good listeners.

**New Wonderings**

After interviewing Pat Flohr (Appendix H and I), a first grade K-2 Fail Safe aid as well as observing various primary classrooms, I wonder whether the transition from the primary setting (with the aid) to the third grade (without the aid) classroom challenges students and requires them to take on more responsibility. I learned that the aids provide much assistance in the primary grades. In third grade, students are expected to take on these responsibilities (transitioning, lunch count, etc.) with no help from an aid. I would be curious to see if there is a difference between third grade classes with only one teacher compared to a class with multiple teachers or adults. Would students seek more or less reassurance? In my future teaching, I would survey K-2 Fail Safe aids and interview other third and fourth grade teachers.

It would also be interesting to observe whether the seven students in my classroom seek the same amount of reassurance during their various specials. Would they still seek reassurance in art, music, PE, or library? Would a different instructor increase or decrease the amount of reassurance students seek? I wonder if student behavior would change with those special teachers who had them in both primary and intermediate grade levels. In my future teaching, I would like to research, observe, and interview special teachers to see if there is a difference in the level of reassurance certain students seek.

In the beginning of this inquiry process, I wanted to research whether the child’s self-confidence level had an effect on the amount of reassurance a child seeks from an adult. Due to time constraints, I was unable to gather sufficient information to make a claim on this topic. In my future teaching, I would like to interview and survey students
on their self-confidence levels and how it relates to their independent work. Also, I am interested in providing instruction on how to build self-confidence. Then, I would interview and survey students and note any differences in students during independent work time.

Throughout this inquiry process, I wanted to discover whether there was a certain time of day or specific activity/assessment that affected whether students needed more reassurance. I collected various data (located in Appendix O) on the seven students who consistently sought reassurance, but because of time, I did not collect as much data as I would have liked, thus not being able to make a strong enough claim. Also, I wonder whether grades play a key factor in when students sought reassurance.
APPENDIX TABLE OF CONTENTS

A: Observation Checklist
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D: Parent Letter
F: Student Survey
G: Interview Questions
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L: Inquiry Brief
M: Note card Intervention
N: Student Birth order and age sheet
O: Certain Time of Day or Specific Activity/Assessment Research
Checklist

Subject:

**Directions** (How were they given?):

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<th>Name</th>
<th># of Questions</th>
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Observation Sheet (Intervention)

Child’s Name:

Date of Observation:

Subject and Reaction to Check:
Anecdotal Records

Monitors: X or Y

K   B
K   A

M   P
M   E

A   E
I   A

A   S
M   K
Dear Parents,

Throughout this school year, I have taken great pleasure in watching your children grow as learners. As part of my PDS internship, I have the opportunity to participate in a teacher inquiry. This process consists of picking a topic, researching it, collecting data on it, analyzing the data, and finally, presenting the findings. I decided to look at why 3rd graders seek reassurance, and how I can best help them become more independent workers.

As part of my inquiry, I would like to gather input from you regarding the amount of reassurance students seek while they are at home. Attached is an eight-question survey. Please take a few minutes to fill out the corresponding sheet and return it to school with your child no later than March 5, 2008. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the teacher inquiry or the survey, please email me at cam5020@psu.edu or call me at (717)-332-1688. Thank you for your assistance with my project.

Sincerely,

Ms. Mulligan
Parent Survey

Child’s Name: ____________________________

Please circle the word that best fits each question.

1. My child is responsible for completing chores around the house
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

2. If my child does not complete his or her chore(s), there is a consequence
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

3. When doing homework, my child asks for help
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

4. My child asks me to clarify directions to homework assignments
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

5. I sit with my child and talk him/her through their homework until it is complete
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

6. When doing homework, my child asks me if he/she is doing it right
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

7. I look over my child’s homework after he/she has completed it
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

8. My child gets frustrated and upset when he or she cannot figure out an answer on a homework assignment
   Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never
Student Survey

1. I understand the directions when Mr. Benson or Ms. Mulligan state them to me before an activity…

2. I ask a partner or neighbor for help with directions after they are given…

3. When I am completing a worksheet or taking a test, and I come to a question that I do not know, I immediately ask Mr. Benson or Ms. Mulligan for help…

4. When I come to a question that I do not know, I read over the question again and try to figure it out before asking Mr. Benson or Ms. Mulligan for help…

5. After I am finished with my homework, I like it when someone in my family looks over it…

6. I get worried or nervous when I find out we are having a test/quiz…

7. I get worried or nervous while I am taking a test…

8. After I complete an assignment, I get nervous and worried about how I did on it…
9. Please rank the following school subjects starting with the one you like the most and ending with the one you like the least.
   (Math, Reading, Listening, Spelling, Cursive)
Student Interview Questions

1. Do you have any brothers or sisters?
   a. How many brothers?
   b. How many sisters?
   c. Are you the youngest?
   d. Are you the oldest?
   e. List siblings in order from oldest to youngest (where do you fit into the picture)
   f. When is your birthday?
   g. How old are you?

2. Are you more aware of asking Mr. B or I a question because of the card on your desk?
   a. Why?
As part of my inquiry, I would like to gather input from you regarding the amount of reassurance primary students seek while they are at school. Below are three short questions. Please take a few minutes to fill out this sheet. Thank you for your assistance with this process.

**Please circle the word that best fits each question.**

- Students approach me throughout the school day to ask for clarification to directions stated by the instructors
  
  Often          Sometimes          Rarely          Never

- Students approach me throughout the school day to ask for assistance on everyday tasks that they are capable of doing on their own
  
  Often          Sometimes          Rarely          Never

**Please answer the question below**

- What kinds of assistance do you provide to the students during a particular school day? (Ex: help with backpacks, lunch count, etc.)
As a first grade Paraprofessional my primary responsibility is to assist the classroom teacher and her students with the activities that support our educational program.

In reference to the first two questions - Early in the school year the students are making new friends, learning classroom rules, organizing materials, listening to directions, practicing "I" messages (just to mention a few of their new experiences!) so clarification is often requested by the students. But as expectations and routines become established, clarification is required less often.

As I get to know the students and their capabilities, I better understand how to respond to their requests for help. For example, if they ask for help tying a shoe, I may suggest that they ask a friend for assistance.

Lastly and perhaps most important is praising the students for a job well done to build and maintain their self confidence. I try to remember to "catch them being good!"

Question Three -
This list includes the things I do during a school day to assist the students:
- lunch sign-up
- classroom "Lunch Aide" - includes maintaining discipline, directing clean-up, DEAR time
- "unfinished" work
- instruction of small groups for reading, math, and writing
- locating materials such as folders or books
- providing comfort in difficult times

I was happy to assist with your inquiry. Best wishes as you continue your teaching career!

[Signature]
Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it’s ever okay to ask certain questions during an activity/assessment?
   
   a. What kinds of questions are good questions?

2. What is going to happen if you get a check?

3. What are the consequences of receiving a check?

Think: Is that question necessary?

a. Chip Wood goes into great detail on child development. The book is separated into chapters based on the age groups of children and where they should be developmentally based on certain criteria, which include, physical, social, language, cognitive, ability, growth, behavior, and subject matter.

b. This book will benefit me during the research period of my inquiry. I will be able to use the information to figure out what is developmentally appropriate for children before, during, and after third grade. Also, the teacher can use this resource to make sure lessons are directed towards the correct age group (not too easy/not too advanced).


da. Kevin Henkes writes a cute children’s book about a little mouse named Wemberly who worried about everything! She worried about big things like her parents not being there, and she worried about small things like the crack in the living room wall. The biggest thing she worried about was her first day of school. She was very concerned about making friends and learning new things. In the end, she had nothing to worry about!

db. This book would make for a great read aloud for my third grade students. Though the book is at an easier level, I thought it would be a great introduction to a discussion about not worrying. The students could relate Wemberly’s predicament to taking tests (test anxiety). *Wemberly Worried* could lead into a discussion on student independence, reassurance, or test anxiety.


da. This book addresses the issue of test anxiety, what it is and what it is not. Cizek and Burg explain the causes and effects of test anxiety and how students can reduce it using various tips and strategies mentioned throughout the text.

db. *Addressing test anxiety: In a high-stakes environment*, will be helpful with my inquiry research. I can use this book to gain a better understanding of what causes test anxiety, and the effects it has on certain students in my classroom. By learning more about this, I can gain a better understanding of why students act in the way they do during a test/assessment activity.

a. Worthy, Broaddus, and Ivey focus on reading, writing, and learning in grades 3-8. The book has an emphasis on getting to know students as people and as learners. Also, it talks about tailoring instruction for individual students. It advises teachers to provide extra assistance for students who struggle as well as attempt to meet the needs of the students during regular instruction time. The Appendix includes various worksheets that teachers can use with students such as a habit survey and blank evaluation forms.

b. This book will benefit my research and data collection during my inquiry. I can use the worksheets in the back for surveys and teacher checklists. Also, the teacher can use the information in the book to evaluate her instruction during a lesson. The teacher can video-record a lesson and see if it met the needs of her students.


a. Larkin writes an article explaining what is meant by the term, “scaffolded” instruction and how teachers use it with students in the classroom. The article goes on to provide guidelines of scaffolded instruction such as establishing a goal and giving feedback to students. Then, it explains how to scaffold during a lesson using step-by-step instructions.

b. This book relates to a sub-wondering of mine for my inquiry. I can use the information in the book (the step-by-step instructions) and check that I am following through with the independent practice part of instruction. Through applying the information to a lesson, I could observe whether it promotes more independent workers.


a. The article provides strategies to help promote independent workers such as drawing guidelines for students to follow when they become stuck with their work. Also, the article talks about various discussions that went on in the classroom about working independently. It also goes into detail about what a teacher can do/provide to students during independent work time such as breaking during lessons (for questioning), assessing the pace, checking the time, and modeling children to peers. In the end, this study shows how students can improve tremendously in their independence.

b. I will use this article during my inquiry as an aid. The strategies mentioned might work with my third grade students. As I collect data, I can attempt to use various strategies mentioned in this article to see if it might increase the level of independence and decrease the amount of reassurance needed from the teacher.
   a. Robyn Silbey offers tips on how children can boost their confidence levels and decrease dependence on teachers. The article gives three ideas when completing independent practice, which are think, write, and evaluate. The article ends with a note to teachers. It explains how teachers should resist the urge to rescue students when they come to a problem.
   
   b. The ending to this article is very interesting and one that will benefit my inquiry research. It talks about how teachers should resist the urge to explain a problem to a student. It gives the example of a child who comes up to a teacher and asks for assistance. Instead of going over the steps to the answer, the article advises teachers to make children aware of the proper resources in figuring out a problem. I can use this technique during assessments in the classroom. If a child approaches an adult for help, she can state where that child might go to find the appropriate answer or state that she will not tell the child the answer, but listen to what he or she has thus far.

   a. This is a previous inquiry paper about responsibility. The paper looked at responsibility as a lifelong skill and explained how fourth grade students can learn about it through brainstorming and showing others how to be conscientious individuals.
   
   b. This paper might come in handy when completing my inquiry research and data collection. I can use the information in this paper and apply it to my survey to parents, students, and teachers. Through the data collection and the analysis of it, I can see if responsibility has an effect on students being independent workers.

   a. Mary Ann Rafoth does a fantastic job providing information on how teachers can help their students with various independent study strategies that are easy to implement in a classroom setting. The strategies build on classroom ideas and events that are happening in the classroom. These strategies range from kindergarten through 12th grade. Rafoth’s ideas come from her experience as a former teacher and psychologist.
   
   b. This book provides useful information that can be used with my inquiry. I can use certain ideas that are mentioned in this resource such as using simple memory strategies, following directions, and monitoring learning. During instructional time, I can observe whether or not the use of these strategies fostered independence.

a. *Fostering Independent Learning* focuses on students and how they use self-regulation during independent learning. The book talks about various methods and performances that may take place. Also, it goes into great detail about familial support and how it is detrimental to fostering independence. The last part of the book talks about ways teachers can empower students to self-regulate during certain subjects.

b. This book provides descriptions about self-regulation and how it can benefit students. Also, it includes various worksheets, checklists, and surveys that teachers can use to assess children. For my inquiry, I can use some of the worksheets ideas when creating various surveys for my students, parents, and teachers.
Carley Mulligan  
Inquiry Brief  
February 25, 2008  

Context  
This particular third grade classroom consists of seven girls and eleven boys. Of these eighteen children, one female child is enrolled in Title I for reading. In the beginning of the year, two students (both female) “tested out” of Title I for reading. The eighteen children in the class range between the “Basic” and the “Proficient” reading stages based on the assessment that they took in the beginning of the year. Six of the students are part of learning enrichment with three being boys and three being girls.

When looking at the various social relationships that take place in the room, there are a similar amount of leaders, pleasers, and followers. There are five leaders, which consist of three girls and two boys. There are seven pleasers, which consist of five girls and two boys. And finally, there are six followers, which consist of three girls and three boys.

Rationale  
Over the course of the school year, I found that there are several students in the class who consistently seek reassurance from one of the classroom teachers. For example, during a math assessment some students would just ask, “Is this okay?” Other students would come up and ask, “Is this good?” It reached the point where students would ask over ten questions during one activity or assessment. I began to wonder why students felt the need to “double-check” with an adult when they clearly knew the answer to their questions?

I decided that I needed to do further research to figure out the underlying meaning behind the children’s dependence on an adult in the room. I began thinking about all the different topics that could justify why students act in a certain manner during independent lessons/assessments. I came up with various ideas for why this may occur. Some reasons include: Directions are not clear enough for students, students are lacking in their self-confidence, students are lacking in their self-monitoring skills, students need more check-ins during independent work, students act in this manner at home, the K-2 Fail Safe aids promote less independence for primary students, and finally, some students may have test anxiety. These above ideas began my thought process, and I want to know the underlying reason my third grade students need so much reassurance! Also, I want to find out whether all of my students need reassurance or if only certain children need it.

Main Wondering  
Why do my students need so much reassurance??? How can I best help my 3rd graders become more independent workers?

Sub-Questions  
- In what ways could directions to an assignment/activity/assessment be made clearer by the instructor?
- How might students do more self-monitoring during an individual activity/assessment?
· How might check-ins benefit the students before they begin an activity/assessment?
· In what ways do students seek reassurance from parents?
· How might the K-2 Fail Safe aids play a part in students being less independent?
· What is the developmentally appropriate stage for children in third grade? What is appropriate for students and what is expected of them?
· In what ways are students lacking in self-confidence?
· How might a certain time of day or specific activity/assessment affect whether students need more reassurance?

**Timeline**

2/18-2/22  
1. Update Inquiry Brief and Annotated Bibliography for 2/27 submissions  
2. Make checklists  
   a. Whole-group  
   b. Independent  
3. Create Survey/Self-Assessment  
   a. Parent  
   b. Students

2/25-2/29  
1. 2/27-Due: Inquiry Brief and Annotated Bibliography-FINAL  
2. Finish creating surveys  
   a. Complete Student Surveys during class  
   b. Take home parent surveys (have paper in front of survey explaining purpose of it)  
3. Begin classroom observations with the checklists (Analyze)  
4. Research (Wherever my inquiry takes me)  
   a. Independence  
   b. Test Anxiety  
   c. Developmental ages  
   d. Grade expectations  
5. Set up classroom observations in building

3/3/-3/7  
1. Observations (Analyze)  
   a. Room 3/Primary classrooms  
   b. Other classrooms in the building  
2. Analyze parent and student surveys  
3. Decide on a focus (one, several, or whole-group)  
4. Research (Wherever my inquiry takes me)  
   a. Independence  
   b. Test Anxiety  
   c. Developmental ages  
   d. Grade expectations
3/10-3/14
1. Spring Break
2. Create various interventions to try on students
   a. Three Sticks
   b. Time Limits
   c. Green/Red Sticks
3. Put together whole-group discussion questions/one-on-one interview questions
4. Observations of another third grade class in other district?

3/17-3/21
1. Observations (Analyze)
2. Have a whole-group discussion or conduct one-on-one interviews (depending on the focus)
   a. Whole-group: Read Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes
   b. One-on-one
3. Begin interventions (Analyze)

3/24-3/28
1. Continue interventions (Analyze)
2. Create Survey/Self-Assessment similar to the one in the beginning
   a. Parent
   b. Student
3. Observations (Analyze)

3/31-4/4
1. Continue interventions (Analyze)
2. Observations (Analyze)
3. Complete Surveys
   a. Send home Parent Surveys
   b. Complete student surveys in class

4/7-4/11
1. Analyze parent/student surveys
2. Research
3. Work on Inquiry Paper
   -Description on teaching context
   -Wonderings and Questions
   -Data Collection and Analysis Process
   -Explanation of Findings (Including Claims and Evidence)
   -Reflections and Future Practice
   -Organization
   -Mechanics

4/14-4/18
1. Work on Inquiry Paper
2. Prepare for Inquiry Conference

4/21-4/25
1. 4/23: Inquiry Paper Due- FINAL
2. Prepare for Inquiry Conference

4/26
1. Inquiry Conference
Data Collection Ideas

Question 1: In what ways could directions to an assignment/activity/assessment be made clearer by the instructor?

Data Collection Used: Teacher will observe various lessons and record how the directions were given to the students. Then, the teacher will observe and record the amount of reassurance the students needed for that particular lesson.

Question 2: How might students do more self-monitoring during an individual activity/assessment?

Data Collection Used: Teacher will read, Wemberly Worried by Kevin Henkes and have a discussion. At this time, the teacher can discuss self-monitoring and talk about how students can use it during activities or assessments. Then, the teacher can observe students during these times and record whether students use self-monitoring and if they still seek as much reassurance from an adult.

Various Interventions:

Three Sticks: Students are given three sticks throughout the course of the day during an activity/assessment. Then, students can only approach the teacher three times during that time. Once students give three sticks to the teacher they cannot ask any more questions until the end of the test.

Time Limits: Place a time limit in the beginning of an assessment where students need to work WITHOUT asking an adult for help. This can apply to an activity too.

Red/Green Sticks: Place a box with a stick in it. The stick can have green on one half, and red on the other half. During independent work, when a student needs attention from an adult, they could turn their stick from green too red. Then, the teacher will walk up and help them. The students will continue working until the teacher comes up. (Will the students decide that they do not need help anymore if there is a certain wait time?)

Question 3: How might check-ins benefit the students before they begin an activity/assessment?

Data Collection Used: Teacher can have students repeat back directions before an activity or assessment. Then, the teacher can observe and record whether students seek reassurance from an adult.

Question 4: In what ways do students seek reassurance from parents?

Data Collection Used: The teacher will send home Parent Surveys. This will allow the teachers to see what kinds of assurance students seek from their parents. The teacher can analyze the surveys.

Question 5: How might the K-2 Fail Safe aids play a part in students being less independent?

Data Collection Used: Observations of primary classrooms

Question 6: What is the developmentally appropriate stage for children in third grade? What is appropriate for students and what is expected of them?

Data Collection Used: Researching and reading various information.
**Question 7:** In what ways are students lacking in self-confidence?
*Data Collection Used:* Student Surveys

**Question 8:** How might a certain time of day or specific activity/assessment affect whether students need more reassurance?
*Data Collection Used:* Student Surveys (What is your favorite/least favorite subject?), Observations during activities and assessments.
Student Birth Order and Age Sheet

Student A - November 21, age 9, youngest
Student B - March 21, age 9, oldest
Student C - March 17, age 9, youngest
Student D - September 6, age 9, youngest
Student E - April 15, age 8, oldest
Student F - October 8, age 9, oldest
Student G - October 1, age 9, youngest
*Student A said his least favorite subject is writing and his favorite subject is math. Student A sought reassurance in math on 2/20, 2/21, 2/26, 3/17, and 3/19. Student A sought reassurance in writing on 2/19, 2/20, 2/25, 3/17 and 3/19.

*Student B said her least favorite subject is math and her favorite subject is reading. Student B sought reassurance in math on 2/19, 2/28, 3/17, and 3/18. Student B sought reassurance in reading on 2/20, 3/18, and 3/19.

*Student C said her favorite least subject is spelling and her favorite is math. Student C sought reassurance in math on 2/26, 3/17, and 3/18. Student C sought reassurance in spelling on 2/19, 2/21, and 3/19.

*Student D said her favorite subject is math and her least favorite is reading. Student D sought reassurance in math on 2/20, 2/26, 3/5, 3/17, and 3/18. She sought reassurance in reading on 2/21, 2/27, 2/28, and 3/5.

*Student E said his favorite subject is math and his least favorite subject is listening. Student E sought reassurance in math on 2/26, 2/28 and 3/17. He sought reassurance in listening on 2/20, 2/25, and 3/5.

*Student F said her favorite subject is math and her least favorite is reading. Student F sought reassurance in math on 2/20, 2/21, 2/26, 3/17, and 3/19. She sought reassurance in reading on 2/19, 2/21, 2/26, 2/28, and 3/18.

*Student G said her favorite subject is math and her least favorite is reading. Student G sought reassurance in math on 2/20, 2/26, 3/17, and 3/18. She sought reassurance in reading on 2/26, 3/5, and 3/17.