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**USING GOAL SETTING TO INCREASE ACADEMIC SELF-
EFFICACY IN AT-RISK NINTH GRADE STUDENTS**

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*The significance of a man is not in what he attains
but in what he longs to attain.
-Kahlil Gibran*

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examines the effects of goal setting on the academic self-efficacy of ninth grade at-risk students. The study was completed in a large urban high school in eastern Pennsylvania with ninth grade students who were identified as being at-risk.

Methods of data collection included teacher research, surveys, field notes and student work. The study suggests that goal setting was ineffective as a means for increasing perceived academic self-efficacy. The study also suggests that students' actual experiences, vicarious experiences, affective experiences and persuasions played roles in the students' lack of growth in terms of their perceived academic self-efficacy.

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RESEARCHER STORY

I entered this profession with the same reason as any other teacher: to make a difference. For most of my life I had wanted to be a teacher, largely driven by how much fun it seemed. Not until I reached high school did I really understand *why* I wanted to be a teacher. This is the point at which I had *that* teacher that changed my life. This teacher not only gave me the facts and figures of his discipline; but he taught me about life, about goals and about making something out of myself. His influence on me stretched far beyond the classroom and his advice followed me well past my undergraduate career. I wanted to be *that* teacher to someone... I wanted to change some student's life and give her direction. Throughout my undergraduate education I maintained this idea. I learned all I could about educational theory and practices. I worked tirelessly in my pre-service experiences and *FINALLY* got a job. I was mentally prepared to make a change in my students' lives! Then I walked into my first classroom.

My first class consisted of low-level ninth grade students, most of whom were retentions. A large number of them were minority students and from low-income households. Many of them were involved in gangs. Although I didn't know it then, many of them would never even graduate from high school. I had never experienced this before; both my high school and college were largely white, middle-class. It was then I realized that this would be tougher than I first thought. I thought, "How could I possibly relate

to them? Why would they even respect my opinion?" In my life, I had never wanted for anything or worried if I was going to graduate from high school. These students probably *did* want for many things and probably did not find high school relevant enough to look towards graduation. My first year as a teacher was the hardest of my life. I discarded the belief that I would change a student's life and just worked on making it through the year alive and sane. It was not until I got a couple of years under my belt that I remembered why I became a teacher in the first place.

The more experience I got as a teacher, the more I developed a kinship with those students with whom I previously had felt no connection. I found that I saw more meaningful rewards in these classes compared to others that I was teaching. It could have been that subconsciously I had expected less from them and therefore their achievements seemed greater. It also could have been that I knew that these students needed me more than others, so their achievements were mine too! My lofty undergraduate goals had been confronted by reality, but I was back on track to make a difference with my students.

I found that with the low-level, at risk kids I had to throw content out the window and focus on what they need in life. Many of my colleagues would cringe to read the following statement: There is much in my curriculum that is non-essential. "The content is important for understanding where our country came from." It is the typical cliché response. However, what I see as the most important part of my curriculum is teaching students

how to use the skills of a historian—how to *do* history as opposed to just learning history. If acquired, these skills are priceless and can be used in any discipline, let alone any aspect of their lives. My students didn't need to memorize the Bill of Rights—they needed to know *how* to access, read and understand the Bill of Rights! Students in my classroom use *observation* to pick out clues to combine with their prior knowledge so that they can then make *inferences* about the material. They are essentially acting as detectives in a 'crime of history.' In my ideal curriculum, students would never have to memorize dates. They would be the problem solvers of history—armed with the details of history they would put themselves in the shoes of those who came before them and not only *re-create* their decisions but *evaluate* them within the context of the time period as well as the present. Ideally, this would not only equip students with the skills to be successful in the outside world, but give them a sense of empathy for those who had to make vital decisions in the course of history.

It was with experience that I first considered using mastery oriented goals, though I didn't call it that. The goals were ones that I set; the students were not invested in the goals so they didn't quite buy into them. This is where I think I went wrong; they were not motivated by my thoughts of what they needed to achieve. However, they enjoyed getting positive feedback from me. Rather than modifying behavior through traditional discipline I looked to help students recognize what an appropriate action was and how they could take that action in the future. Finally, I was starting to meet my goal!

In the spring of 2009, I was asked to be a part of a new initiative at my high school. The initiative revolved around placing ninth grade students with a team of academic teachers. The students would be grouped with the same kids and the same teachers all year long. The goal behind this was to create a community within a community. The hope was that doing this would ease the transition from middle school to high school. Additionally, the hope was that these teams of teachers would keep students from falling through the proverbial cracks.

The transition into this new way of doing business has been filled with logistical obstacles and other setbacks. However, the experience that I had that year was unlike any other year in my career. I had the unique opportunity to watch my students grow, to see their skills develop and guide them towards a path of success not only in their academic career, but in life. This is not because of my own efforts, rather the team of teachers I was working with. From the beginning of the year we set out to give students the opportunity to succeed and the tools to succeed. With a few exceptions, they did! These tools are similar to what I looked to explore in my research study. Though our team did not sit down and set goals with our students, we had them sign a contract, that outlined their responsibility as students. We found that this gave the students ownership; they recognized what they needed to do and how they needed to do it. In addition to these contracts, we often called the students in to our team meetings to reflect upon their progress. They responded favorably to this. Finally, through teaming we have created a community that

encourages nurturing and caring, while maintaining high expectations. Parents and students alike have noted that this has allowed the students to transition into high school effectively. My team and I see these results in all students, but more so for the students who would be considered “at-risk.” A handful of students who would otherwise have been left behind are currently in the tenth grade. There are students who *were* retained, but I think I have met that goal that I set long ago before I even stepped foot inside a classroom. This led me to believe that if students have an investment in their own goal setting they will increase their academic self-efficacy. Additionally, giving the students the skills that are found within the realm of self-regulation, I believe that they will respond with positive results and apply those skills to the remainder of their academic career.

Thanks to the teacher who inspired me so long ago, I know that I must not stop at this hint of success. I need to reach higher to surpass what I thought I could do; this is why I am so interested in the present study. My research goal in this study is to help ninth grade academic students increase their academic self-efficacy through goal setting. I know that if I am able to have students set goals and self-regulate that they will have confidence in their skills. This confidence will translate into the academic success needed for them to get a high school diploma and become a contributing member of society...at least that's *my* goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In today's society, students need more than just reading, writing and arithmetic to be successful. To be competitive in the 21st Century, students need life skills that will allow them to set goals, overcome obstacles and plan for the future (The Metiri Group, 2003). The students who are most in need of attaining these skills are students who the education system deems "at-risk." By the time these students reach high school they are on track for discipline problems, truancy, retention and eventually dropping out of school (National High School Center, 1992). I assert that if there is no intervention at this point in time, then these students will struggle to graduate, get jobs and become contributing members to society.

There are various reasons as to why students drop out before graduation. In 2006, Civic Enterprises in association with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation conducted focus groups representative of the student populations most likely to drop out of high school. The reasons given for dropping out in this report ranged from failing to keep up with academics to leaving school for family reasons; however, "sixty-nine percent of respondents...also cited not feeling motivated or inspired to work hard." (p. 4) Students reported that their lack of motivation came from how much their teachers challenged them, but some students also reported that previous academic experiences had left them behind by the time they reached high

school. For many of the students polled, poor experiences in earlier grades led to a poor attitude in academics. Additionally, the students reported that lack of parental involvement also played a role in their decision to drop out of school. Based on the results of this study, it can be reasonably inferred that these students' experiences contributed to a low level of perceived academic self-efficacy.

A classroom teacher must address the needs of all students, but is often aware that there are some students in the class who may need more interventions than others. There is room for all students to increase their self-efficacy by developing a skill in which they feel deficient. Through goal-setting, these students can develop the skills needed to regulate their own behaviors, thus achieving the goals that they have set for themselves. Students who stand to benefit the most from such an intervention are those students who may have been identified as at-risk for dropping out of high school.

At-Risk Students: Why is ninth grade such a critical year?

The ninth grade year is a pivotal one for many students, particularly at-risk students. "At-risk students are students who are not experiencing success in school and are potential dropouts. They are usually low academic achievers who exhibit low-self esteem" (Donnelly, 1987). Research is ambiguous in terms of a specific definition of 'at risk' students, however the National

Center for Education Statistics (1992) identifies several characteristics of student deemed ‘at-risk’. These characteristics include:

- students from single-parent households
- low socio-economic status
- transient students
- parents who have low educational expectations for their children
- grade-level retention
- truancy
- students who do not complete homework
- students who are regularly disruptive (p. vi)

In particular, ninth graders who are considered at-risk are most vulnerable to dropping out from high school when they are legally allowed to do so.

Studies examining intervention at the ninth grade level confirm the characteristics outlined by the NCES (National High School Center, 2007; Gewertz, 2009; Donnelly, 1987; Jordan, 2001). While the NCES identifies students who are at-risk for dropping out, many authors cite the importance of an at-risk student’s transition into high school; it is at this point that students make the decision to “play the game of school” or to just bide their time until they can withdraw. “Students who manage the academic demands of the transition to high school have a high probability of graduating four years later. But those who do not...face a substantially elevated risk of dropping out of high school” (Neild, 2009, p. 53). Drawing on evidence from the National Databases of Student Enrollment, state reports and nationally representative surveys, Neild (2009) asserts that the transition to high school is “...a place in the educational progression where students across the United States are at increased risk of getting stuck” (p. 56).

Why is there such difficulty transitioning into high school?

Following their eighth grade year, all students prepare to make the move from middle school to high school. They are not only entering a new physical environment, but a new state of mind. “School transitions...bring many changes in teacher relations, peer groups, classes and grading practices—any of which can affect self-efficacy” (Schunk & Meece, 2005, p. 74). American high schools are structured in such a way that students enter a grandiose building that is designed to house several hundred, even thousands, of students. For many students, this leads to a great deal of anxiety – students have left the supportive community of the middle school and are thrust into a situation where they feel lost (Donnelly, 1987, Jordan, 2001, Neild, 2009). In addition to entering a new building, students are also surrounded by new faces as many middle schools may filter into a regional high school. “Students must negotiate new social relationships and adapt to the practices and routines of the new school” (Neild, 2009, p. 59). There are three additional reasons that students have difficulty transitioning into high school: life-course changes, inadequate preparation for high school, and high school organization and climate (pgs. 58-62).

By the time students have reached high school, they have already gone through the physical changes that are associated with puberty, but many of them have not mentally matured. They face the possibility of more high-risk decision-making as well as the negative influence of older students. Neild (2009) points out “...a study by Christopher Weiss and Peter Bearman

provides good national evidence of the increase in drinking, smoking, and drug use between eighth and ninth grade” (p. 58). Based on this assertion, one can infer that some at-risk students’ struggles may be even greater as they are more likely than the typical student to be engaging in deviant behaviors such as drinking, smoking, etc. (Marsh and Cornell, 2001). In addition to an increased exposure to high-risk activities, students are often given greater freedoms at this point (Neild, 2009 & Civic Enterprise, 2006). Without a parent constantly checking up on them, students are more likely to neglect academic responsibilities. Drop-outs surveyed in the report conducted by Civic Enterprises (2006) reported that “As they grew older, they had more freedom and more options, which led some away from class or the school building. It was often too easy to skip class or engage in activities outside of school” (p. iv).

Neild (2009) noted that, “when students who struggled academically in the middle grades but were inadequately challenged before high school enter ninth grade, their lack of knowledge and skills finally catches up with them” (p. 59). As a result of their actual experiences and vicarious experiences, students develop a concept of what it takes to play the game of school. The experiences that students have and their perceptions of such contribute to their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). While these experiences are the students’ realities, their perceptions may be skewed. Additionally, students might not possess the skills needed to be successful in high school. Neild (2009) refers to data reporting standardized test scores of an urban school district: “Data

from these districts indicate that students who enter high school with academic skills below grade level are at higher risk of getting off track to graduation than those with on-grade skills” (p. 60).

Jordan (2001) argues that the lack of resources in large, urban school districts puts at-risk students at a further disadvantage as there is “...a fundamental lack of educational resources available at school, [and] sporadic or non-existent exposure to quality instruction...” (p. 4). This would indicate that students are not prepared to interact with texts in their classroom, nor do the type of work that the curriculum demands. Inability to meet curriculum standards would result in credit denial, thus setting the path for student dropout (Gewertz, 2009 & Civic Enterprises, 2006).

The final source of anxiety for incoming ninth graders includes the high school organization and climate (Neild, 2009). In addition to learning the new faces of their peers, students need to acquaint themselves with a new way of doing business. Ninth graders need to “...learn about various important details such as the credit game, attendance policies, exit exams, college boards, and making allies...” (Jordan, 2001, p. 7). Without completely understanding the structure of a high school support system, these students often find out this vital information too late. That lack of a support system is felt in the classroom as well. “The traditional social organization of the high school, in which teacher’s primary allegiance is to subject-matter departments and students are hurried from one...class period to another, can leave students feeling anonymous and alienated” (Neild, 2009, p. 61). Jordan

(2001) argues that the students perceive this anonymity as “an absence of caring and support” and as a result students, specifically those at-risk, “develop an unhealthy contempt for schooling” (p. 8). The manner in which high schools function, particularly in ninth grade, needs to adapt to the needs of their students to ensure latter success in their academic careers.

What can be done?

When pondering what can be done to aid in the transition to high school, it is critical to reflect upon what is *not* working as students enter high school. The overwhelming theme in the literature and the discussion above is that students feel a lack of support and nurturing in a large high school environment (National High School Center, 2007; Jordan, 2001, Neild, 2009). Additionally, “Students are apt to have higher self-efficacy for succeeding in a new environment when they are familiar with it and believe that others are available to help them overcome difficulties” (Schunk & Meece, 2005, p. 88). Much of the research suggests the creation of stand-alone ninth grade academies, directed primarily towards ninth graders (National High School Center, 2007; Jordan, 2001; Neild, 2009). Many ninth-grade academies have demonstrated a decrease in dropout rate and fewer reports of depression and other high risk behaviors as well as an increase of participation in school sponsored activities (National High School Center, 2007). A study of the New Haven Schools Project, which emphasizes relationships with a “qualified, caring staff” as well as community involvement, found that “achievement levels have been raised while

attendance and behavior problems have been lowered” (Donnelly, 1987, p. 2). While the National High School Center focuses on the ninth-grade problem, the New Haven Schools Project does not deal with just ninth graders. Ruth Neild (2009) examined the data of two models of ninth grade transition. In these models, teachers were organized according to teams, representing each core subject. In addition, each team was assigned a roster of 120 students. The purpose of this was to encourage “a personalized school environment for teachers and students” (p. 64). Only one of the schools reported that there was an increase in academic performance, yet students in both reform models reported, “. . .that they knew and felt supported by their classmates. . . [and] that their teachers knew them and cared about them and that they liked being with their teachers” (p. 65). The research cited above would clearly be most useful to those who create educational programs, rather than classroom teachers. For the purpose of this study and for the typical classroom teacher, the key is *not* creating ninth grade academies, but creating a climate for the students in which they are accepted, supported and mentored.

Gewertz (2009) conducted a study that identified at-risk students and followed them through their ninth grade year for the purpose of preventing loss of academic credits. Before students even entered high school, their guidance counselors were provided with a spreadsheet that outlined truancy issues, poor grades and discipline problems among other issues. These served as an alert to guidance counselors that these particular students were in danger of being retained in ninth grade, and possibly even dropping out of high

school. Teachers were also given access to this information, so that they could be proactive if and when students did not perform well in their classes. Once students were identified as returning to their old behaviors counselors would conference with students and devise contracts that served as a plan for the students' improvements. Teachers and counselors were given progress reports every five weeks so that they could conference with students regarding their progress. While some students were saved, other students fell behind in their credits and had to be retained. The support system that was created kept students who would have otherwise fallen through the cracks from doing so. One at-risk student remarked that it was the first time he had ever gotten an A. He said, "I didn't know I could do that" (p.2). The supportive and nurturing intervention that took place in this study is a theme similar to other literature regarding at-risk students (National High School Center, 2007; Neild, 2009). Additionally, the support system that was provided to the students allowed them to create an environment of success. This conferencing is a key theme within the literature regarding goal setting (Rader, 2005). It can be inferred that if students were given the opportunity to set goals and acquire skills to encourage self-regulated learning in environments that are nurturing, then they may have the opportunity to be successful in academic environments.

Self-efficacy

Defining Self-efficacy

"The striving for control over life circumstances permeates almost

everything people do throughout the life course because it provides innumerable personal and social benefits” (Bandura, 1997, p. 1). Most adults have experienced success in something that they believed that they were good at; similarly, most adults have failed at something that they believed that they were not good at. Albert Bandura, creator of social cognitive theory, feels that the perception of ability is related to the outcome. This perception is referred to as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is an individual’s perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels. It is important to note that self-efficacy does not refer to general capabilities. Rather, it refers to an individual’s belief that she can complete specific tasks successfully (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Meece, 2005; Linnebrink & Pintrich, 2003; Schunk 1996). For example, if individuals believe that they are good at math, they are not referring to their perceived self-efficacy, as the statement is too general. If individuals are confident that they can complete a specific task, such as long division, over and over again with success, then they are demonstrating self-efficacy. An important point to be aware of is that “...efficacy is a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral sub-skills must be organized and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes” (Bandura, 1997, p. 36). For example, students may have a high-perceived self-efficacy for learning, but being confident in their ability to learn requires them to possess other self-regulatory skills.

Typically, the definition of self-efficacy is met with confusion, or misattribution. Other terms that many perceive as closely related are self-

concept and self-esteem. The term confidence is key to that confusion, especially when referring to adolescents.

“Self efficacy concerns students’ beliefs that they can do something like solve a math problem, read a book, ride a bicycle, or tie their shoes. It involves some judgments that the individual can or cannot do these activities, just as self-perceptions of competence or self-concept beliefs reflect similar beliefs” (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, p. 121).

Self-concept is a general perception of one’s aptitude, as opposed to their beliefs of completing a specific task (Bandura, 1997). “Self-efficacy theory proposes that these more specific judgments will be more closely related to an individual’s actual engagements and learning than general self-concept measures” (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). On the other hand, self-esteem is “...concerned with judgments of self-worth. There is no fixed relationship between beliefs about one’s capabilities and whether one likes or dislikes oneself.” (Bandura, 1997, p. 11). While someone may be efficacious in the ability to do something, they might not be proud of it, and vice versa. Both self-esteem and self-concept can derive from the same sources that contribute to self-efficacy. However, neither self-esteem nor self-concept can be defined as a specific set of skills or behaviors. Self-efficacy can.

“Outcomes arise from actions. How one behaves largely determines the outcomes one experiences” (Bandura, 1997, p. 21). Additionally, Bandura believes that self-efficacy plays a central role in what individuals do; he does not support backward causation, which is to say that individuals do not see the end result of a task and *then* judge that they are deficient at that task. Rather, he asserts that one’s efficacy beliefs will determine what she will or will not

attempt. A higher perceived self-efficacy leads to an individual being engaged cognitively and using strategies to overcome obstacles. She will also be aware of her ability to think about her own cognitive processes. In addition, she will put forth more effort and persist. As students find favorable outcomes, they will become more motivationally engaged (Bandura, 1997; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, Schunk, 1996). This level of engagement is what many of the high school dropouts lacked, as reported by Civic Enterprises (2006). “Compared with learners who doubt their capabilities, those who feel self-efficacious about learning or performing a task competently are apt to participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties, and achieve at higher levels” (Schunk & Meece, 2005, p. 73). If schools take it upon themselves to equip students with the tools they need to set goals and overcome obstacles, then individuals are likely to improve self-efficacy (Schunk, 1996).

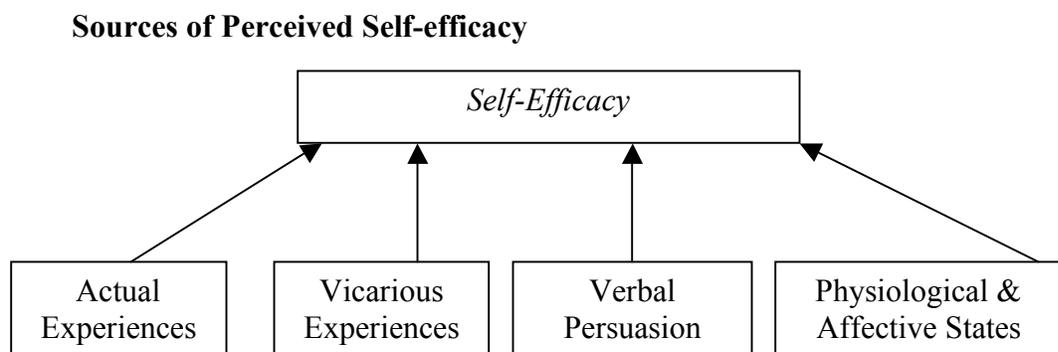


Figure 1: Sources of Self-efficacy

Actual Experiences

Self-efficacy stems from the social exposure of an individual. The first source of perceived self-efficacy stems from actual experiences. These are events or outcomes that people experience for themselves (Bandura, 1997; Schunk & Meece, 2005; Schunk, 1996). For example, if a student constantly receives C's on his or her report card, she might develop a low-level of perceived self-efficacy for learning. Whereas a student who constantly gets A's on his or her report card may have the belief that she will continue to get A's regardless of the teachers, school, etc. In forming perceptions of self-efficacy, these experiences are most influential. Families have a central role in forming these actual experiences. Bandura, et al. (1996) performed a study that attempted to link student self-efficacy to parental aspirations. Bandura and his colleagues found that children's beliefs in their academic efficacy was strongly linked to their academic achievement. Additionally, there was a strong link between parental aspirations and student academic efficacy. The connection between lack of parental aspiration and self-efficacy can be made as well. Individuals who are raised in lower socioeconomic environments might not have access to some of the enrichments that other individuals might, however it is important to note, "...not all children from poor families hold low self-efficacy" (Schunk & Meece, 2005, p. 84).

Vicarious Experiences

The second source of perceived self-efficacy comes from vicarious experiences. These are the experiences of others that an individual observes. Often these vicarious experiences stem from comparison to or the modeling of

peers (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1996). In the classroom setting, modeling may have a lesser effect on students (Schunk, 1984). Imagine classroom instruction on the topic of fractions: the teacher stands at the front of the classroom and goes through the steps of finding the lowest common denominator. The class observes and thinks, “Of course the teacher is able to do this, she is the smart one, she should be able to do this.” The classroom teacher is a not a fair comparison, because she is not equal to the students. However, when the test on fractions is handed back the students are able to make comparisons to their peers, their equals. At this point, they observe the success or failure of their peers and make judgments about their own capabilities regarding fractions. This can be detrimental as students progress throughout their educational careers. Schunk (1984) asserts that this comparison to peers helps to enhance motivation; however, it can also be argued that it can damage the students’ perceptions of their capabilities.

“Telling children that similar others can perform a task...can promote a sense of efficacy for succeeding because children are likely to believe that if other similar children perform at a certain level they can as well. In contrast, comparing oneself with those either much better or worse offers less information about what one can do” (p. 9).

This can be useful in attempting to increase perceived self-efficacy. Schunk (1984) further argues that when students meet their goals and compare those attainments with others’ progress, they then will be more willing to continue to set goals and self-evaluate.

Forms of persuasion

Individuals are reliant on others to help them judge whether or not they are competent in a skill, therefore the feedback that individuals get is influential on their perceived self-efficacy. This source has the capability to encourage individuals to persist in their efforts and feel that they are making progress. On the other hand, it can truly devastate these individuals. If, perhaps, the person providing the feedback is not realistic or honest with her feedback, then the individuals pursuing a skill could feel defeated in their continuous attempt to meet their goals. For example, students may be struggling to master a specific skill and are motivated by the teacher saying “You are making satisfactory improvements;” but after a longer period of time the students will no longer persist. Similarly, praising individuals for a mediocre performance causes them to see themselves as less efficacious. (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1996)

Physiological & Affective States

A fourth way that individuals develop their perception of self-efficacy is through their own physical and emotional experiences. The human body is hard-wired to respond to stress and anxiety; likewise it responds to relaxation and calmness. When the body is in a stressful situation, it might hinder performance (Bandura, 1997) “By conjuring up aversive thoughts about their ineptitude and stress reactions, people can rouse themselves to elevated levels of distress that produce the dysfunctions they fear” (p. 106) For example, a student who perceives himself to be inept at reducing fractions tends to

develop anxiety for the fractions test that he is about to take. Regardless of the amount of studying and practicing he has done, these thoughts of failure will tend to hinder his performance on the test. On the other hand, students who are confident in their ability to reduce fractions will be relaxed therefore increasing their chances of performing well on said test.

Assessing Self-efficacy

As self-efficacy is an individual's perception of her capabilities to complete a specific task, it is difficult to assess with methods other than surveys or self-reports. What is important to note in using these tools to assess self-efficacy is that one must gather and explore the evidence of perceived capability in a specific skill. It is also important to note that a high self-efficacy may result in positive outcomes, but there is no automatic relationship (Schunk & Meece, 2005). In measuring an individual's perceived self-efficacy Bandura (1997) relies on self-efficacy scales.

“In the standard methodology for measuring self-efficacy beliefs, individuals are presented with items portraying different levels of task demands, and they rate the strength of their beliefs in their ability to execute requisite activities. The items are phrased in terms of can do rather than will do” (p. 43).

Self-reports are also useful in assessing an individual's confidence in his or her capabilities, however data may be skewed based on the researcher's expectations (Bandura, 1997).

These tools provide useful information, and in this study both will be utilized, but in order to triangulate evidence of self-efficacy one needs to observe the behavioral engagement of an individual, the cognitive engagement

of an individual as well as the motivational engagement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, Schunk, 1996). When students are behaviorally engaged, the evidence is readily observable. Likewise, students who might have lower perceptions of self-efficacy will tend to be more willing to give up when confronted with obstacles (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Schunk, 1996). The argument can be made that at-risk students would be prime candidates for this self-doubt as they are likely to have experienced many setbacks in their academic careers (Donnelly, 1987, National High School Center, 1992, NCES, 1992). Unlike their engaged, efficacious counterparts these students might not persist in challenging situations, choosing to give up. "...When students seek help from teachers or peers in order to learn and understand the material, we consider that an important indicator of behavioral engagement" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003, p. 123).

While the students may be behaviorally engaged, it does not always mean that they are cognitively engaged. Many teachers observe the students in the room who are staring at them, looking like they are absorbed in the lesson, but these students' minds are elsewhere. Ultimately, a behaviorally engaged student uses self-regulatory skills to persist through challenging obstacles. "Persistence may bear the best relation to self-efficacy when the task is sufficiently difficult such that students with lower self-efficacy will quit whereas those who feel more efficacious will persevere for varying time periods because they believe they can master it" (Schunk, 1996, p. 13).

Like behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement can also be

observed, but it is more difficult to detect. Teachers can observe the questioning and discussion of students to determine if they are exploring the information in a deeper sense. Additionally, the classroom teacher can also observe how the students are processing information. For example, if students strive to think on higher levels, they might choose to summarize something rather than just memorizing information then they are displaying cognitive engagement. Furthermore, students who employ metacognitive strategies demonstrate they are cognitively engaged (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). “The quality of cognitive engagement reflects the quality of the students’ efforts in the task, while simple quantity of effort reflects behavioral engagement” (p. 124). Linnenbrink and Pintrich assert that behavioral and cognitive engagement will lead to motivational engagement, and in due course learning and achievement. They identify three major components of motivational engagement: personal interest, utility value and the general importance of the content or task. Personal interest suggests that the student finds intrinsic interest in the content. Utility value indicates how useful the task or content is. Finally, importance pertains to the students’ beliefs that what they are learning is of life-long significance to them. Linnenbrink and Pintrich further maintain motivational, cognitive and behavioral engagements are all interrelated—one influencing another. These arguments are supported by Schunk (1996) and Lau, et al (2008).

Self-efficacy's Role in Academic Achievement

Research indicates that the higher one’s self-efficacy is, the more

likely she will experience success with a particular skill. Schunk and Meece (2005) argue that self-efficacy in learning will influence other aspects of the students' lives, thus helping them to connect new information to things they already know. Additionally, Schunk (1996) feels that "Students who feel more efficacious about learning ought to engage in such activities such as attending to instruction, rehearsing material to be learned, and monitoring level of understanding" (p. 7). For these reasons it is critical for educators to be aware of not only how to identify an efficacious individual, but how to increase self-efficacy for those students. "A fundamental goal of education is to equip students with self-regulatory capabilities that enable them to educate themselves" (Bandura, 1997, p. 174). To do just this, teachers need to engage students behaviorally, cognitively and motivationally.

Appropriate and timely feedback is useful in encouraging the progress in an individual's pursuit to attain a skill. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) summarize in stating,

"Some students are given practice and instruction, in how to do their schoolwork better; other students are given the same instruction, but are also provided with feedback to increase their self-efficacy. In the latter treatment, students are taught how to attribute their improvement to their developing knowledge, skill, and effort, and are discouraged from attributing their poor performance to lack of ability" (p. 128).

The concept of timely feedback is a key theme in the goal-setting literature; thus a connection can be made between goal-setting and increasing self-efficacy (Rader, 2005). In addition to this encouragement, Schunk and Meece (2005) recommend that teachers and schools create nurturing and caring environments that encourage communication, mentoring, etc. This

recommendation is consistent with the literature relating to at-risk students, as well as ninth graders (National High School Center, 2007; Jordan, 2001; Neild, 2009; Gewertz, 2009). The big picture behind this encouragement relates to increasing self-efficacy and therefore influencing achievement.

An identifying characteristic of cognitive engagement is the use of deep thinking. This can mean that that students are thinking on the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy or it can mean that they are using self-regulatory skills to better solve problems and overcome obstacles (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). In 1990, Pintrich and DeGroot conducted a correlational study that looked at how motivational orientation, self-regulated learning and classroom academic performance were related. What is of particular interest are the data regarding self-efficacy and self-regulated learning strategies. In this study, the researchers examine the expectancy components, the value components and the motivational components related to the task. They found that "Self-efficacy was positively related to student cognitive engagements and performance. Students who believed they were capable were more likely to report the use of cognitive strategies...and to persist more often at difficult or uninteresting academic tasks" (p. 37). For this study, there were no interventions, only inventories taken regarding the students' beliefs. It can be argued that since efficacious students turn to metacognitive strategies when they are faced with challenges, then if students are equipped with self-regulatory skills they will be able to deal with reasonable challenges with ease, thus increasing their self-efficacy.

Finally, engaging students motivationally might lead to increased academic achievement. Motivational engagement is related to behavioral and cognitive engagement (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003), therefore one must consider the aforementioned in attempting to increase motivation. In attempting to foster motivation, teachers need to consider the interests of the students. They need to create an environment of choice, so that those students buy into the topic at hand. While this is not always possible, or even realistic, this opportunity allows for the students to become cognitively and behaviorally engaged, thus giving them exposure to the tools that would allow them to become more efficacious individuals (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). “Accordingly, a self-efficacy perspective suggests that if students are given tasks and activities that are challenging but not too difficult, their efficacy will increase as they experience success. As self-efficacy increases, interest and value also may increase as expertise develops” (p. 133). It is important for individuals to recognize that ability is not set in stone. It can be improved upon, therefore generating more confidence in a specific skill. Behavioral, cognitive and motivational engagements are a means to improve a student’s self-efficacy. It can be argued that through the process of goal-setting and self-regulation as an agency of achieving goals, students will be engaged behaviorally, cognitively and motivationally, therefore increasing their self-efficacy.

Goal Setting

As students observe their own progress, their perceptions of their

ability to complete a specific task will increase (Bandura, 1997). Goal setting is an effective means to sustain and improve self-efficacy. “As people work on a task they compare their current performance with a goal. Self-evaluation of strengthens self-efficacy and sustains motivation” (Schunk, 2001, p. 2). Some argue (Bandura, 1997) that goal setting is not a means to increasing self-efficacy, however other studies indicate that as individuals achieve or observe progress towards their goals, they are more engaged behaviorally, cognitively and motivationally (Urduan, 1997; Schunk, 1980, Schunk, 1984, Schunk, 2001). Schunk (1994), stated in an address to the American Educational Research Association that, “The belief that one is making progress, along with the anticipated satisfaction of goal accomplishment, enhances self-efficacy and sustains motivation” (p.3). It is critical to note, however that “although goals provide direction they do not guarantee successful performance...The use of individual goal setting accompanied with appropriate feedback and teacher support is crucial” (Cheung, 2004, p. 7). To clarify this further, goal setting alone is not a means to increasing self-efficacy; the individual must utilize self-regulatory skills to monitor the progress of their goals. Schunk (2008) defines self-regulation as the “...process whereby students activate and sustain cognitions and behavior system oriented toward the attainment of learning goals” (p. 465). This cyclical self-regulatory process allows individuals to be self-reflective, to make a plan for themselves and then to reflect on their progress (Bandura, 1997). In doing so, individuals are able to better respond to their progress,

thus sustaining their cognitive, behavioral and motivational engagements.

Goal Components

In addition to using self-regulatory skills to track the progress of one’s goals, research suggests that some types of goals are more conducive to success than others. Cunningham (2000) and her colleagues conducted an action research project in which they focused on decreasing undesirable behaviors and increasing motivation and achievement in implementing goal setting with students in an elementary school. Teachers and students set goals together, evaluated them, and then revisited the goals. Data indicated that there were substantial improvements in achievement and self-efficacy. When setting goals, one must consider the specificity, proximity and difficulty of the goals (See Figure 2)(Schunk, 1984; Schunk, 2001; Rader, 2005; Bandura, 1997).

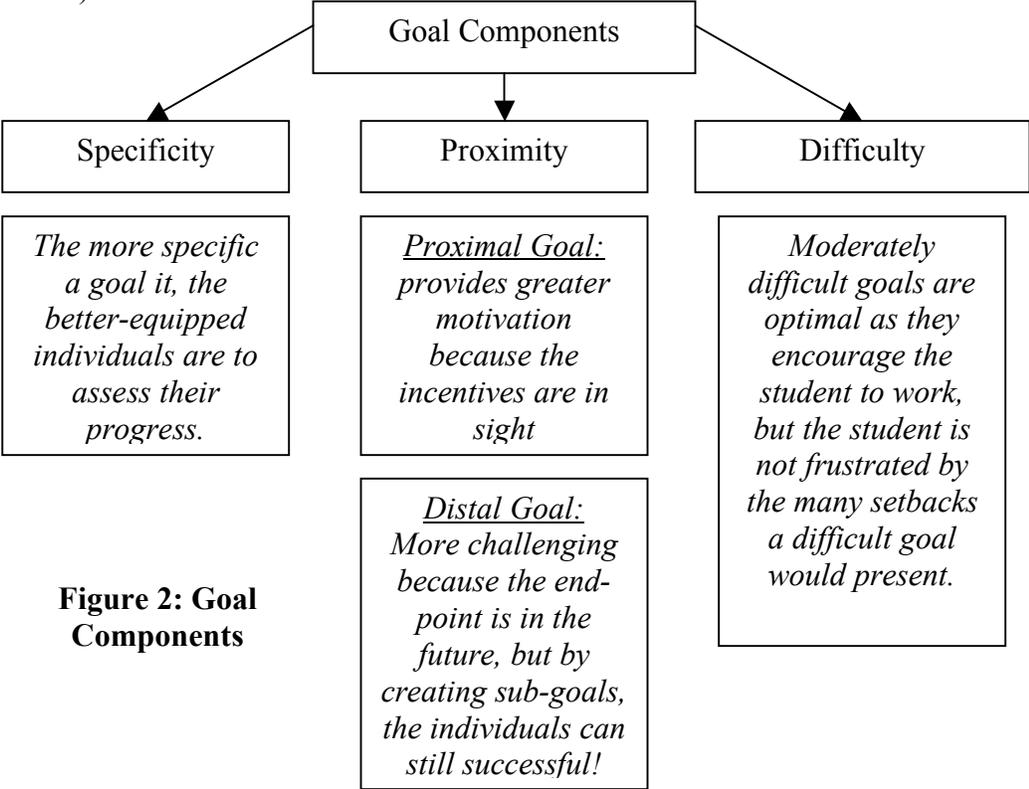


Figure 2: Goal Components

The bulk of research focuses on proximity, however relationship between all three is critical to the success of not just achieving the goals, but increasing self-efficacy. Literature also indicates that there are several keys that influence goal effectiveness (Rader, 2005; Schunk, 1984; Schunk, 2001), including goal orientations

Specificity

“Goal setting can motivate behavior and inform people about their capabilities” (Schunk, 1984). The more specific a goal, the better an individual can judge his or her progress. This, in turn, promotes task performance and develops motivation. For example, a third grade student would like to improve his ability to do his times tables therefore he sets the following goal: *I will be able to recite the times tables up to nine*. This specific goal indicates that he must successfully recite all of the times tables through the number nine. In attempting to achieve this goal, the student can track his progress as he memorizes the times tables, thus feeling motivated to move onto the next level. “Explicit standards regulate performance by designating the type and amount of effort required to attain them, and they generate self-satisfaction and build personal efficacy by furnishing unambiguous signs of personal accomplishment” (Bandura, 1997, p. 133). Similarly, the feedback that an individual receives regarding his or her goals needs to be explicit (Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005, Cheung, 2004). If the student fails, then it is the responsibility of the teacher to re-evaluate the student’s plan for meeting that goal and develop one that will pinpoint what the student

needs to work on. In terms of the student memorizing his times tables, he requires an external source that can correct him and make suggestions as needed. This external source serves as a check for him, as well as a support system. This support may be particularly helpful in dealing with at-risk students, who often lack the support both at home and in the school environment (Schunk, 2003).

Proximity

The proximity of goals refers to the time in which goals must be completed. Proximal goals deal with the present time or near future, while distal goals refer to a time further in the future. Dale Schunk tested the effectiveness of proximal goals in promoting performance and also investigated the relationship between interest and activities. He hypothesized that, “Proximal goals, which provide immediate incentives and guides for performance, should exact greater motivational effects than distal goals, which project far into the future and are less effective in influencing what one does in the present” (1980, p. 5). In this study, he took a group of students who were not doing well in math and gave them a packet with problems that they needed to complete. He further divided up the students into a group with distal goals, a group with proximal goals and a group with no goals. His intent was to see if proximal goals would lead to better achievement or self-efficacy. He found that the students who set proximal and distal goals showed improvement in their self-efficacy, while the no-goal students showed no significant changes. Furthermore, he also found that the students who set

proximal goals were more persistent in attempting to solve difficult problems. Thus it is the level of difficulty that needs to be considered in forming the goals.

Difficulty

The difficulty of the goal refers to how hard the goal is in reference to some outside standard. When goals are set too high, the repeated failure inhibits the psyche of the individual resulting in a loss of motivation and engagement. On the other hand, if goals are too easy and require little effort, the individual would be less likely to persist as she accomplishes those goals simply. (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005). The happy medium of goal setting would be to set moderately difficult goals as they "...maintain high effort and produce satisfactions and a growing sense of efficacy" (Bandura, 1997, p. 134).

Goal Orientation

In addition to considering the specificity, proximity and difficulty of goals, individuals must also consider what types of goals they would like to achieve. Goal orientation refers to the type of goal. Schunk (1994) asserts "...students who attribute success to ability, effort and effective use of strategies, should experience higher self-efficacy and remain motivated to work productively" (p. 4). Research further indicates that there is a strong connection between goal orientation and successful outcome (Lau, 2008; Urdan, 1997). Mastery goals are structured in such a way that success is measured by progress, reliant on individual's own observations. Nichols and

Hancock (2003) found that students get greater intrinsic rewards from mastery goals. Schunk (1994, p. 9) concurs, stating that students are "...apt to experience a sense of self-efficacy for skill improvements and engage in activities they believe enhance learning". Conversely, performance goals rely on outside standards to judge success or failure. While individuals may experience success with their goals, they are less likely to develop and sustain the metacognitive strategies that may be encouraged with the mastery goal (Schunk, 1994).

Making Goal-Setting Effective

In addition to creating goals that will encourage successful outcomes, individuals must also be aware of other steps that need to be taken to ensure that goal setting is effective. As previously mentioned, feedback is critical to the effectiveness of a goal. The support provided must be realistic and explicit (Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005). If the individual is approached with a false sense of positive progress, she may feel defeated when she fails, as judged by outside sources. Regardless of how sound that individual's goal is, the feedback that she receive may derail her confidence in completing the skill.

Individuals must also be able to set realistic goals. This is not to say that goals should not be difficult. In fact, the literature points to the contrary (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005). Individuals should set goals within their own proximal skills levels and be encouraged to further challenge

themselves once they have met previous goals. For example, a low-performing Algebra 1 student might set a goal to be doing college-level Calculus by the end of the year. Not only is this a difficult goal, but it is unrealistic as that student needs to learn Trigonometry as well as more Algebra skills for this to be possible. A realistic, yet moderately difficult goal for this student might be to complete quadratic equations with 85% accuracy by the end of the marking period. To gauge how realistic a goal is, Schunk (1984) and Rader (2005) recommend constant conferences in which students evaluate their progress and make modifications to their goals. This allows for an outside source to give them feedback on their progress. Additionally, it allows for students to participate in the goal setting, which will foster commitments (Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005; Schunk, 2001). Ultimately, however, it is up to the student to do what she needs to in order to meet the goal but “By understanding the role of goals, counselors, teachers and other practitioners will be able to work with students and clients to assist them in learning effective ways to manage their lives” (Schunk, 2001, p. 2).

Conclusion

I firmly believe that ninth grade is a pivotal year, and in that year teachers need to make great strides to keep students on the right track. The students who particularly need this assistance are those students who research deems at risk. The research suggests that to best help students’ transitions from middle school to high school is to put in place a support system for these students. Further, research also suggests that there is a strong connection

between the fulfillment of goals and an increase in perceived self-efficacy. While there have been no studies that specifically link goal setting and self-efficacy, I am working under the assumption that there is a connection between self-efficacy, goal-setting and academic achievement. Considering this and the research discussed above, one is led to believe that ninth grade at-risk students would be likely to increase their academic self-efficacy if they engage in appropriate goal setting.

TRUSTWORTHINESS STATEMENT

In order to ensure trustworthiness in my study, I needed to be sure that all participants contributed willingly. To collect the data that I needed from these students, I needed the permission of Moravian College's Human Subjects Board, my building principal and the parents and/or guardians of my students. "Although the process of obtaining permissions can be burdensome, it is a necessary and important step in the action research process. Obtaining permissions will protect you [the researcher], your participants, your school and your university" (Hendricks, 2006, p. 111). Once the Human Subjects Internal Review Board approved my proposal, I was able to gain permission from my principal and my students. (See Appendices A, B and C respectively.) As per Hendricks' (2006) suggestion, I developed these consent forms to include the purpose for my study, how the students will be included in the study, how I will protect the identity of the students and school, and that participation is completely voluntary and will have no impact on their grades if they choose not to participate. Upon presenting the consent form to my principal, I conferred with him regarding the purpose of the study, my methods and data collection. Additionally, I provided my principal with a collection of literature that supported my study. Once my principal gave his permission to conduct my study, I then moved on to discussing my study with my students. I explained to my students what I was studying, why and how I had hoped it would improve them as students. I allowed them to ask any questions that they might have had and ensured them that their identities

would be protected. I further assured the students and parents, via the consent form that I sent home, that I had their best interests in mind and that there would be no preferential treatment for students who had decided to participate. While the study was not content-related, the implementation of my methods was intended to be a natural development in my classroom as it connected with my philosophy of improving students' life-skills.

To ensure anonymity, I assigned each participating student a pseudonym. As I compiled my data, I only used the pseudonyms. A list of student names and corresponding pseudonyms were kept in a secure place and destroyed upon the completion of my study.

Once my study was underway, my fellow researchers and I formed teacher inquiry groups. MacLean and Mohr (1999) recommend this as a means to problem solve and find support during the research process. In these inquiry groups each of us were able to discuss any obstacles that we faced in data collection or analysis. It was additionally useful for further encouragement as we became frustrated with the challenging process of implementing our research studies.

In order to be sure that my study was credible, I collected many forms of data. Hendricks (2006) refers to this as triangulation suggesting, "if a teacher collects multiple forms of data...then the credibility would be increased" (p. 72). The data sources that I collected throughout the course of my study included student-generated artifacts, observational data and inquiry data. The student artifacts include journals that were collected on a regular

basis. The students were provided with specific guidelines for journal writing. Hendricks (2006) suggests that the specificity of the guidelines “can increase the chances that information in the journals can be useful” (p. 75). The observational data also came from multiple sources including my field notes, observations made by other teachers, and non-participant observations in other classrooms. Finally, my inquiry data stemmed from surveys that were given at the beginning and end of my study. Additionally, I conducted conferences with students. As I collected the data, I reflected on it. These reflections allowed me to identify any biases that may have been present in my data collection.

MacLean and Mohr (1999) suggested that rather than ignore the fact that I, as a researcher might have biases, I should “identify [my] attitudes and assumptions on a regular basis, reminding [myself] that [I] am an integral and intimate part of [my] classroom and [my] research” (p. 129). Some of the biases that may have existed have to do with the students who were the subjects of my study. I automatically assumed that these students, who were identified as at-risk, lacked academic self-efficacy. I did not recognize that these students, who may have had horrible academic experiences, could have persevered before they even reached my classroom. Additionally, I think that I also I assumed that all students wanted to become better students. As a student, I always tried to improve myself and I still have a difficult time understanding people who do not give their full efforts. Finally, I think that what I saw as academically successful may not be what my students believed.

It could be their perceptions that doing the minimum amount of work to get by in school is successful. I continued to remind myself of these biases as I collected and analyzed data.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

At-risk ninth grade students are most in need of help in transitioning into high school. If students do not develop confidence in their academic ability at this level, then they are in danger of dropping out of high school. (Donnelly, 1987; Gewertz, 2009; Jordan, 2001; The National High School Center, 2007) In order to answer my research question, which is, how does goal setting affect the perceived self-efficacy of ninth grade at risk students, I engaged the students in goal setting and other specific self-regulated skills. I first introduced to the students the process of setting goals. Then, once students had set goals they put together action plans and reflected upon goals that may or many not have been achieved. Throughout this process, I observed and recorded the change, if any, in their perceived self-efficacy.

Research Goals

When I began this study I wanted to change kids' lives! I wanted to take students who, for various reasons, had not been confident in their academic skills and completely turn them around by giving them ownership in their own educations. As someone who has always been intrinsically driven, I have always held a belief that students who were not similarly confident in their skills just needed a spark.

I had found in previous teaching experiences and in my own personal experiences that goals had always been great motivators and in turn translated into increased self-efficacy. When my students walked into the classroom on

their first day of school, I knew that it was going to be challenging as many of them did not look at all thrilled to be there. Regardless of my concerns I forged ahead, instructing students about the types of goals, talking about their academic progress and monitoring their developments. At the mid-point of the study I realized that students had not even remembered their goals, so I needed to re-group my approach to get them more involved in their own goals.

I am someone who has always loved school, I still do. I would be naive to think that I could get students to love school, but I at least wanted to help these students attain the confidence needed for acquiring new skills and being successful in the academic realm.

Setting

I teach ninth grade Social Studies in an urban school district with approximately 2000 students in grades nine through twelve located in the northeastern United States. This school has a diverse population, with White students making up 57% , Hispanic students making up about 27% and African American students making up 11% of the student population.

At my high school, ninth grades students are grouped into teams so that they will have the same four academic teachers throughout the course of the year. In addition, there is a special education certified teacher who pushes into the classrooms to provide support for not only special education students but also regular education students. Students leave the team for electives such as foreign language or technology classes. Classes are held on an A-B schedule. This means that every other class, academic classes meet for 85

minutes. On the fifth day, students see all of their academic teachers for 45 minutes. Teaming allows for flexibility in scheduling to best accommodate the needs of the teachers and the students. In my classroom, the desks are arranged in pods of four and five students. This allows me to have student collaborate on a regular basis.

Participants

In my ninth grade United States History classes, I have approximately 110 students. All students took part in the goal-setting activities, but data were collected for 14 of the students. These students were identified as at-risk. These students were selected using characteristics that researchers have used to define at-risk students: students with excessive absences ($n > 10$), discipline problems, and/or failing two or more academic classes in their eighth grade year and who are economically disadvantaged (Donnelly, 1987; Gewertz, 2009; Jordan, 2001; The National High School Center, 2007). Additionally, I cross-referenced this list with our team's Critical Literacy class. This class is typically made up of students who are the lowest achieving or need remediation with reading and writing skills. Oftentimes, the students are who enrolled in this class exhibit the characteristics of an at-risk student.

Data Gathering Methods

In order to answer my research question, how goal setting affects at-risk students, and to achieve triangulation, I collected observational data, student work, and survey data. Hendricks (2006) encourages data collection

from several sources to ensure validity and reliability. Thus, the collection of the data was critical to my study.

Observational Data

The bulk of my data came from my observations and the observations of others, in the form of a field log. I recorded my thoughts regularly in this field log. These notes varied from short anecdotes from class to my thoughts and reactions from student conferences. In addition, my notes also varied in that some of the notes reflected my own participation in classroom goings-on, while others were my non-participant observations. At the end of a day that I made observations, I typed up my notes and documented any insights that may have been gleaned from those observations. The field log also served as a good place to record conversations that I had with students and their specific responses to my prompts. The quotes that I recorded from students gave me some of the most important insights of my study.

Student Work

Another source of data was student work. As we began the study, I had students write an Academic Autobiography (see Appendix D), which was to indicate their previous educational experiences. This allowed me a view into how their actual experiences and vicarious experiences had influenced their self-efficacy. I made notes to the students in their learning logs, made photocopies for my records and then returned them. On the photocopies, I made inferences regarding their self-efficacy and previous experiences.

Following goal setting instruction students created their own goals and recorded the goals in their learning logs. During the instruction, I had emphasized the importance of the specificity, proximity and difficulty of their goals (Schunk, 1984; Schunk, 2001; Rader, 2005; Bandura, 1997). To further aid students in writing their goals I provided them with a handout outlining goal components (see Appendix E). They handed them in and I made comments in the learning log regarding the structure of their goals. I was sure to steer away from making recommendations for their goals because I wanted them to have ownership of their goals. Once the goals had been set and the students were able to review my notes, they created action plans for meeting their goals. In this action plan, titled “My Plan for Success,” students were asked to visualize their goals, make plans for their goals, set due dates for their goals and troubleshoot any obstacles (See Appendix F). Students regularly made entries regarding the progress that they were making on their goals (See Appendix G). At the conclusion of the study, students wrote a learning log entry that examined the success of goal setting. This entry served as one of the most important pieces of data as it looked at whether or not my study had met its goals. Students were asked to be specific in their reflections, as this would indicate to me the successes and failures of my study (See Appendix H).

Survey Data

“A survey or questionnaire gives you a broad base for understanding your students’ ideas in regards to your research question” (Maclean and Mohr,

1999). Additionally, Bandura (1997) suggests the use of self-efficacy scales as a means of assessing perceived self-efficacy. In the first week of my study I administered a self-efficacy survey to my students (See Appendix I). This allowed me to gauge the students' confidence in their classroom behaviors. The questions specifically referred to confidence in their academic skills, help seeking, motivation, self-regulation and self-control. I gave the same survey to the students at the completion of the study, to identify any changes in perceived self-efficacy.

THIS YEAR'S STORY

The First Days of School

The students filed into my classroom just like they had for the past 5 years of my teaching career. Usually, I would expect ninth-graders to be shy and quiet. Not these groups of students, they were chattier than classes I had in the past. I thought to myself: *Oh my, I am in for it.* As is typical of the first day, I introduced myself to the students and shared with them my expectations. As I finished introductions I explained to them that *this* year would be a little bit different! I told them that my goal for the year was to not only have them do well in Social Studies, but for them to improve themselves. As I looked out into the classroom I saw their eyes just glaze over. I thought to myself: *Great, so now they think I am just some crazy teacher who thinks that I am going to completely change their lives.* I shared with them that not only did I have goals for them, I also had goals for myself: I wanted to write a book! Again, the students looked at me like I was crazy. So I said, “yeah I want to write a book... see I want to do this experiment and when I am done with it, I am going to write about it.” With this statement the students seemed a little more interested, but no one was quick to ask questions even though the classes were quite loquacious. With no questions or comments from the students, I began to tell them *my* story.

When I begin classes for the year I always share with the students my expectations of them, that they learn to read and think critically. I then told

the students why I thought this was so important for them to learn while they are still in high school—because in college very few people will be there to help them learn how to read the way that they need to be successful. As I began to explain the importance of reading critically, I shared with the students that I didn't know how to *really* read until I was a sophomore in college, and I almost failed out because of it. Their glazed eyes were now replaced by ones that held shock and awe. One student said, “Wait... then how are you a teacher?” I told the student that he had asked a very good question. The answer to that question is that I set a goal for myself to be a better student and a better reader. I told him that there were times when I got something that I needed to read and I wasn't too confident about it, but I pushed through because I knew I had to in order to meet my goal of doing well in school. My ability to set goals for myself and persist to achieve those goals helped me get to where I am today—very close to earning my Master's Degree from Moravian College. I told them that now I felt confident that I could do well in academics. Then, I shared with my students that I would like to see them have the same sort of positive experience – setting goals and working to achieve them. I told the students that we would actually be working a great deal this year on setting goals, making action plans and reflecting on our progress. As time ran short during the classes, I closed by telling the students that I had hoped that they would be part of the book that I was writing. I quickly handed out permission slips as the time ticked away, reviewing what I was studying, why, and that I would love to include them if

they chose to be a part of this book. There were a few students who were excited about the concept of being a part of the book, but overall the students just stuffed the paper in their bookbags and rushed out of my class. I thought to myself: “Tomorrow I will get them to buy into this!”

Things I wish I knew on Day One:

When the students started the year, they came in with previous experiences and biases. The beginning of the year was always tough for teachers, because of just that—they were unaware of students’ backgrounds. Sometimes it took quite a long time before teachers got to know their students’ stories. With this particular class, there were so many things I wish that I had known before embarking on my journey. Below are vignettes that identify things I wish I had known on the first day of school. I do not know if knowing these things would have affected my study, but it would have helped me to understand my students better and at an earlier point.

Kyle

Dear Mrs. Deily,

I am going to be one of your most challenging students. I come into your classroom with a lot of things going on in my life. Last year, I was in partial hospitalization; this is my first year mainstreamed. Over the summer, my dad passed away in a motorcycle accident and I still really haven’t dealt with it. On top of that I have been diagnosed with Asperger’s, so I struggle with social situations. I do have a lot of things going for me though. My mom loves me a lot and works really hard to make sure that I get the education that I deserve. I am really smart, but often my behaviors get in the way of my learning. There are going to be times when you want to wring my neck, but hopefully you will not give up

on me! I think I have a lot to offer, I just need to get myself straightened out.

Matthew

Dear Mrs. Deily,

I am a really sweet kid who wants to do well in class. I have always struggled in school but I am worried that the ninth grade will be too much for me. I have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Asperger's and ADHD. My mom is a single mom—she works like crazy and does her best to make me better. She writes things down for me and talks to my teachers all the time, but sometimes neither my mom nor I know what to do. I make really good progress initially by working my butt off, but around Thanksgiving my doctor is going to switch my medications, so I will struggle with staying awake and focused in class.

Danny

Dear Mrs. Deily,

I am really quiet in your class, but sometimes in other classes I get a little mischievous. I am an English Language Learner, so I sometimes struggle with doing some of the class work as well as reading the book. I have always hated school, but I really want to do well. Maybe I hated it so much because language was such a barrier for me. I start off the year pretty badly, but turn things around. You are going to be so proud of me!

Diane

Dear Miss,

It's going to take you a while to figure me out, if you figure me out at all. I have got an attitude and I am determined not to listen to anyone. That doesn't mean that I don't know that school is important though... I know it's important, but I just can't bring myself to do more than going through the motions. I find school completely boring (except math class)! Maybe I find it boring because I don't really have that much confidence in my reading and writing, I am really bad at it. Going through the motions isn't enough for me though; by the time we are halfway through the year I am going to be in danger of being retained in ninth grade. I start to think, "what's the point?" but when I hear that I still have a chance of

passing some of my classes I feel a lot better about myself and even come after school for help.

Alex

Dear Miss,

You and I are really going to butt heads this year. Sometimes I am going to show what a great person that I can be, other times I am going to show you my talent for pushing the limits. Last year, I was at my middle school for like 2 months and I had so many discipline problems that they almost expelled me! I haven't quite reformed yet, I still get in trouble a lot, but I kind of do everything I can without crossing the line. To tell you the truth, some of the times I don't even know when I am talking or distracting the class—it gets me in trouble a lot. I have trouble, too, taking ownership for my actions. Even though I get OK grades and I am really smart, my behavior doesn't allow me to be as good as I can be.

DeeDee

Dear Mrs. Deily,

I really don't get to know you too well because I am not in school that much. I am absent and tardy a lot and when I am here, I am in in-school suspension because of my tardies and skipped detention. It makes it really hard for me to do well. My mom does the best that she can, she always calls to check up on my attendance, but court dates and dentist appointments take me away from school. I am really close to being retained in the ninth grade, but I sometimes don't even care because I might be moving somewhere else so I can have a brand new start. When I am in class, I do an OK job. I struggle with reading the text, but I do try pretty hard in class.

Johnny

Dear Miss,

I get down on myself really, really easily. I have had a tough life. My cousin is raising my sister and me, and she is only like ten years older than I am. For my whole life I have felt like no one wanted me, I feel rejected. What makes it worse is that I have an IEP, so I feel like I am some kind of weirdo. I don't like special attention, but I need it and I know I need it. I am well behaved in class, I talk sometimes, but I am well behaved. Sometimes I get really distracted by

others, and when I get redirected sometimes I get mad. Even though I get discouraged really easily, when I find something I do know about I light up inside. I have kind of made up my mind that I am going to fail ninth grade no matter what I do, so I sort of don't even want to work.

How is this History?

My first stab at goal setting

I felt like I rushed through that first day—the kids got to know me a little bit, but I don't think that they bought into what I was saying. I am not sure if they even understood what I was trying to do. So, the next time I saw them I decided to introduce the idea of goals and goal setting. As they walked into the classroom, I had a warm-up on the board. It asked them to list three things that they had wanted to accomplish this year. The purpose of this was to have them brainstorm and think about their goals. Many students asked if they could write about anything; I told them that for now they should just focus on academics. Most students got to work, writing down their ideas but a few students sat in their seats, staring blankly at me. I asked the students to share some of their goals, and they were the typical general goals that I would have usually gotten at the beginning of the school year: “Not to fail,” “Get honor roll,” “Don't get written up.” I thought to myself, *this is a pretty good beginning; I just need to help them tweak this a little bit.* I told the students to keep in mind what they had written down and to keep thinking about what else they wanted to accomplish this year—we would get back to it later.

What the heck is self-efficacy?

Following the mini-lesson on goal setting, I decided to dive into self-efficacy. I thought to myself: *How am I ever going to get them to understand what I am trying to do with this study?* Again, I started the class off with a warm-up. I asked students, “If you don’t know where you are going, how can you expect to get there?” I allowed them about five minutes or so to brainstorm about the prompt and answer the question. After those five minutes had passed, I asked them what they had thought about the prompt. Again, student answers were very general and predictable, remembering what we had talked about in the previous class. “You need goals to get what you want” and “You need to know what you want to do” were some of the responses. I was impressed that they had remembered what we worked on in the previous class, and that they had seemed to embrace the idea of what I was trying to do with them. I told all the students who volunteered that “these are great answers!” Then I ask them: “So how do you feel when you get what you want?” Silence filled the room, so I re-worded the question: “How do you feel when you have met your goals, after all your hard work?” A student responded, “I feel pretty good about myself.” I thought, *Yes!! I have them right where I want them so that I can explain what self-efficacy is.* I told the students that this was absolutely right! I gave examples of sports heroes, entrepreneurs, academics and even referred to my own life! This helped me transition into my instruction on self-efficacy.

I thought that it was important that the students knew what I had wanted them to get out of this study, so I was sure to spend time explaining to them what exactly self-efficacy was. After the introductory discussion, I put the word SELF-EFFICACY on the board. I asked the students if they had ever heard of this term before. One student raises his hand and said, “Yeah is it like self-esteem?” I told the class that the student was close, but self-efficacy was a little bit different. I explained to the student that, “self-esteem is pretty much how you feel about yourself; self-efficacy is how confident you feel about a certain skill.” Under where I had written SELF-EFFICACY, I then wrote the word CONFIDENCE. I further explained to the students that, “self-efficacy refers to not only what they feel confident about, but also what they feel they can do over and over again with success.”

This is going well so far, but here is where it gets difficult! Now I have to explain to the students what I hope they get out of this whole process.

Having explained what self-efficacy was, I asked the students “So what happens when you are feeling confident about a particular skill?” There was silence at first, then a student hesitantly raised his hand, “Well I guess that, you know, I am more willing to do it.” I told the student, “Good,” and wrote the response on the board. Other students chimed in with similar answers. In an effort to lead the students in the direction that I wanted to go, I had asked them, “are you more willing to pay attention to it?” The students nodded their heads in unison, so I wrote that on the board. Then I asked, “Are you more willing to think about it and work at it?” Again the students nodded their

heads, signaling that I could write that answer on the board as well. *This is great! The students seem into and completely get what I am talking about!* Then, one student raised her hand and said, “How is this history?” I thought, *Darn it! I had a flow going, I was about to connect this all together and someone asks that question.* It was a valid question, so I took the time to answer it. I told that student that she was right; it was not about history. It wasn’t even close to being about history. I told her, “Sometimes teaching is just not about giving facts or homework or tests. Sometimes it is about trying to get your students to be better people, to set them up with the skills to be successful in whatever they do after high school.”

The flow in my lesson was gone, but it was sacrificed for a teachable moment. I thought, *Hopefully it was worth it.* I tried to get back on track, returning to what I had written on the board. I took time to label each of the statements that were made, adding my own terminology into it (See Figure 3).



Figure 3: What self-efficacy can do

With my own terminology added, I explained the method of my madness.

“See, when you are confident (self-efficacious) about a particular skill, you are willing to pay attention to it (behavioral engagement). As you become more and more confident about that skill, you are more willing to think about it from different angles (cognitive engagement). Finally, as your confidence increases you will find that you are more willing to spend time working on that skill to become even better at it (motivational engagement)! This will all lead to more confidence (self-efficacy). What I want to try to do is to see if by setting goals, you can become more confident about your academics.”

The students just looked back at me, one student asking, “Do we need to write this down.” I told that student “No” and quickly realized that I had gotten too technical on them. With that comment, I decided that it was time to distribute the self-efficacy survey (See Appendix I). The self-efficacy survey was of my own design, but it was very loosely based on self-efficacy scales created by Albert Bandura (1997). I told the students that I wanted to judge where they stood so far with their academic self-efficacy. I told the students that, they should think about academics in general. I asked the students to read each statement carefully and respond with the following:

- 5 → most like me
- 4 → sort of like me
- 3 → sometimes like me, sometimes not
- 2 → not really like me
- 1 → least like me.

The students completed the surveys, and I collected them so that I could review them. I scored each item, according to the scale above. The only exceptions in the scoring were the questions that demonstrated a low-perceived self-efficacy (Appendix I, Questions 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9). In these

questions, I reversed the scoring. Therefore if the student indicated in those questions that the prompt was least like him, then I scored it as five points. In addition an indication that the prompt was most like him would be scored as one point. A maximum score indicated a very high level of perceived self-efficacy would have been 45. A minimum score, indicating a low level of perceived self-efficacy would have been a score 9. Additionally, the content of the question gave me insight regarding the students' behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement and motivational engagement. The following are the results and the insights that were gleaned from the results.

JOHNNY

Johnny's score was a 20. Overall, Johnny did not show much confidence in his academic skills. He admitted that he had a hard time concentrating in class, which is noted in his IEP. His specially designed instruction requires that Johnny have cues to stay on task. Based on my observations, Johnny's score was spot on. He avoided doing work and resistant to assistance.

CHRIS

Chris' score was a 28. Overall, Chris was on the fence for all of the options. He did admit that he sought out help when he came across a problem. He also admitted that he also had a hard time concentrating in class. I didn't think I would qualify this student as having a low level of self-efficacy, but there is definitely room for improvements.

DANNY

Danny's score on the self-efficacy survey was a 32. This student was also towards the mid-line in terms of his perceived self-efficacy, with a lot of reporting "sometimes like me, sometimes not." His strengths seemed to be that he asked for help when he had trouble and that he did homework on time. However, he wasn't very likely to look up information outside of class and rarely took notes in class.

MATTHEW

Matthew's score on the self-efficacy survey was a 32. This student really had no middle ground, he was either confident in his abilities or he was not. He admitted that he struggled the most in social studies and sometimes had a hard time concentrating in class. On the other hand, he seemed pretty confident in his self-regulation skills: he believed that he completes things on time, he writes down his homework, will do outside research for something in class and will resist the temptation to talk to others in class. However, I thought a part of him not talking to others was related to his disability.

KYLE

Kyle scored a 36 on his self-efficacy survey. He had a pretty high perceived self-efficacy, but some of his assessments in class didn't necessarily agree with the results of the survey. At that point in the study, I thought he really did have confidence in his reading, writing and language skills. I disagreed with his assessment of being able to complete his assignments on time and resisting the temptation to talk to others in class.

ALEX

Alex is another student who had a different perception of his self-efficacy in comparison to what I saw in class. He scored a 31 on his self-efficacy survey. While his perception that he cannot resist the temptation to talk to others was spot-on; I have observed that he does not stop talking - EVER! This usually got him in trouble. He also noted that he completed his work on time and wrote his homework down as well. I have not observed this to be true.

DIANE

Diane's score on the self-efficacy survey was an 18. She did not feel confident in her ability to read, write and speak. In my classroom observations I had found this to be true, she needed directions re-worded, etc. so that she could best understand them. In some cases she didn't really care to have them re-worded she just sort of gave up and said, "I don't get this." She said that she struggled most in Social studies, this was probably accurate because she also struggled with language and there is a great deal of reading

and writing in Social Studies. Diane also recognized that she did not always hand her assignments in on time, which I observed in class. Finally, she said that she has a hard time staying focused in class and often feels tempted to talk in class.

DEE DEE

DeeDee's self-efficacy survey score was a 28. DeeDee admitted that she did not have very much confidence in her reading, writing and language skills and that she struggled in social studies. Again, I saw a connection as Social Studies is reading and writing intensive. Dee-Dee seemed otherwise confident in her ability to write down homework, to complete work on time, etc. She also said that she had little or no problem concentrating in class and could avoid talking to others. At this point, I couldn't really say if those perceptions are also what *I* see... she hasn't been present in class very much and when she has she has been very quiet. I could note, however, that when she returned to her class following her absence she took it upon herself to get the work that she had missed.

LANEY

Laney scored a 21 on her self-efficacy survey. Laney did not feel completely confident in her ability to read, write and speak. She also felt that she sometimes struggled most in Social Studies. Again I saw a connection between reading and the distaste for Social Studies. She said that she did not often complete her homework on time and had a hard time both concentrating in class and avoiding talking to her friends in class.

KAREN

Karen scored a 22 on her self-efficacy survey. Karen noted that she struggled with her reading, writing, and language skills, this lack of confidence translated into her lack of confidence to do well in Social Studies. She said that she completed her homework on time, but did not write it down. From what I saw in class, she did not complete her homework regularly. She noted that she did not often take notes in class and often could not resist the temptation to talk to others in class.

Academic Autobiographies

The self-efficacy surveys gave me some insight as to where the students stood in terms of their perceived self-efficacy. However, there were other issues that I needed to know about concerning their self-efficacy: How did they get like that? Bandura (1997) states that self-efficacy results from individual's actual experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological states. The Academic Autobiography gave me more information about where these kids were coming from.

Following our discussions on self-efficacy and goal setting, I set out to have the students draft their Academic Autobiographies. Each student was given a journal that would serve as his or her learning log for the study. I proceeded to hand out the worksheet that I had drafted for students so that they would have a guide for their writing (See Appendix D). Students did not seem to struggle with this very much; they got right to work. Unfortunately, time in the class soon ran out and I needed to assign this for homework. Below are excerpts of learning log entries that I actually got back; many of the students did not return them to me.

DANNY

Septembe, 3

I always felt the same way about school. I just dislike it.

DEE DEE

no, I always hated school because it's boring, school is important, but it's to much. It puts extra things on your mind. School is just a extra thing on your

to-do list. I just go to learn so I can go to college to be a doctor.

I think this is the case because teachers make it boring. If teachers made school not all about test, homework and doing this and that I would like it. Teachers are all also head on students...

To be honest, I don't have no strengths in school. I don't have any strengths because I don't worry about that. All I worry about is my job.

My weaknesses are everything because I do everything equal. School is my thin either is homework. Everything is my weakness because in a way I don't care only to do my stuff to pass. I try to overcome, but it don't work.

DIANE

I have always felt the same why about school, boring! I don't know why but I never really enjoyed my academic classes. I don't know if my feeling for school is gonna change but I'm hoping so. I was so excited to go to school when I was younger but look at me now I hate it! This is how I feel about school.

I think this is the case because of the drama. No matter where I got there is always drama even if they don't know me... I asked my mom over and over again to have me home schooled but she won't.

My strengths as a student are...getting down to work when I need to. I don't really feel I have other strengths. This is my strength because I would like to get good grades through out my year in high school.

My weaknesses as a student are talking and not doing homework and giving attitude. Let's just say I can't not talk, I don't really feel like doing homework and I can't help my attitude... how really don't know how to overcome them.

MATTHEW

My name is Matthew and for me going to school was fin in the beginning. Then it started to get

boring. I didn't like it then. But I still get good grades. This is the case because your attitude determines how good you do in school.

My strengths as a student are always focusing, getting work done on time, and getting good grades. There are my strengths because they help me do good. Also to accomplish tasks. I developed these strengths by just being a good student and coming prepared.

My weaknesses as a student are not being able to understand what I read in books, struggling on tests or quizzes and forgetting to do assignments. There are my weaknesses because they kind of make me do bad in school.... To overcome them I just have to keep on trying and never give up.

SALLY

Every year it's something different, 6th grade I liked it, 7th grade I loved it, 8th grade I hated it, this year I like it. It depends who my teachers are, and who's in my classes.

Goal-Setting, It's for real this time...

This is what it is all about! Time to set the goals. I need to make sure that the students know what kinds of goals to set so that they can be successful. I think that if the goals are too general, students make the goals too easy and don't set deadlines this study will fall flat! Hopefully the handout that I made for them will help them set their goals (See Appendix E)!

I started off the class by having the students refer back to a warm-up from one of the first class periods. This warm-up asked them to identify three things that they wanted to do this year. The students turned to this warm-up and I began with my instruction on goal setting. I distributed the goal setting handout and got to work explaining the specificity of the goals, the proximity of the goals and the difficulty of the goals. The kids looked as though they

were paying attention and getting it. And I *thought* that I had made this process really simple by giving them the handout to accompany my instruction.

I repeated what I had said about what a goal needs to be successful, and let the students get to work on their own goals. I had no handout or framework for this, I just let them at it. The only instructions that I gave them were that they needed to write down at least five, those five needed to be about academics and that they needed to follow the rules that we just went over. As I braced for them to start writing, I felt pretty good about my instruction—I felt like I had hit all the bases. As I circulated the room, I could see that the students were struggling with setting their goals. They were dead quiet, and they were never that quiet. I had to probe students to get them to think about what they wanted to achieve, how they wanted to achieve it and when they wanted to achieve it.

I don't feel very confident about this—I emphasize to them that the goals should be theirs but I get the feeling that they were sort of hindered by the fact that I told them to stay within the realm of academics. As class wrapped up, I told the students to keep thinking about these goals, that we were going to re-visit them in about a week or so. After that week, I had them pick one or two goals that they were really passionate about and wanted to pursue. In the meantime, I collected the learning logs to make comments on the structure of the students' goals.

Setting up action plans

After a week or so, I was able to go through all of the learning logs and return them to the students with my comments regarding the structure of their goals. When I returned them students asked, “so what’s my grade on this?” and “You wrote something on this, does that mean it’s wrong?” I sighed, recognizing that these kids were playing the game of school. Who could blame them? This is the way it had always been for them, do something because the teacher says so. Once the students had their learning logs back in their possession, I had them go through and circle which goals they had wanted to pursue. I emphasized to them that the goals should be *theirs*, not their parents’, and not their teachers’. I told them, “If you can’t own your goal, then you won’t achieve it. You have to do it for you!”

Students quickly circled their goals and we got to work on the next step in the goal setting process—setting up the action plan. I explained to the students that you couldn’t get somewhere without directions. I then told them, “We are going to write directions.” I handed out a worksheet that I had created so that students would have prompts to respond to as they set up their actions plans (See Appendix F). As I was handing out the worksheets, I saw the confused looks on some of my students’ faces, so I decided that this needed to be modeled. The example I gave was my own. I didn’t write it on the board, rather I just talked about it:

“My goal is to complete my Master’s of Education degree, and graduate from Moravian College in the spring. I imagine myself, sitting in front of my thesis committee as they tell me that I have passed! Then I imagine being at Commencement, with all of my family

in the audience. I would see them as I walk across the stage and get my diploma. They would all be clapping for me. I tell myself that I have worked hard and I deserve this. I am really proud of myself.

In order to achieve my goal, I am going to need to put a lot of time in. I am going to need to be diligent in collecting my data, writing my papers and keeping up with the reading. I will set aside at least one weeknight after I put my daughter to bed, and four hours a weekend to make sure that my work gets done.

I know that sometimes I am not going to want to do work. I am going to be too tired, or there will be something that I would rather do. When that happens, I will tell myself that for every hour of work I do, I get to do something that I want to do for an hour. I am going to make sure that everyone around me knows what my goal is too, so that when I start to slack off they can remind me of my goal and I can get back on track.”

The students seemed a little bit more comfortable with what they had to do, but in retrospect I wish I had put my example in writing for them so they had something to use as their template. I reiterated for them what I had done in my example. I had figured out what I wanted to do, visualized that it would be like when I did achieve my goal, made a plan for achieving my goal and then made a plan for what I would do when I was faced with obstacles. I thought that the example would set their creative juices flowing. In fact, they had a great deal of trouble writing the action plans. Most students had trouble getting started with their writing. The prompts that I had provided for them didn't seem to be enough. I circulated the classroom, answering individual questions but *again* the time in class ran short and I had to have the students take their action plans home to finish them. I worried that I would never see these action plans again if the students took them out of the room, to a certain

extent I was right- not all of my study participants handed in their action plans.

Below are excerpts of the action plans I *did* receive back from my participants.

JUNIOR

- Need to study more for A/B average and need to learn a language.
- Get focused more
- have B+/A average in Science/Math

ALEX

I would feel happy by not getting corrected all the time I envision me doing very well in class. The people around me would be shocked. I would feel confident. I will almost never get into trouble. I envision me being a well behaved student. "Alex why are you acting good?" I will believe in myself I will feel very confident.

I will achieve my goal by paying attention to the teacher's instructions. I will make sure to keep my mind on school work. Do my work and worry about nothing but school. I will do my work to keep myself busy.

I will like to achieve this goal by the end of the school year.

I face the temptation to start talking to my friends. I will stay focused on my work rather than talking. I will try to justify my actions. I will try and notice what I'm doing wrong and fix it.

LANEY

To pass this school year with all my grades between 83% and 99%. My friends are proud of me thinking I finally did it. I am proud of myself and so is my family.

I will achieve this goal by studying and paying attention in class. I will do all my work and make sure I do my best to get these grades. Every night (or every other night) I will study what we've done in class.

I will achieve this goal for the whole year. On all my test/quizzes/project/HW, etc. Through out this whole year. I hope I get good grades.

I will face many obstacles such as being at work and trying to fit my HW into my schedule and things will get harder like on test and with class work but I will try to do my best at doing everything.

JOHNNY

My plans for success are do all my homework that assigned to me, and Finish projects. I chose do all my homework because I usually blow off all of my homework. Then I chose finish projects because I usually start them but never finish them.

If I do my homework I will pass. I can do it if I make my homework priority. Also if I focus on it I will do it. This is how I can do my homework.

If I finish my projects I can pass. I can finish projects by being committed to it. I can also by just focus on the project. Another reason is think if I don't do it I will fail and I don't want that. This is what can help me do projects.

I chose these two things to help me succeed because they are my weakest things. I really know I can do this. If I do homework and projects my grade will go up. Also it will make pass.

KAREN

The goals that I have for myself this year is to be more organize and to get A's in all my classes. I will clean my backpack once a week. I will do all my work that teacher gives me.

CHRIS

Visualize:

- I would be proud and my parents would be proud because usually I don't get a lot of A's I usually get B's so this year I want to do better.
- I would be extremely happy is I got straight A's.

Plan:

- I will study at least 5 nights a week for 15 min.
- I will pay attention and take notes during class.
- I will try not to fool around and get distracted during class.

Due Date:

- The first semester and then the second semester.

Obstacles:

- If I play sports I will try my best to fit in study time.

DIANE

My goal is... to get an "A" in science. If I was to achieve this goal I would be proud, feel excited and happy. It would mean a lot to me because I know I can do what I set my mind to and that im on my way to college!

I will achieve this goal by doing my work and not worry about my friends. The things I will do is I will think before I blow off homework. Think before I do something stupid, like talking while in the class I need the most. I would like to achieve this goal by the end of the 1st quarter.

Some of the obstacles I think I'll face along the way is peer pressure or not having my friends because I ditch them for school. I also think I won't keep my work on it because I really don't like school or homework. My plan to over come peer pressure is not be a follower and do whats best for me, my plan for friends is telling them if they realty were my friends they would understand or try to achieve a goal too. Last, the plan for keeping my word. Well since I have it written down I could look back and say if I don't acheve this there is a possibility of my not getting to college or when I think, say in my head that remember were you wanna go in life and picture me there.

Let the work begin...

Now that the students had set their goals, it was time to put those goals to work. We went through the usual routine of a history classroom, trying desperately from time to time to squeeze in progress monitoring for the students' goals. What happened in the classroom, however, would prove insightful for the study's progress.

“Wait, what do I need to underline? I wasn't paying attention.”

One of the many focuses in my class was reading comprehension. I took the time regularly to go through with them and work on active reading skills as well as how to answer comprehension questions. Basically, my hope was to help them read with a purpose. Every time I went into these lessons, I hoped that students would buy into it—that they were engaged and the wheels were turning. How my participants do during these lessons gives me an idea as to how they are progressing toward becoming more academically self-efficacious. The lesson this time around did not go so well. The students were reluctant to use metacognitive strategies. They wanted to just answer the questions, rather than reading the article that I gave them. I saw that many of the students skipped to the questions because they struggled with the article, so I chose to go over the article modeling talking to the text skills. We previewed the comprehension questions, and then went through the article highlighting and making notes on the parts of the article that pertained to the questions that we needed to answer. As we began to do the work together, I

noticed that both Alex and Junior were behaviorally engaged; however I wasn't sure if they were *thinking* about the material. I started feeling pretty good about this! Alex, who had been a behavior problem so far in the year, was behaving and doing his work. I was feeling so good because it had been such a struggle to get him to behave! I spent the majority of my instructional time just trying to keep him on task. My good feelings were squashed when, after we went over a question, Diane chimed in, "Wait, so what do I underline? I wasn't paying attention." Frustrated, I took a breath and asked her to re-read the question and went through the process of finding the answer. She was resistant to this, just wanting me to give her the answer. After that encounter, I looked around a little more closely and saw DeeDee and Laney looking off of other students' papers to make sure that they had hi-lighted what they were supposed to. It's like a light went on for me: *Some of these kids are going through the motions; they don't actually want to think. They want me to give them the answer. They may not even want to be better, they just want to play the game of school and get passed on to the next grade!*

Working on Study Skills

In this class session we wrapped up talking about the Compromise of 1850. We were getting ready to take a quiz, so I decided to take the time left in class and dedicate it to helping the students prepare for their quiz. We started off by doing some practice quiz questions. Most of the class was direct instruction, as I thought that I needed to model how to go through multiple-choice questions and matching questions. From that point, I handed

out index cards and discussed with the students how to create flash cards that would be useful for studying.

I set this time aside to work on something that I knew that they needed help with. I thought that it was going to be such a productive activity. Most of the students don't seem to be taking the time to ask questions or make flash cards. Kyle could not sit still; he took a long time getting his materials out to get to work. He was talking to others when he was supposed to be working. He didn't seek out help; he just said that he didn't have the information. Danny didn't say much of anything. He didn't have his book with him or his old homework assignments. He didn't seek out any help from me, but I did see him talking to others around him. I thought, *Hopefully, it is about the content.* I had to repeat the directions several times to Alex; he was constantly talking to others. Johnny sat there not doing his flash cards because he hadn't done his homework. There was one bright spot though. Matthew made flashcards for all of his vocabulary words and more than a couple of times he raised his hand so that I could clarify answers to the homework for him.

Conferences with the team

One month into school, and the team teachers recognized that we were having some major problems with two students in particular. Below are dramatizations of the conferences that took place between these students and the team teachers.

Alex

Miss Smith (Biology teacher): We *need* to call Alex in today. He can't sit still, he talks back when re-directed, even when he has work to do he talks to others and distracts them! He is way too smart to be doing this stuff; he is not doing very well at all academically. I think his behavior is getting worse, too. Today, he pulled a chair out from another student. I pulled him into the hallway to discuss this with him and he didn't understand why he was getting yelled at.

Mrs. Deily: Well, let's call him down. I think he is in computer class.

After a couple of minutes Alex arrives at the classroom that the team is meeting in.

Miss Smith: Do you know why you are here?

Alex: 'cause I am in trouble?

Mrs. Deily: Well sort of, but sort of not.

Mrs. Walters (English teacher): Alex, we are having this meeting to make sure that you don't get into more trouble.

The teachers take turns describing what they are observing in their classrooms. The teachers are repeating essentially the same comments; he talks too much, doesn't take redirection well and gets others distracted. While we share our thoughts Alex listens but he was fidgety, tapping his foot.

Miss Smith: Why do you think you do this?

Alex: Because I am bored and when others around me aren't working I don't work either.

Miss Smith: Now Alex, this sort of goes against what I have seen in class. Even when you do have work to do you are talking and acting inappropriately. We also notice that you are the person that gets the other students off task.

Alex is now not making eye contact, still tapping his foot anxiously.

Mrs. Walters: Ok, now what we see is that you are not responding very well to verbal cues to get back on task. What we can try out is using non-verbal cue to get on task—shoot you a look or point or something. Maybe that will get you on task, but ultimately you have to understand that it is up to *you* to make the changes.

Mrs. Deily: You need to watch how you respond to the teachers giving you the cues...oftentimes you give some attitude when re-directed. You need to understand that we're being a pain in the neck for a reason, not just because we want to be a pain. We are giving you these reminders so that you can be a better students, you have to remember that.”

We wrap up the meeting, sign Alex's pass and send him back to class.

Kyle

E-mail from Kyle's mom:

Hello Mrs. Deily,

I am concerned about Kyle's grades in your class and would like to do everything possible to ensure that we address any issues from early on. Previously, at open night, the team & myself agreed that we would all take a proactive role in helping to make sure that Kyle has his daily assignments written in his planner. But, as I can see on the grading website, its obvious he's missed a couple of assignments although I have been checking & signing off on his planner everyday.

It's difficult for me to make sure he is completing all assignments due if I do not know about them. The grading website reflects assignments that are past due vs. giving a parent a heads up to what is coming due.

I understand that it is Kyle's responsibility to write down & remember his assignments, but considering his current IEP, I would appreciate a more active, teamwork approach to helping Kyle succeed during his freshman year.

My response:

Hello! Thank you for your e-mail!

I, too, would like to see Kyle be more successful with completing his homework. I did notice that you are signing the assignment book, but unless prompted he does not show the book to us. A possibility would be to have Kyle show us his assignment book after he writes the work down, then we teachers can initial the book next to the assignment. I will speak to the team today. In addition, we will call Kyle into our team meeting.

We meet during team time and call Kyle in from his class.

Miss Smith: Kyle, we brought you in today because we talked to your mom. We have some concerns about your progress in your classes. We wanted to talk about filling out your agenda book so that you can remember to do your homework.

Mrs. Deily: I am seeing that you just don't want to do it. You are a very smart kid, you just don't want to work. Here we expect more from you. Right now, the responsibility is falling on you to get it signed.

Kyle: I explained that to my mom yesterday. I told her it was my responsibility.

Miss Smith: Ok, now Kyle we want to see you make an effort to bring up your agenda book to us. We will remind you from time to time, but it is on you. Now let's talk about behavior. Yesterday, I had to shut down a lab because of your behavior—

Kyle cuts Miss Smith off.

Kyle: I was going to sit down and do the work and then that other girl was like bothering me.

The teachers go around the room, telling Kyle what they have observed about his behaviors in their classrooms. With each observation, Kyle cuts the teacher off and provides an explanation.

Mrs. Deily: Ok, I am going to stop you there. You need to accept what they are telling you. What I am seeing here are your teachers giving you observations, and giving you options of how to best choose your behavior and you are coming back

with excuses. Part of your SDI is to get cues to stay on task. Those SDIs are to help you become a better student, if you aren't receptive to what they are telling you, and then you aren't helping yourself. Do you understand?

Kyle nods.

Mrs. Deily: Ok, I am going to sign your pass to go back to class. I need you to think about what we said here today and I would like to see changes accordingly in class.

These two students probably frustrated me the most out of all of my students because I could see their potential. I knew that they were very smart kids, but they just didn't work the way that they were supposed to, hampered by their own behaviors. They were exhibiting the same patterns in all of their classes, even giving their teachers outside of team time an even harder time. I would love to see them succeed, but they seem to be their own worst enemies.

Progress Update #1

Mid-Quarter Progress Reports

Having completed five weeks in this school year, the team issued progress reports so the students had an understanding of where they stood academically at the mid-point of the marking period. I used these progress reports as an indicator of cognitive engagement and motivational engagement.

Johnny

Biology	47%
Algebra 1	87%
History	22%
English	60%

Johnny is on track to fail ninth grade. It is too early in the year for students to be doing so badly. In addition to not completing any of the homework assignments, he did not initially hand in an academic autobiography.. He is a kid who I think is dealing with alot of issues. He doesn't want help in class and with a couple of exceptions he is not willing to work.

Diane

Biology	60%
Algebra 1	92%
History	54%
English	68%

Diane, too, is on track to fail ninth grade. I don't see any willingness to be a better student. She wants to be spoon-fed answers. She doesn't bring her materials to class and she often does not want to do the work in class.

Matthew

Biology	45%
Algebra 1	85%
History	68%
English	46%

Matthew is a special needs student. He is working hard, but at times I am not sure if the regular ed rigor is too touch for him. I worry that he might shut down on me!

Danny

Biology	65%
Algebra 1	84%
History	55%
English	50%

We brought Danny in for a conference and put him on a contract (See Appendix J). He needs to try to use 4 academic strategies per week and report to us those strategies that he chose to use. He does not have to write a journal entry, just list what he used and in what instance. We told him that one strategy that he should shoot for every week was to complete homework on time.

Sally

Biology	77%
Algebra 1	87%
History	57%
English	79%

Sally seems to only really be struggling in my class. Most, if not all of that is as a result of her not completing her homework.

Laney

Biology	70%
Algebra 1	88%
History	72%
English	97%

Laney sort of picks and chooses when she wants to work. Sometimes she can be really on task and work hard. Other times she is easily distracted and gets by while doing the minimum amount of work.

Karen

Biology	62%
Algebra 1	92%
History	66%
English	93%

Karen is really quiet in class, she doesn't routinely do her homework and she doesn't actively participate in class. I make it a point to seek her out in class, and see if she is making progress but she flies under the radar. She definitely makes it seem as though she is going through the motions, I think it is just not sinking in for her.

Kyle

Biology	72%
Algebra 1	89%
History	58%
English	97%

We have been in constant contact with Kyle's mom. (He has an IEP) He is supposed to bring his assignment book up to us to initial, but more often than not he does not bring it up to us.

Jane

Biology	79%
Algebra 1	87%
History	52%
English	92%

Jane, too, goes through the motions in class. She often gets distracted, but seems to want to do better. Like many of the other students Jane does not do her homework and does not seem to prepare for her assessments. I am starting to think she might be starting to give up!

Alex

Biology	63%
Algebra 1	87%
History	57%
English	74%

Alex should be doing so much better than he is!! He is a smart kid! Alex is just not handing in his homework. He seems to be doing equally as badly on his assessments, is that for lack of preparation and paying attention??

Junior

Biology	78%
Algebra 1	89%
History	73%
English	83%

I am overall pretty happy with how he is doing. I would like to see the biology and history grades up a little more, but this is a lack of him doing homework. That's a shame, too, because he really is a bright student.

Learning Log Entry – My Progress

Just getting to the point where we could take the time out of class to write these learning log entries has been frustrating. The classes that I have

this year are really challenging and it is taking so much longer to get through activities then it did last year. In addition to that we have our typical school interruptions like fire drills, assemblies etc. I am really struggling with seamlessly fitting this into my instruction.

To track the students' progress I used their grades, but I also used their learning log entries to see how well they were progressing to their specific goals. The students were provided with a handout to document their progress (See Appendix G). It asked them to describe the progress that they were making towards their goal(s), obstacles that they may have faced, and how working towards the goal has changed them.

LANEY

9-30-10 (my brothers Bdayy!)

So far i'm doing good (I hope). Im taking notes in class and studying for my test, so I think that that's making me progress. Since I'm not too sure I am I try to get my HW done and hand everything in on time. I have to go to work just about everyday till about 9:30-10:00 so I really don't get time to do my HW but I try to put it into my schedule and so far it's kinda working. I ask my boss/dad to take a break to do my HW, and if we aren't busy, he will let me do it.

I hope & think I'm getting to my goal. I really hope I do well this year (maybe I'll get a phone).

It kinda helps me but at the same time not really. It has because I know what some of the answers are but I also talk a lot in ALL of my classes. My report card says "talks too much in class!!"

DIANE

My goals haven't got anywhere like I have a short attention span so like it's hard to achieve it. Ummm, I could study more often if I don't have a test, but just so I know the

material. My house is never really quiet for me to concentrate on what I'm doing.

DEEDEE

1. a progress that I'm making towards my goal is studying, staying up an extra hour before my test.
2. I could tell I'm making progress and it's working because when I get my test back I'm passing. I will try my best.
3. I know I am making progress. I'm gonna keep working on it.
4. To be honest no because I just failed a test. But I know on thing I am gonna keep working on it.
5. No, because I hate school. The reason why I hate school is because I know I'm not trying my hardest.

JUNIOR

1. So far I think I've been doing fairly good. Though I do think I could do better.
2. I could tell by the grades and the work I've done.

JOHNNY

I truth fully didn't even start doing any of my goals yet. I didn't start them because I forget what the homework was by the time I get home so from now on I look at my agenda book every night and have my sister sign it to say I did it.

ALEX

1. I do think we made progress in some ways but then again I have a lot of work to do ← with both goals I need to work on being focused. I have faced obstacles in me being finished or doing work and people around me are talking I tend to join which I should stay focused on my school work and be quiet.

This goal has challenged me a lot it has made me think a little more in which when I wasn't thinking I would be talking to classmates to being distracted to others.

KAREN

One of my goals is to get As in all my class, and I'm making progress by doing all my homework. My other goal was to be organized and I clean out my binder once a week.

KYLE

My goal was to get nothing less than a B on my report card.

So far my goal progress is going good I just bumped my history grade from an F to a B. How I did so was by staying after school for help, completing all homework assignments and studying before tests. I also hold in English but I have a C+ in Biology so what I could do to help bring it up is, find out what I need to work on in hard in this class.

CHRIS

- So far I have been doing good with my homework. I do it every night unless I forget my paper at school or forget to do it. I try my best.
- I also think I have been good with tests, cause when I get the test I usually know most of it and its at the top of my head.
- I also do my best to study almost every night
- One obstacle that I faced was I had 3 tests in one day and it is hard to study for that. But it turns out the tests were easy so I am doing good.
- No I haven't met it yet because it isn't at the end of the semester but I am on my way. If I meet my goal I can try to do better and go for 5 A's.
- Yes because I usually get distracted in class but having this goal I try my best not to get distracted.

MATTHEW

In high school also far, I am making so good progress in some of my classes and other, not so well. Now I will explain to you the good and bad progress I am making.

In my easy classes like English and Critical Literacy, I get mostly A's and B's but my midquarter grade for Both of these is a B. But in the more complicated classes like History, Algebra and Biology I don't really do so well in these classes. I get either an F or a C in them.

In the classes I am doing good in I get good grades but paying attention, taking notes and studying. But in the classes I am not doing so well in I try to do the same thing, but it just seemed more complicated while learning especially studying.

I'm still trying my best to do good and graduate from high school. I just hope I get there soon.

Well that's how I'm doing in high school so far. I also hope I succeed.

DANNY

My goal is to try not to get any C's in my report card. What I've been doing to accomplish this goal, it that I've been studying and I do all my work that is assign to me whether is do in class or at home. I've actually been seeing some results I haven't fail none of my test and I've been doing most of my homework and I can see that my grade is going up it's getting better.

The students' perceptions of their goal progress were similar to my own. I saw one or two students had made progress academically, but others were struggling. It was helpful to identify why they were struggling. It was nice to see that while the students had not made progress, some noted that they had ambitions to do better. I thought, *Maybe there is some hope with this study!*

Ups and Downs

Dear Journal,

This process has been filled with such ups and downs. There are times when I feel like I am just spinning my wheels! I do everything in my power and can't get across to these kids. There are times when I see kids like Matthew who are trying so hard and it just breaks my heart to see that they are struggling. There are also times when I want to pull my hair out because kids like Kyle and Alex have so much potential, but choose to not work towards it. Finally, and probably the most frustrating

is not being able to figure some of these students out! Diane, loves me one day hates me the next. DeeDee is bright, but she is never in school; and Johnny knows he needs extra attention, but when he gets it he gets angry. I keep telling myself: we have to keep pushing through!

Johnny helps another student

About a month into the study, class began with the following warm-up: Have you ever gotten into an argument with someone? When you argued why did you just not give up? As I was taking attendance, I saw Johnny talking to the person across from him. His attitude today seemed more positive than ever before. I moved over to his group of desks. He looked at me and said, “Miss, can I help him with the warm-up?” I looked at his desk; he had nothing out on it. I told him, “Get out your materials, do it yourself first and then you can help him.” Johnny responded, “Miss, we talked about this last year in my class. I know this.” I just smiled at him, and thought that finally he had turned a corner and was getting motivated. Johnny wrote down the question, not the answer and began to help the person at his table with the warm-up questions. I wasn’t even sure that the student at Johnny’s table even needed his help, but I didn’t let on because I saw how it made Johnny so proud.

When we went over the question during class, Johnny did not share his answer with the class. It was a shame to see that his enthusiasm for the warm-up question did not carry over to the lesson. In this lesson, students had to read a summary of the Dred Scott Case and then summarize the major arguments in the case. Johnny did not summarize the reading, nor did he use

the talking to the text strategy. This frustrated me because this is a skill we had done multiple times in class.

Alex changes his socks in class

Alex arrived in class late, as his classmates were already working on their warm-ups. He carried with him not only his bookbag, but a gym bag. As he walked into the class I told him, “Alex, we are just getting started so why don’t you get your stuff out and begin to answer the warm-up question.” He did not respond. I went about taking attendance and caught up with a couple of students who had been absent. When I looked back to him, I saw that rather than doing his warm-up Alex was changing his socks. I said to him, “Alex, you need to put that away and get started on your warm-up.” He said, “What!?! I am just changing my socks.” I explained to him that this was not the appropriate time or place to change his socks. He said again, “I am changing my socks.” Finally I told him, “Look, you have a choice either you remain in class and behave appropriately or you can change your socks in the principal’s office.” He reluctantly complied and put his socks back in his gym bag.

I circulated around the room for one more minute, noticing that Alex hadn’t even written down his warm-up. I then began to go over the warm-up and transition into the day’s lesson. As I was introducing the lesson, I saw that Alex’s head was down. I asked him to pick his head up. About two minutes later his head was back down. Again, I asked him to pick up his

head. Once I had finished giving the introduction to the lesson, I dove into providing the students with background information they would need to do the activity I had planned. I was writing some major terms on the board and noticed Alex stand up and walk across the room to the pencil sharpener. With one eye on him, I resumed writing terms on the board. I caught him out of the corner of my eye making faces at the students, so I asked him to return to his seat. He said, “What!?! What did I do??” I told him, “Alex, I saw you. Now please have a seat.” He returned to his seat, mumbling something incomprehensible.

I handed out the worksheets that the students would be working on and began going over the directions. Mid-direction, he raised his hand and asked to go to the bathroom. I told him that he needed to wait until after I had gone over the directions. When I had finished, then I told him that he was allowed to use the restroom, but very quickly. Students in the class worked well, as I circulated I saw them using talking to the text strategies as I had directed at the beginning of the activity. Several minutes after Alex had returned from the bathroom, I went over to see what he had completed. His page was blank; he wasn't using the talking to the text strategy. I pointed to the page and asked him, “Now what are you supposed to be doing here?” He said, “I wasn't paying attention” and laughed loudly. Frustrated, I restated the directions and went on to work with other students.

Shining a new light on Alex, but only briefly

Dear Journal,

We took a trip up to Vo-Tech today so that the students could look at the school. It was a really laid back day for the teachers. While our students toured the facility, we kind of just sat and waited for them. When the kids started to return Alex sat down (without prompting) with the teachers and was actually engaging in conversation with us, asking good questions and making intelligent comments. I told him "Look, this is the person that you can be. You can be a great kid, it is just at times you choose to act out and misbehave. This was a nice conversation with you, let's keep this type of behavior up." I hope that this is the beginning of something very good!

Dear Journal,

The other day was such a great day with Alex. It was such a great sign to see that Alex could act so wonderfully. I really thought that a change was in the future. So I was heartbroken, when I arrived in school this morning to find a sub report from yesterday. While I was out of school, it was reported to me that Alex was misbehaving in class. He had to be told four times by two different teachers to take his hat off. He also had to be told to put his cell phone away. This morning, I pulled him out of someone else's class to talk to him. Immediately, he sprung to the defense and denied everything. He said that the sub had just made it up. While we were talking, one of the teachers who had re-directed him just happened to be walking by. The teacher and I tried to calmly talk to him, but he continued to be defensive and raised his voice. I can't figure this kid out! He is smart, but he will not shut up long enough to let any education sink in AND he will not change his behavior. It's a shame because I saw what he COULD act like.

Johnny struggles

In class, students were working as groups to complete a worksheet. They needed to read the textbook and answer questions. As I circulated the room, I noticed that Johnny's table was working on the back of the sheet and Johnny had hardly completed any of the worksheet. I asked him why he was still on the first page and the rest of his table was on the back of the page. He said, "Miss I can't comprehend good. I am slow at reading." I had already been aware of Johnny's difficulty reading as it was noted in his IEP. In addition, Johnny is enrolled in a class called Critical Literacy which focuses on reading comprehension skills. I knew that in his class he had used a post-it reading strategy to monitor comprehension. In fact, his teacher told me that the strategy was his preference. I ask him, "Well are you using the post-it strategy that we have talked about?" He responded, "No, this ain't my book." I told him that that was the reason that post-its were so beneficial; you could take them off when you were done. I said, "Try it out." Johnny then took out his post-its and proceeded to put them on his face rather than use them for a comprehension tool. I shot him a look and he took the post-its off of his face.

The time for completing the activity soon ran out, and Johnny had not completed much of the work. The student teacher began going over the worksheet, and Johnny began talking to one of the students at his table. He took the student's glasses and was trying them on, so I called him into the hallway.

Mrs. Deily: Ok, you know that I could just kick you out of class right now and write you up, right?

Johnny: Yeah, I know.

Mrs. Deily: Ok, well the reason that I called you out in the hall instead is that I see you doing things to avoid doing the work. You are talking to others, etc. Also what I see is you on track to being in ninth grade again next year. Is that what you want?

Johnny: No

Mrs. Deily: So really, what needs to happen now is that it is up to you. We have talked to you, called you in for meetings, we have set up goals for you, set up a work contract with you and given you the tools to help you with your comprehension. And you are choosing not to use them. So right now this is on you. It is up to you to make the change. The teachers can't do any more for you. You need to do the rest.

With tears in his eyes, Johnny just nods and we return to the classroom.

Time to re-group

After talking to some of the students, I recognized that they had actually forgotten that we even set goals. To this point in the study, I had struggled with finding the time in the class to address goal setting. With this feedback from the students, I recognized that I needed to take a different turn in the study.

I wanted to dedicate a portion of the class to revisiting the goals that the students had set for themselves. I began by explaining to the students that I had not been meeting my goals. I reminded the students about how in the beginning of the year I told them the story of how I wanted to write this book—and in this book I was going to see if I could get students to be more

confident through goal setting. I continued to tell the students that so far, I thought that the whole process was not working so I needed to revisit how I was doing things.

I asked the students if they remembered their goals, a large majority giggled and shook their heads, indicating “no.” I had them take out their learning logs to be reminded of the goals. I then handed out index cards to the students. On the card, they wrote their goals. After the goal was written on the card, I had them tape the index card to the front of their planners. Students used these planners every day, so I hoped that the daily reminder of their goals would get them to be more motivated to work towards the goals.

Progress Update # 2

Learning Log Entries

Approximately a week after creating the index card reminders for the students’ goals, I had students track their progress again. I still had them follow the handout that I had previously used, but with this entry I asked them to respond to the following question: How has having the index card as a reminder helped you to achieve your goal (if at all)? Like the last entry, I did not receive many of the learning logs back. Below are excerpts of the learning logs I did receive. This would be the final progress entry that the students made.

SALLY

- My progress isn’t that good. I have C’s in mostly everything. I miss some homework, and don’t do well on some of my tests.

- I've faced being tired when I get home, not wanting to do anything. I still manage to do my homework, if I don't understand it, at least I try it, or I might wake up earlier in the morning before school and do little assignments.
- I haven't met my goal yet.
- Yes, I've been getting more serious in my classes, I really try to get my assignments done in class sometimes so that when I get home I won't be overwhelmed with homework.

DIANE

I'm progressing w/ my goal. I started doing my HW more & I'm studying more now. I know I'm making progress because most of my grades went up by at least 2+ points. My teachers aren't talking too me to tell me to be quiet as much as they used to. (except history).

I'm not making progress I am getting to meeting my goal. Something I can do it hand in project & HW's on time & participate more in class. I can also study harder for my test/quizzes. It has changed the way I acted because it pushes me to actually want to get good grades & not just be like "eff that" or "this is BS! I ain't doin' it!" It motivates me to do better.

MATTHEW

So far I think my progress is improving slightly. I'm still failing in some classes but in others I'm doing ok.

JOHNNY

My goal was to do my homework. I'm not achieving my goal because I still haven't did my homework.

CHRIS

For my goal, I am not making great progress. I am not doing good in history. My grade in English isn't an A but it is still good. Some of the obstacles I faced was I didn't do good on a history test. I am just not good at history. I think I might start staying after before a test or something. IN English I had the same problem I didn't do good on a test. Also I forget to homework sometimes. I really need help in history.

I think doing this is really helpful. This motivates me to try my best and reach my goal. It makes me think about it I should get in a class which I do. It motivates me to study so I could do good in class.

KYLE

The progress I am currently making is not doing well. For reasons I just can't explain, I have been slacking Academically and it has been affected by my behavior in a few classes.

In the beging of the year I was failing a few classes but with ard work I was able to bring them up to decent grades. SO I know I am capable of doing it again with hard work and energy.

The obstacles, well there really haven't been any except for me getting lazy in school.

I definitely haven't met my goal and I am very determined to do everything I can to achieve it.

I now realize that to ease the stress of school work I need to start the quarter off with good grades and not just finish with them because I will not have to work double harder to just bring them back up. When I should be doing ti for a great grade.

KAREN

The progress I'm making with my goals are okay it could be better. I always to study, but I get distracted. This goal has changed the way I act because I don't talk while the teacher is talking.

ALEX

I have made some progress with my goals

I can tell I am because the work Is coming easier to me now that I pay attention and limit my talking.

I some-times go back to where I started but then I realize how far I've come.

I have not met it yet but U am very close to, I just have to stay focused.

It has because I knew I can do better and I try my hardest to do so.

JOHNNY

I am doing ok with my goals. I started to do my homework assignments I got switched out of Spanish to a extra help class at 4th block and I do my homework in there. I have a lot of time to do it so I get most of my homework done.

DANNY

I think I'm going to be able to achieve my goal. I've been doing my homeworks. I've had good grade in my test and I behave in class. This has been helping me a lot because now I have a goal something I want something to motivate me to do my work.

JANE

The progress I make is good because I've been doing my homework and studying more, so I can pass this year. So I think I'm making a step forward and doing really well. The index card helps because it motivates me to at least try, and if my answers are wrong I can just change them but the important part is I tried and I complete my assignments. I feel I am meeting my goal step by step and day by day.

LANEY

I'm doing better than before I think I old had one "C" but tha'ts pretty good.

I can tell I'm making progress because I'm getting better grades which I'm happy about.

I am getting to my goal.

I am pretty close but I just need to work harder & studying more because I fee like my grades are going back down.

Not really because I am who I am but I think that I'm paying more attention in class.

The index card has not helped me because I feel that having it makes it seem like I need a constant reminder, which I don't like because it feels like IDK I just don't like it.

End of Marking Period Grades

At the end of the marking period, I again took note of the students' academic standings. The data provided insight into their behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement and motivational engagement. Linnenbrink & Pintrich (2003) note that these are indicators of academic self-efficacy. A change for the better in their academic standings from the mid-marking period progress reports was supposed to provide a picture of whether goal setting was, in fact, leading to an increased academic self-efficacy. However, what I found was that while some of the students were able to improve their grades from the mid-marking period point, most did not.

Johnny

Biology	51%
Algebra 1	73%
History	57%
English	71%

Johnny is on still track to fail ninth grade. He regrouped enough in two of his classes to get his grades up to passing, but he still ended up failing Biology and History. Part of the reason that I think that he pulled out a passing grade for English was because he had an English support class.

Diane

Biology	65%
Algebra 1	89%
History	73%
English	74%

I was glad to see that Diane was able to bring most of her grades up into the C-range. I was especially happy to see how well she did in Algebra class. I think she is capable of much, much more though.

Matthew

Biology	61%
Algebra 1	86%
History	71%
English	82%

I was very happy to see that Matthew was able to pull his grade in English from a 52% to an 82%! I know how much he struggles. I think Biology and History give him the toughest time. I am not sure if it is because he is not as interested in them, or if the critical thinking factor has challenged him beyond what he is capable of.

Danny

Biology	70%
Algebra 1	80%
History	84%
English	60%

I was happy to see the progress that Danny made in my class, however I would have liked to see his hard work translate into his other classes. Perhaps it might have been the language barrier—he was an ESL student.

Sally

Biology	79%
Algebra 1	83%
History	75%
English	77%

I think Sally is capable of more, but I am happy to see that she is passing all of her classes.

Laney

Biology	68%
Algebra 1	84%
History	75%
English	83%

Karen

Biology	65%
Algebra 1	88%
History	72%
English	64%

This is sort of where I had expected Karen would end up. She doesn't regularly do her homework, nor does she participate in class activities.

Kyle

Biology	66%
Algebra 1	85%
History	81%
English	95%

These are great grades for Kyle, for the most part. I hate to see his Biology grade because I know that he is capable of so much more. His class has many students who are disruptive. According to the other teachers, Kyle joins right in with the disruptions which may have explained his grade.

Jane

Biology	74%
Algebra 1	83%
History	60%
English	76%

Jane managed to pull her grades up to passing with the exception of History. She still goes through the motions in class and is easily distracted. I worry that as the content gets more and more difficult she will not be able to keep up as long as she is distracted in class.

Alex

Biology	69%
Algebra 1	86%
History	69%
English	56%

Alex is so much smarter than this! It was very disappointing to see these grades!

Junior

Biology	77%
Algebra 1	87%
History	74%
English	83%

Junior stayed pretty much where he was at the mid-quarter point. Again, I would like to see him doing better because he is capable of so much more.

Could this be working? Not so fast...

Conference with Kyle

Kyle's fourth block teacher came up to the room that the team meets in. She asked, "Have you seen Kyle? He never showed up for my class?" She told us that she had called security and they were looking for him. It turned out that Kyle had reported directly to the Guidance Office without checking in with his fourth block teacher. His guidance counselor brought him over to the meeting. He was bothered because he had his iPod confiscated from him because he was using it in class. This was a direct violation of the school's electronics policy. Once the teacher confiscated it, she put it on her desk. While she was at lunch, he snuck into the teacher's classroom and took the iPod back. Miss Coughlin told him "you made the choice to use your iPod... you make the choice to go into Mrs. Walter's desk and take the iPod." Kyle just sat there and nodded, not making much eye contact. He said, "I understand what you guys are saying, but just like you are saying that someone shouldn't take it off the desk, I was worried someone would take it from you." I thought, *this is typical to his disability; a kid with Asperger's will take everything literally and only sees things in black and white.* Mrs. Walters responded, "Still, you could have expressed that better by approaching ME about it rather than just taking it off of my desk. And you need to be sure to address Miss Coughlin in a more respectful manner; the way you were just talking to her was very disrespectful."

It seems to me that we teachers are spending most of our time explaining to kids how they should act, and what other methods they could use

to resolve conflicts. We spend so much time on this; it is a miracle that any teaching gets done. What is most disheartening of all, is that we aren't really seeing any changes in behaviors, whether we are dealing with Kyle or other students. The teachers are so aggravated because we have talked to these students endlessly, submitted conduct referrals and nothing has changed!

Johnny visits his locker for the first time

The day started so wonderfully. I was circulating the classroom, checking homework, when I got to Johnny. I asked, "Johnny, do you have your homework?" Very excited he said, "Yeah, Miss, I did it!" I said, "Wow that's great Johnny I am glad to see it." As I continued to circulate throughout the room, I observed that Johnny didn't have his chart out to do the warm-up. I thought, *It's like he thinks that since he did his homework that was enough.* Later on in the class, we began to do work using the textbook. I noticed that Johnny was not working.

Mrs. Deily: Johnny, where is your book?

Johnny: At home.

Mrs. Deily: Why is at home?

Johnny: 'Cause Miss I never got a locker.

Mrs. Deily: Did you go to the office?

Johnny: Yeah, like 9000 times.

Mrs. Deily: Well, get up because we are going to the office for the 9001st time.

I asked the student teacher to keep an eye on the students for 5 minutes, while I accompanied Johnny to the Student Services office.

We went into the office and I asked the secretary if she could pull up his locker information. Within thirty seconds the secretary had pulled up his locker number and combination. I sent him to his locker to check to see if it worked. When he got back he was very slow to get to work, but seemed very happy to just have a locker. I wasn't sure how to interpret this event. It was unclear to me whether Johnny didn't ever push the locker issue because he didn't want to work, or he didn't push the issue because he didn't want to ask for help. In either case, it demonstrated to me that he definitely was not motivationally engaged in his academics.

Diane puts up a fight

As soon as I assigned the activity for the day, Diane raised her hand and asked to go to the bathroom. I had previously observed that Diane asks to go to the bathroom, just to take a walk and avoid work, so I asked her get a certain amount of work done before she could go to the bathroom. After about twenty minutes, she still hadn't finished what she needed to, and didn't seem in any sort of rush to get the work completed. I approached her table.

Mrs. Deily: So I guess you don't have to go to the bathroom that bad, huh?

Diane: Miss, I just don't like doing work.

Mrs. Deily: Why?

Diane: I don't know, I just don't like working.

Mrs. Deily: Ok, that's honest.

Diane: I just don't like school.

Mrs. Deily: Is there anything you like about school?

Diane: No, it's boring...all we do is learn and teachers talk too much.

Mrs. Deily: Is there any class that you do like?

Diane: I like Math class cause the teacher is like nice and fun. And I am good at math.

I nod.

Mrs. Deily: So what do you want to do with you life?

Diane: Well I wanted to be a marine biologist, but I don't like biology and I am not good at it.

Mrs. Deily: Yeah, you kind of need biology to be a marine biologist. Do you want to go to college?

Diane: Yeah.

Mrs. Deily: Well you play the game of school pretty good but you can do better. And to go to college you will have to do a lot better. You say "Miss I wasn't paying attention, what do I write down?" But maybe you should actually pay attention in the first place.

With five minutes left in class, I went over to Diane to check her progress.

She was in the same spot that she had been in when I was talking to her.

Again, I felt defeated and thought, *How can I ever get these kids to be more confident if they don't want to be better students?*

Meeting with Matthew's Mom

Since the beginning of the year, Matthew had been working his tail off! I could tell that he was a little behind where he should be in terms of his reading, writing, etc., but his work ethic was amazing. He worked really hard and was doing his homework regularly. When we met with his mom at parent- teacher conferences, the teachers sung his praises and commended his mother for the wonderful work she had done with him. His grades weren't all

that great, and Matthew voiced to us that he had begun to get a little frustrated, but he kept plugging away. Around Thanksgiving, the teachers started to notice that Matthew had started nodding off in class, which was very unlike him. He had a hard time paying attention and staying focused. It was suggested that Matthew's mom come in for a meeting.

An e-mail from Matthew's Mom

Hi Mrs. Deily,

I received your voicemail from today and I thank you for your concerns! Being tired and almost falling asleep in class is actually one of the complaints I've heard from Matthew himself, too!

When we were at his last doctor's appointment in November, this was mentioned. Thinking that his taking all his medications in the morning was part of the problem, it was recommended to have him try taking all his medications in the evening/bedtime. This was started probably that following week, which would have been the week before Thanksgiving, which would make sense with the time frame that you mentioned seeing a change in Michael. Although he seems very sleepy in school regardless, it would seem that this medication schedule change may be making it worse.

Next Tuesday, the 21st is when I am coming in to speak with all of you at 1:00 and then I'll be taking Matthew back to the doctor afterwards for another appointment. So the medication issue and all that we discuss at the meeting will be brought to her attention as well.

Thank you, again, for your concerns and your input. I welcome all of it if it will help Matthew in any way!

The day for the meeting finally came, and all of Matthew's teachers were present. We went around the room voicing our concerns, noting observations that we had made in class. All of our observations were similar: Matthew was falling asleep in class, he wasn't focused during activities and there were times that he would just start into space. Matthew's mom

attributed these behaviors to a change in medication. We all brainstormed as to what we could do to help Matthew get a little more organized and on-task in class. We decided to create a checklist for him to put on the front of his binder. It said: 1) Get materials out, 2) Write homework down, 3) Have the teacher sign the agenda book, and 4) Do your warm-up. Our hope was to get Matthew in the routine of getting his agenda book signed so that his homework would improve and so that his mom was better informed.

One of the major concerns that I voiced, and his mom echoed, was that I was worried what would happen to him next year when he doesn't have a team of teachers who follow his progress. Also, what would happen to him where there isn't a support teacher in the room with him? As a Section 504 student, Matthew did not have access to the resource room to get extra help during tests and assignments even though he had a slew of learning disabilities. The guidance counselor suggested that Mom formally request for Matthew to be tested to see if he qualifies for Special Education resources. The hope was that by next year, he would have an IEP in place so that he can get access to the extra assistance that he needed.

This is it! We are wrapping it up!

Final Self-Efficacy Survey

As one of the concluding data collection activities, I had the students complete another self-efficacy survey. This survey was identical to the one that they had taken in the beginning of the year (See Appendix I). I scored it exactly as I had the first self-efficacy survey. In questions 2, 6, 7, 8 and 9, I

reversed the scoring. Therefore if the student indicated in those questions that the prompt was least like him, then I scored it as five points. Similarly, indication that the prompt was most like him would be scored as one point. A maximum score indicated a very high level of perceived self-efficacy would have been 45. A minimum score, indicating a low level of perceived self-efficacy would have been a score 9. However, it is important to note the timing of the two surveys. The first survey was given in the first days of school, before any grades were given. The second survey was administered about halfway through the school year *after* the students had just received their report cards. The following are the results of both the first and last surveys.

CHRIS

Chris' score was a 28. Overall, Chris was on the fence for all of the options. He did admit that he sought out help when he had come across a problem. He also admitted that he also had a hard time concentrating in class. I didn't think I would qualify this student, as having a low level of self-efficacy, but there is definitely room for improvements.

Chris' score in the final self-efficacy survey was a 25. Again, he was on the fence for most, if not all of the prompts. In this survey, he noted that he struggled in Social Studies whereas in this first survey that he took, he noted that only sometimes struggled in Social Studies.

DANNY

Danny's score on the self-efficacy survey was a 32. This student was also towards the mid-line in terms of his perceived self-efficacy, with a lot of reporting "sometimes like me, sometimes not." His strengths seemed to be that he asked for help when he had trouble and that he did his homework on time. However, he wasn't very likely to look up information outside of class and rarely took notes in class.

Danny scored exactly the same on the final self-efficacy survey. Again, many times he reported "sometimes like me, sometimes not."

KYLE

Kyle scored a 36 on his self-efficacy survey. He had a pretty high perceived self-efficacy, but some of his assessments in class didn't necessarily agree with the results of the survey. At that point in the study, I thought he really did have confidence in his reading writing and language skills I disagreed with his assessment of being about to complete his assignments on time and resisting the temptation to talk to others in class.

Kyle scored a 31 on his final self-efficacy survey. Kyle still has great confidence in his reading, writing and language skills. Again, he said that he completes his assignments on time, but I have seen evidence to the contrary. In the previous survey Kyle notes that it was not really like him to talk to others in class, whereas in this survey he admitted that sometimes he is likely to talk to others in class, while sometimes he is not.

ALEX

Alex is another student who had a different perception of his self-efficacy in comparison to what I saw in class. He scored a 31 on his self-efficacy survey. While his perception that he cannot resist the temptation to talk to others was spot-on; I have observed that he does not stop talking – EVER! This usually got him in trouble. He also noted that he completed his work on time and wrote his homework down as well. I have not observed this to be true.

Alex scored the same score in the final self-efficacy survey. He did note that now, he is more likely to ask for help when he gets stuck on a problem whereas in the first survey he said that it was least like him.

DIANE

Diane's score on the self-efficacy survey was an 18. She did not feel confident in her ability to read, write and speak. In my classroom observations I had found this to be true, she needed directions re-worded, etc. so that she could best understand them. In some cases she didn't really care to have them re-worded she just sort of gave up and said "I don't get this." She said that struggles most in Social studies, this was probably accurate because she also struggled with language and there is a great deal of reading and writing in Social Studies. Diane also recognized that she did not always hand her assignments in on time, which I observed in class. Finally, she said that she has a hard time staying focused in class and often feels tempted to talk in class.

Diane's score on the final self-efficacy was a 22. She seemed to become more confident in her reading, writing and language skills noting that it was sort of like here whereas in the first survey she said that she very had little confidence in her reading, writing and language abilities. Again, she said that she struggles the most in Social Studies, which supports what I had seen in her progress reports as well as in the classroom.

DEE DEE

DeeDee's self-efficacy survey score was a 28. DeeDee admitted that she did not have very much confidence in her reading, writing and language skills and that she struggled in social studies. Again, I saw a connection as Social Studies is reading and writing intensive. Dee-Dee seemed otherwise confident in her ability to write down homework, to complete work on time, etc. She also said that she had little or no problem concentrating in class and could avoid talking to others. At this point, I couldn't really say if those perceptions are also what *I* see... she hasn't been present in class very much and when she has she has been very quiet. I could note, however, that when she returned to her class following her absences she took it upon herself to get the work that she had missed.

DeeDee did not complete a second self-efficacy survey. She was admitted to KidsPeace for an extended period of time; therefore she was not in class to complete the survey.

LANEY

Laney scored a 21 on her self-efficacy survey. Laney did not feel completely confident in her ability to read, write and speak. She also felt that she sometimes struggled most in Social Studies. Again I saw a connection between reading and the distaste for Social Studies. She said that she did not often complete her homework on time and had a hard time both concentrating in class and avoiding talking to her friends in class.

In the final self-efficacy survey, Laney scored a 23. She actually feels less confident in her reading, writing and language skills not that it was not really like her. Again, she did admit that she didn't complete her homework on time, which is what I had observed in class.

KAREN

Karen scored a 22 on her self-efficacy survey. Karen noted that she struggled with her reading, writing and language skills, this lack of confidence translated into her lack of confidence to do well in Social Studies. She said that she completed her homework on time, but did not write it down. From what I saw in class, she did not complete her homework regularly. She noted that she did not often take notes in class and often could not resist the temptation to talk to others in class.

In this self-efficacy survey, Karen scored a 17. However, she did say this time around that she really struggled in Social Studies. Again, she said that she completed her homework (some of the time), but her progress reports indicated that she has not been keeping up with her homework.

I found from these self-efficacy surveys that the students' perceptions of self-efficacy actually went down. I can attribute the decline in the scores to the timing of the surveys as well as other confounding variables, however the results clearly indicate that I was not able to help students increase their perceived academic self-efficacy through goal setting.

Mid-Marking Period Grades

Four weeks after the last grade-check, students were again issued progress reports. These were not the grades that went on their report cards; they had another four weeks ahead of them to bring their grades up. Just as before, these grades offered me a picture of the level of the students' behavioral engagements, cognitive engagements and motivational engagements. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) recognize these as indicators of academic self-efficacy. Below are the students' progress reports. I have

included previous marks to offer a comparison and to show growth or a lack thereof. Each column represents about five weeks of the school year. The first column indicated the academic standing of students after five weeks. The second column represents grades after ten weeks, as well as what was listed on the students' report cards. Finally, the third column represents students' progress five weeks into the new marking period.

Johnny

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	47%	51%	63%
Algebra 1	87%	73%	53%
History	22%	57%	52%
English	60%	71%	55%

Johnny has a similar pattern in his marks, he manages to pull his grades up in some of the classes just in the nick of time, but his reluctance to do homework or study for tests and quizzes are really hurting him. In class, he is not cognitively engaged and based on his marks and his performance on homework he is not motivationally engaged.

Diane

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	60%	65%	81%
Algebra 1	92%	89%	82%
History	54%	73%	55%
English	68%	74%	44%

Diane seems to have the same pattern; she doesn't do homework or doesn't adequately prepare for tests and quizzes, so her mid-quarters are low. She does manage to pull her grades up by the time "it counts," but only in some of the classes. I see Diane becoming more and more behaviorally disengaged as a result of her grades. It seems as though with every negative piece of feedback (bad grades) she regresses and almost gives up.

Matthew

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	45%	61%	44%
Algebra 1	85%	86%	75%
History	68%	71%	74%
English	46%	82%	69%

Matthew has remained pretty steady with his progress. Unfortunately, it hasn't been great progress. He struggles in the regular education classroom. This is an instance in which a student is behaviorally engaged, cognitively engaged and motivationally engaged but isn't seeing results and it just getting frustrated by his lack of progress.

Danny

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	65%	70%	72%
Algebra 1	84%	80%	91%
History	55%	84%	80%
English	50%	60%	76%

I am impressed with Danny's progress. He has been making a conscious effort in class to do better, and it show in his grades. He is completing homework more consistently, asking questions (though not many) and shows more interest in what grades he got and why he got them.

Sally

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	77%	79%	84%
Algebra 1	87%	83%	75%
History	57%	75%	75%
English	79%	77%	60%

Sally has essentially stayed the same in her academic progress. She still struggles with handing homework in consistently, but seems more focused in class then she had been in the first two months of classes.

Laney

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	70%	68%	88%
Algebra 1	88%	84%	86%
History	72%	75%	63%
English	97%	83%	63%

Laney seems to have worked backwards. Where she used to be doing decently she now seems to have fallen off course. She isn't doing homework as consistently and she is often distracted in class, or she distracts others.

Karen

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	62%	65%	78%
Algebra 1	92%	88%	84%
History	66%	72%	53%
English	93%	64%	72%

Karen seems to have the same pattern throughout the academic periods. She doesn't do homework regularly and she zones out in class. She seems to play the game of school, which is to say that she acts like she is paying attention, but she does not seem to be processing on a deeper level.

Kyle

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	72%	66%	73%
Algebra 1	89%	85%	84%
History	58%	81%	74%
English	97%	95%	82%

Kyle's progress has remained consistent throughout the marking periods. He still has some issues in class with getting off task and distracting others. So far, however he is able to somewhat maintain his grades.

Jane

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	79%	74%	75%
Algebra 1	87%	83%	78%
History	52%	60%	71%
English	92%	76%	80%

Even though Jane had voiced some despair in her grades, she has persevered to earn passing marks. She still isn't doing her homework as regularly, but she was doing enough to get by.

Alex

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	63%	69%	86%
Algebra 1	87%	86%	77%
History	57%	69%	81%
English	74%	56%	77%

Alex's grades rebounded; I think he realized that he needed to do more work to get by in high school. He has gotten better with completing his homework, but behaviorally he is still not on track. He is regularly a major disruption to the classroom.

Junior

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	78%	77%	83%
Algebra 1	89%	87%	85%
History	73%	74%	76%
English	83%	83%	75%

Junior's grades have remained pretty consistent Still, I think he is capable of much more than this.

Chris

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	90%	82%	89%
Algebra 1	95%	97%	95%
History	83%	70%	75%
English	97%	87%	78%

DeeDee

	Mid-Qtr	MP 1	Mid-Qtr
Biology	54%	66%	85%
Algebra 1	88%	79%	99%
History	46%	43%	57%
English	82%	81%	23%

Final Learning Log Entry: How has this helped me?

The final reflection piece of the study, also served as the final piece of my data collection—and the most telling. In this reflection, students were asked to reflect upon how goal setting has helped them to increase their self-

efficacies. Students were given a handout, (Appendix H) which provided them with prompts that would indicate 1) if they met their goals, 2) if goal setting helped them and 3) if they would use goal setting in the future. Below (Figure 4), I have created a pastiche that depicts students' feelings towards the goal setting process.

HOW HAS THIS HELPED YOU???



THIS ACTUALLY DID HELP ME BECAUSE EVERY TIME I TAKE OUT MY AGENDA BOOK I SEE MY GOALS AND REMEMBER THAT I SHOULD DO

ALL THIS TIME I'VE HAD A REASON TO DO MY WORK, TO STUDY FOR MY TEST, AND A REASON TO DO MY HOMEWORK...I THINK I WILL USE IT IN THE FUTURE...

THE GOAL SETTING HAS HELPED IN A WAY BECAUSE I'M NOT GETTING WORSE GRADES LIKE BEFORE. I AM ACTUALLY TRYING.



I DON'T THINK I WILL DO IT IN THE FUTURE—UNLESS A TEACHER MAKES ME

...WHEN I GET MY TEST BACK AND I AM FAILING, I CAN SEE THAT I'M LETTING MY GOAL FALL BEHIND...

...THIS DOESN'T HELP ME BECAUSE I FEEL THAT I HAVE TO DO IT...

...I DON'T THINK HAS HELPED ME... HOMEWORK IS A DUMB IDEA BECAUSE WHEN YOU LEAVE SCHOOL THAT'S YOUR TIME TO GO HOME AND CHILL NOT DO MORE WORK.

GOAL SETTING HASN'T REALLY HELPED ME...BECAUSE EVERYBODY CAN WRITE SOMETHING BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU ARE GONNA STICK TO IT.

Figure 4: How has this helped?

Overall, students did not feel that goal setting helped them become better students. This is a theme that I saw emerge throughout the study. The students indicated that the goal setting and the reflections were just another assignment that the teacher had given them. Two of the students (Danny and Chris) did say that goal setting worked for them. I tend to believe this in their cases because I saw their academic improvement, though a change in self-efficacy was not indicated in their surveys. However, another student who indicated that goal setting had worked for them did not show signs of academic improvement or an improvement in self-efficacy scale score. I am inclined to believe that she may have just been telling me what I wanted to hear—that it had worked for her.

Regardless of their distaste for goal setting, I did find that generally students wanted to be better. If they failed to meet their goals, they were disappointed and did indicate they knew that they had the potential to do better. Even Diane, who throughout the course of the year seemed resistant to every effort that I made towards helping her, was disappointed that she had not met her goals. She said,

“I feel that I could do better...and I want to, but depending on the teacher and their ways of teaching it makes me not wanna try...I have my days when I am a good students but I wanna make everyday like that but I can't if I'm not interested.

The school year had been filled with ups and downs. I had students who really wanted to try, I had students who got off to a slow start and then improved and then I had students who just remained the same. Overall, I have

judged that goal setting did not work for the students who participated in my study. For various reasons, students did not embrace the concept. In addition, I found it difficult to fit time for reflection and progress monitoring seamlessly into my classroom activities.

METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout the course of my study, I maintained a field log. This field log contained my observations, student work, surveys, anecdotes from other teachers, and progress reports. As I moved further into my study, I reviewed my field log, looking for patterns in the data. Some of the patterns that I was searching for had been outlined for me in my review of the literature; namely, evidence of behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement and motivational engagement. Other patterns emerged randomly, some unexpectedly.

Once I finished the study, I formally analyzed my data. When I saw a pattern in the data, I assigned a piece of datum with a code. As I previously mentioned, some of the codes that I used came from the review of the literature. Other codes arose, as I saw common ideas develop. I placed these codes and their corresponding data on index cards, sorted according to the type of data I was collecting (student work, observations, surveys). Once I had organized my data and labeled them with codes, I typed up a formal coding index, which sorted all of the codes. In addition, I grouped the index cards that I had made into related codes. This process enabled me to group similar codes together and developed bins (See Figure 5). The index cards, especially helped me to identify the specific data that supported my thoughts and findings. Finally, from those bins and piles of index cards I was able to create theme statements regarding the findings of my study (See Figure 6).

I organized the themes to reflect the research done by Albert Bandura (1997). He theorized that self-efficacy was influenced by actual experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and affective states. In my data, I found evidence of all of these influences on self-efficacy. Figure 6 identifies the themes and their corresponding influence on self-efficacy.

HOW DOES GOAL SETTING AFFECT THE PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY OF NINTH GRADE AT RISK STUDENTS?

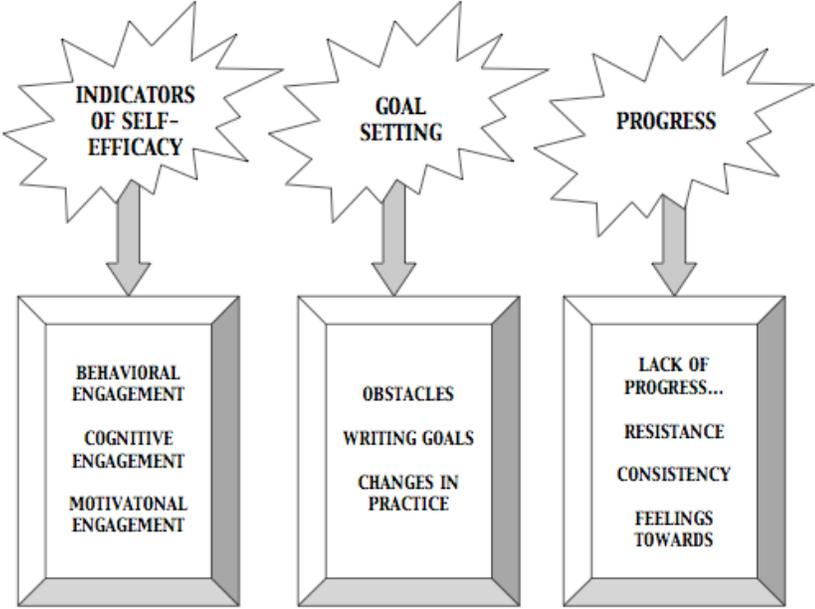


Figure 5: Bins



THEME STATEMENTS

- 1. GOAL SETTING REQUIRES A SUSTAINED TIME COMMITMENT THAT MAY NOT BE POSSIBLE GIVEN CURRENT PRESSURE TO FOCUS ON CONTENT. [SELF-EFFICACY FACTOR: PERSUASION]**
- 2. STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY DECLINED OVER THE COURSE OF THE STUDY WITH ACTUAL EXPERIENCE [SELF-EFFICACY FACTOR: ACTUAL EXPERIENCES]**
- 3. STUDENT'S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES WITH SCHOOL LIMITED THEIR COGNITIVE AND MOTIVATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS WHICH MAY HAVE INFLUENCED SELF-EFFICACY. [SELF-EFFICACY FACTOR: ACTUAL EXPERIENCES]**
- 4. STUDENTS' DISLIKE FOR SCHOOL MAY HAVE INFLUENCED SELF-EFFICACY. [SELF-EFFICACY FACTOR: AFFECTIVE STATES]**
- 5. STUDENTS' BEHAVIORAL, COGNITIVE AND MOTIVATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS MAY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THEIR VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES. [SELF-EFFICACY FACTOR: VICARIOUS EXPERIENCES]**

Figure 6: Theme Statements

FINDINGS

Goal setting requires a sustained time commitment that may not be possible given current pressure to focus on content. [Self-efficacy factor: persuasion]

Much of the research on goal setting in the classroom emphasizes spending a great deal of time discussing goal setting with students (Schunk, 1984; Rader, 2005). It recommends re-visiting goals often, students having time for reflection and making time for teachers and students to conference. As within many classrooms, time became an issue in my classroom; not just for goal setting but for getting through the curriculum. Constant interruptions that occurred weekly limited the amount of time I had with my students. Likewise, when I did have my students in class, I needed to focus on content. This left very little in-class time that I could use to re-visit goals, further instruct on goals, and have students reflect on their progress. Additionally, the teaming structure of the ninth grade demanded a great deal of time which resulted in my inability to conference with students.

Bandura (1997) as well as Linnebrink & Pintrich (2003) recommend verbal persuasion as a means of influencing self-efficacy. What someone says to an individual can influence her self-efficacy in either a positive or negative way. At the onset of this study, it was my intention to give the students constructive and positive feedback. What I encountered was a lack of time to do that. I was able to give the most feedback for the students' Academic Autobiographies and their goals, however once class work and assessments began to come in I was torn as to where I should spend my time. Should I

have sacrificed the feedback on assessments so I could provide more comments on their progress in trying to achieve their goals?

Students who are considered at-risk tend to have skills that are below grade level (Jordan, 2001 & Neild, 2009). Additionally, there is a large gap between the pedagogical philosophies of middle school and high school. The large gap is found in some of the skills that are necessary for the high school classroom. Much of the time in the first few weeks of the school year are spent filling in that gap. This was especially true for the at-risk students who were the subjects of my study. In my classroom, I needed to be focused not only on the content I needed to cover but I needed to find ways to address the skills-based needs of my students as well. As a result of this, I found myself rushing through content to get to goal setting, or vice versa. I wasn't able to give the appropriate time to either, so I needed to change my approach and focus on what the students *needed* to do so that they would have the tools to be successful in the future. Content and skills won out, the time for goal setting was forfeited.

Students' self-efficacy declined over the course of the study with actual experience [Self-efficacy factor: Actual experiences]

The focus of this study was to increase the academic self-efficacy of at-risk ninth graders through goal setting. Overall, students' measured self-efficacy did not increase. There are several possible explanations for the

result. One plausible explanation is related to the timing of the self-efficacy post-survey.

The first survey was given in the beginning of the year, when students had not received any grades, or any *real* instruction. They were fresh off of summer vacation, ready to start the new school year; assuming that it would be just like the previous year. Their perceptions of self-efficacy were higher (mean= 27.42) with the initial reporting in the beginning of the study and lower at the end of the study (mean= 26.16, p-value= .52). The final self-efficacy survey was given just after reports cards were issued, so most students were frustrated with seeing grades that were not adequate, thus this may have influenced their self-efficacy negatively.

Student' previous experiences with school limited their cognitive and motivational engagements which may have influenced self-efficacy. [Self-efficacy factor: Actual experiences]

Regardless of the timing of the self-efficacy survey, there was little evidence in my observations to indicate that students had become more confident in their academics. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) note that behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and motivational engagement are all indicators of an increased perceived self-efficacy. Some of my subjects were behaviorally engaged; they sat in class quietly and went through the motions, but, with a few exceptions as noted below, I hardly ever observed them becoming cognitively engaged. They weren't asking questions, looking at topics from different angles or questioning what they were doing. They went through the motions. Likewise, these students were not motivationally

engaged. It was unlikely that these students would do work on their own time, or look up information that we had talked about in class. Similarly, it was rare that students would stay after school for additional instruction, which signifies a lack of motivational engagement. Other students were not even behaviorally engaged, but ironically just because these students were not behaviorally engaged did not mean that they were cognitively disengaged. Alex and Kyle were prime examples of this. They had to be redirected often in class, but they also participated a great deal. They asked questions that delved deeper into the subjects. These questions provided evidence that they were thinking about the material on a deeper level, thus indicating cognitive engagement.

Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) also link the engagements listed above with academic achievement. They assert that if students are behaviorally engaged, cognitively engaged and motivationally engaged then they would demonstrate academic achievement. With a couple of exceptions, many of my students did not demonstrate academic achievement. They may have been able to bring their grades up slightly from progress report to progress report, but many students still teetered on the line of a failing grade. To me, a barely passing grade does not indicate academic achievement.

The lack of increase in self-efficacy could possibly be linked to the students' established perceptions of school. Bandura (1997) argues that actual experiences influence an individual's self-efficacy. Could it be that there had been too much damage already done to remedy in the short amount of time my study was conducted? In their academic autobiographies, many of the

students indicated that they hated school, or that they did not have positive feelings about school. DeeDee and Danny both noted that they have always disliked school, influencing their current perceptions about academics. I also found evidence that, in some cases, the students' perceptions of academic experiences did not change. I look to the conversation I had with Diane (See "Diane puts up a fight," p. 96). She understood that a high school diploma was important, but found school boring. Her views hadn't changed in the weeks that we had been doing goal setting, possibly because her experiences had not changed enough to influence her self-efficacy.

Students' dislike for school may have influenced self-efficacy. [Self-efficacy factor: affective states]

A major component in assessing self-efficacy is behavioral engagement, so I monitored the behavior of each of my subjects. Initially, I assumed that these students who were misbehaving in class were also not cognitively engaged. I also made the assumption that they did not want to be cognitively engaged, because in my experience students who were asking questions about the content were not usually the students who had behavior problems. (Linnenbrink and Pintrich, 2003).

Kyle came into my classroom with a great deal of personal baggage. He was diagnosed as being on the Autism spectrum, he had recently lost his father in a motorcycle accident and he was entering a regular education classroom from partial hospitalization. Considering all he was dealing with, who could blame him for having a behavior issue or not doing well academically? Regardless, it was my responsibility to get this student to

achieve, thus increasing his academic self-efficacy. He seemed to embrace the idea of goal setting at first, noting in his “Plan for Success” that it would not matter if his parents were proud of him, what would matter is how he felt. I remember being excited at hearing this, as it indicated that he had taken ownership of his goal. However, the goal setting didn’t carry over into the classroom. For much of the school year, Kyle was near failing in most of his subjects. Additionally, in nearly every class he was a behavior problem. The enigmatic part of Kyle was that in between redirections and cues to stay on task, he was asking questions. He genuinely wanted to know more. He was less likely to work independently, but the wheels were turning. This leads me to the conclusion that even though he was not behaviorally engaged, that did not mean that he was not cognitively engaged; his behavior created obstacles for his cognitive engagement. My observations of Kyle throughout the study led me to believe that he wanted to achieve, and he was capable of doing so, but his behavior was standing in the way. Kyle, in one of his learning log entries even made the realization that his behavior had begun getting in the way of his academics. He wrote, “The progress I am currently making is not doing well. For reasons I just can’t explain, I have been slacking academically and it has been affected by my behavior in a few classes.”

Diane was resistant to help. In her Academic Autobiography she mentioned that she didn’t even want to be in school, she begged her mother to have her home schooled. Many efforts to give her extra attention were met with attitude. However, the enlightening element was a conversation I had

with Diane in which she mentioned that she wanted to be a marine biologist—a very high aspiration. As she spoke, she demonstrated that she understood what hard work it would take to become a marine biologist, especially since she hadn't been doing well in biology. At that point in the study, I saw that there may have been a hope—something that I could pin her success to, a long-term goal! However, in class I was still met with a great deal of resistance. In her last learning log entry she noted that her success in class depended on her relationship with the teacher, how dynamic the content or lessons were and what kind of mood she was in that day. Additionally, I think that her lack of academic success had frustrated her to the point that she was ready to give up. In her learning log, she said, “I have the ability to achieve them [my goals] but I study most of the time I feel confident after I take tests, but then I get them back its like what happened?” As I suggested before, maybe her self-efficacy is too far gone for this intervention to work. Similarly, Diane may not have owned the goal; she may not have embraced as her own therefore she was less willing to work towards it.

Matthew defied the description of an at-risk student, but he still stood as a student who was in danger of retention. From the beginning of the year, Matthew was quiet and had a great work ethic. He did everything that I had asked him to do, but he still struggled in his classes. While at a conference with his mother, she remarked that he had been putting in many hours at home in attempt to get himself on track academically. Unfortunately, Matthew was not seeing favorable results on his progress reports and report cards. In class,

he was behaviorally engaged, but as the year wore on I noticed that he was becoming increasingly frustrated and shut down. He neglected to do more and more of his homework and began falling asleep in class. Part of this I attribute to his medication, but Matthew, who had been motivationally engaged in the beginning of the year, was a shell of what he used to be.

Similarly, Johnny became more disengaged as the year went on. He was passively resistant to any forms of help. He had become frustrated with the reading level, the amount of work and closed himself off to any assistance. Johnny, having been abandoned by his parents, was already dealing with psychological and affective issues. His lack of progress in the classroom perpetuated these issues, which had a negative effect on his perceived academic self-efficacy.

Students' behavioral, cognitive and motivational engagements may have been affected by their vicarious experiences. (Self-efficacy factor: Vicarious Experiences]

Schunk (1996) and Bandura (1997) note that student vicarious experiences can influence their self-efficacy. Schunk maintains that comparison in the classroom can be helpful in encouraging both favorable and unfavorable behaviors. Students observe the behaviors and successes of other students and compare their own behaviors and successes. At times, it helps students reign in their behaviors. Other times, students embrace the idea of being the problem child in the classroom.

Alex was a student who had consistent behavior problems. There were times while doing independent work that he needed to be removed from the

classroom so that he didn't distract himself or others. He was not behaviorally engaged and often interrupted the flow of instruction because I needed to redirect him or give him cues to stay on task (See "Alex changes his socks in class"). In other classes, teachers had to stop repeatedly to discipline him. The ironic part of this is that Alex often shouted out answers during a class discussion. This demonstrated to me that he was cognitively engaged and was inclined to know more about the subjects we were talking about. However, like Kyle, his behavior got in the way of his success. My student teacher even noted to me during the course of the study that he would be an excellent student if his behavior didn't hinder his progress. Also, like many of the students, Alex wanted to do well in class. Though he didn't specifically say this, he was often concerned about what he had gotten on an assessment. Perhaps Alex had embraced his role as a troublemaker in the classroom rather than use it as a deterring factor. Schunk (1984) asserts that comparing children can be helpful, but he also maintains that unfairly comparing students can lead to a decrease in self-efficacy. Alex may have compared his poor behavior to the good behavior of other students, thus impacting his perceived self-efficacy. Regardless of how he perceived himself and the role he took on, I believe that he did want to escape this role as a troublemaker; he just did not know how to do it. In his action plan he explained that he "...would feel happy by not getting corrected all the time...I will almost never get in trouble."

High school marks a time of significant social influence. Marsh and Cornell (2001) remark that students in the ninth grade are extremely vulnerable to social pressures. Just as Alex had embraced the role of the troublemaker, other students had felt the need to mirror the attitudes of their peers. Diane, in particular, has been influenced by her peers. In class, she sits next to a student (not involved with this study) who does not do her work, rarely pays attention and is also failing many classes. My observations of Diane lead me to believe that Diane is hesitant to dive full force into her academics for fear of rejection from her peers. Diane travels around with a group of girls who have become behavior problems. One of her closest companions often skips class, does not do her work and talks back to teachers. In her action plan, she felt that the obstacles she thought she would face were "...peer pressure or not having my friends because I ditch them for school." It seems plausible to assume that Diane's behavior is being negatively influenced by her group of friends.

THE NEXT EPISODE...

This qualitative study has given me the opportunity to see a research study through from start to finish. I started off hoping that I would be able to change my students' lives, but as I worked through the study I found that my interventions were having little or no effect. Regardless of the success or failure of my study it helped me learn a great deal about my students.

I found that some of my students didn't want to change, and I had a hard time making a connection with them. Conversely, I was able to see the good in many of my students; I am now able to see them as more than just students sitting in the classroom.

I have these students for the rest of the school year, so thankfully I will be able to track their progress and note if they are retained due to credit denial. I do not plan on continuing the goal setting, as I did not see any sort of positive results from it. However, the team teachers and I have been working together to conference with students who are currently in danger of failing the ninth grade in an effort to get them back on track. So far, our efforts have not panned out.

While I do not think that I will continue the goal setting in subsequent years, I do believe that I will continue doing the Academic Autobiography. It yielded vital information that helped me to get to know my students, and made me aware of their past educational experiences. Based on that information, I may be able to better connect with students and adjust my instruction so that I can best reach them.

This study has left me with more questions than answers. I set out to increase the self-efficacy of ninth grade at-risk students, but found that it didn't help. My research did raise additional questions however, that I plan to explore them in the future:

- What can be done to help a student overcome his previous, negative educational experiences?
- How can a teacher help a small population of students, without neglecting the needs of others?
- What can be done in the classroom to lessen the effects of such confounding variables as home life, social life and peer influence?
- What can be done to encourage students to take ownership of their academic careers?

EPILOGUE

Where are they now?

Alex

At the conclusion of the study, Alex was showing signs of improvement, both in behavior and in his grades. Even though he had made marked improvements, his teachers still had many behavior issues with him in their classes. At the end of the first semester, he was passing all of his classes. Due to his low grades in the beginning of the year and his performance on his mid-term exams, he was considered in danger of failing some of classes, but we believed that if he kept improving, then he would be in good shape to move on to the tenth grade. However, Alex was removed from our classes after he made a harassing comment towards me.

Chris

Chris still struggles at times, but he is not in danger of failing any classes for the year. He remains very quiet in class, but he completes his homework more regularly and works well independently.

DeeDee

DeeDee has returned from her placement at KidsPeace, but she hasn't been attending school. I consulted with the attendance secretary, and she reported that DeeDee just refuses to come to school. Soon she will be taken to court for her truancy violations. She and her family are currently involved in counseling, but we have not been notified as to what the problem is.

Diane

At the end of the first semester Diane was in danger of failing all of her classes with the exception of Math. When we handed out progress reports, we explained to the students that there was still hope of passing. Diane seemed to

take this to heart. She was still not enthusiastic about doing schoolwork, but she was less resistant. Unfortunately, her behavior has not improved. She has since been suspended a handful of times, for various reasons. Her behavior problems seem to happen in the hallways and in her elective classes rather than her academic classes.

Johnny

Johnny is in danger of failing all of his classes and being retained. He is still passively resistant. He doesn't do his homework, he finds distractions in class so that he doesn't need to do his work and he has not responded to any of the interventions that the team of teachers put in place. We have conferenced with his cousin, with whom he currently resides, but to no avail.

Junior

Junior's progress has improved since the end of the study, but he is still quiet in class. Often, it is hard to tell if he is cognitively engaged. However, he does complete his work most of the time and seems to work well independently.

Karen

Karen has made little or no progress since the end of the study. She is still close to failing most of her classes. In History, she is in danger for failing for the year. She is behaviorally engaged, but still goes through the motions in the classroom. She waits for other students to come up with answers, or the teacher to give the answers and then writes them down. Completion of her homework and other assignments is inconsistent. Karen has made no attempts to stay after school for extra instruction.

Kyle

Kyle has his good days and bad days. He participates in class a little, but I often need to stop the class to redirect him. He is distracted easily by others, and often distracts others from their work. He is inconsistent with the work that he hands in and is slow to complete tasks. Regularly his behavior stands in the way of successfully completing the work that he needs to do. A few weeks after the end of the study, we were unsure if he would return to the classroom. His erratic behavior led his case manager to seek out a partial hospitalization assignment for him. We are still waiting on word for a vacancy in the partial hospitalization classroom.

Laney

Laney is also inconsistent with her work. While she is not in danger of failing classes for the year, she teeters on the edge. If she digresses even more, I fear that she will put herself in danger of failing. Laney is easily distracted by others and is more focused on social happenings than academic activities.

Matthew

Matthew is still falling asleep in class; the doctors were never able to adjust his medication so that he could be as attentive as he wanted to be. He is still quietly struggling, but has a great work ethic. He is in danger of failing the ninth grade, but his teachers have agreed that if he continues to work hard and give a full effort, then he will be promoted. At times, Matthew shows frustration and shuts down, but there are also times that he demonstrates his motivational engagement. His mom is still fully involved with the teachers

and is currently seeking out testing to have him classified as a Special Education student so that he has access to additional resources.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: HSIRB Approval Form



May 10, 2010

Jennifer Deily
4173 Newburg Road
Bethlehem, PA 18020

Dear Jennifer Deily:

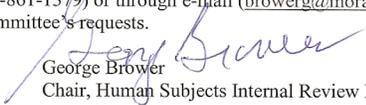
The Moravian College Human Subjects Internal Review Board has reviewed your proposal: "Increasing self-efficacy in ninth grade at-risk students through goal-setting and self-regulation." Although the committee cannot give its complete approval at this time, your research is conditionally approved, pending the following revisions.

1. In your Informed Consent form, please clarify
 - a) by stating how a student or parent(s) can withdraw during the study.
 - b) including contact information for the same professor on all versions of the form..

Please note that if you intend to venture into topics other than those indicated in your proposal, you must inform the HSIRB.

Should any other aspect of your research change or extend past one year of the date of this letter, you must file those changes or extensions with the HSIRB before implementation.

This letter has been sent to you through U.S. Mail and e-mail. Please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone (610-861-1379) or through e-mail (browerg@moravian.edu) with any questions about the committee's requests.


George Brower
Chair, Human Subjects Internal Review Board
Moravian College
610-861-1379

APPENDIX B: Principal Consent Form

March 29, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I am currently enrolled in the Master's of Education program at Moravian College, pursuing a degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The courses I have been taking for the past few years have enabled me to be progressive in my teaching, and keep current with current pedagogical trends in order to provide the best possible experiences for my students.

The capstone of the Master's of Education program requires that I conduct an action research study that focuses on a major component of my teaching practices. I have decided to focus the effects of goal setting and self-regulation on the perceived self-efficacy in at-risk ninth grade students. First, I will identify at-risk students enrolled in my class, using research-based characteristics. Second, I will conduct mini-lessons regarding self-efficacy and instruction focusing on goal setting. Students will then set goals that are meaningful to them and make a plan to achieve these goals.

Data will be collected through surveys, student conferences, student work and observations. Within the first week of the study, I will administer a survey to the students to gauge their perceived self-efficacy. Students will then create an entry in their learning logs entitled, "My Academic Autobiography" which will outline their development as a student. I will conference with the students bi-weekly. Students will also regularly make entries in their learning logs to track the progress of their goals. At the mid-way point and the conclusion of the study, I will administer the perceived self-efficacy survey and examine it for changes. As a final form of data, students will create an entry in their learning log entitled, "How has this helped me?" This entry will examine the process of goal setting and how it has affected the students.

All students in my ninth grade classes will be participating in these interventions, but only students who have been identified as at-risk will be included in the data of my study. All participation in this study is completely voluntary and will have no impact on their grades. Only data from those who sign on as research participants will be used in my study. If the student withdraws, or the Parent/Guardian does not provide consent I will not include that student's information in my study.

The names of all participants will remain confidential. There will also be no mention of the names of the institution, specific faculty members or cooperating teachers. Minor details in student work may need to be altered, however, in order to maintain student anonymity. Additionally, all research materials will be secured in a protected location and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

If you have further questions about this study, please contact me in a timely manner so that we may discuss it. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Deily

I attest that I am the principal of the teacher conducting this research study, that I have read and understand this consent form, and received a copy. Jennifer Deily has my permission to conduct this study at Freedom High School.

Principal's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C: Parent Consent Form

March 29, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am currently enrolled in the Master's of Education program at Moravian College, pursuing a degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The courses I have been taking for the past few years have enabled me to be progressive in my teaching, and keep current with current pedagogical trends in order to provide the best possible experiences for my students.

The capstone of the Master's of Education program requires that I conduct an action research study that focuses on a major component of my teaching practices. I have decided to focus the effects of goal setting and self-regulation on the perceived self-efficacy in ninth grade students. I will conduct mini-lessons regarding self-efficacy and instruction focusing on goal setting. Students will then set goals that are meaningful to them and make a plan to achieve these goals.

Data will be collected through surveys, student conferences, student work and observations. Within the first week of the study, I will administer a survey to the students to gauge their perceived self-efficacy. Students will then create an entry in their learning logs entitled, "My Academic Autobiography" which will outline their development as a student. I will conference with the students bi-weekly. Students will also regularly make entries in their learning logs to track the progress of their goals. At the mid-way point and the conclusion of the study, I will administer the perceived self-efficacy survey and examine it for changes. As a final form of data, students will create an entry in their learning log entitled, "How has this helped me?" This entry will examine the process of goal setting and how it has affected the students.

All students in my ninth grade classes will be participating in these interventions, but only students who have agreed to participate will be included in the study. All participation in this study is completely voluntary and will have no impact on their grades. Only data from those who sign on as research participants will be used in my study. If the student withdraws, or the Parent/Guardian does not provide consent I will not include that student's information in my study.

The names of all participants will remain confidential. There will also be no mention of the names of the institution, specific faculty members or cooperating teachers. Minor details in student work may need to be altered, however, in order to maintain student anonymity. Additionally, all research materials will be secured in a protected location and destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

My professor at Moravian College is Dr. Joseph Shosh. He can be contacted via e-mail at jshosh@moravian.edu. Mr. LaPorta, Principal of Freedom High School has already consented to this study. If you have any concerns please feel free to contact him in the Main Office at 610-867-5843. If you have further questions about this study, please contact me in a timely manner so that we may discuss it. I can be reached via e-mail at jdeily@bethsd.org. If not, please sign the bottom of this letter and return it to me at your earliest convenience. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Jennifer Deily
Freedom High School Social Studies Department

My child has permission to participate in this study.

My child does not have permission to participate in this study.

Student Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D: Learning Log Entry--Academic Autobiography

Learning Log Entry "My Academic Autobiography"

To figure out where we are going, we need to reflect on where we have come from. In no less than 5 sentences each, respond to each of the following prompts in your Learning Log.

- Have you always felt the same way about school? (e.g. always liked it or always hated it...)
- Why do you think this is the case?
- What are your strengths as a student? Why are these your strengths? What did you do to develop them?
- What are your weaknesses as a student? Why are these your weaknesses? What have you done to overcome them?
- Describe (don't name) your favorite teacher. If you don't have a favorite teacher, just describe your ideal teacher. Be sure to explain!
- Which class do you feel most motivated in? Why?

APPENDIX E: Goal Setting Handout

GOAL-SETTING

Why set goals?

- Goals motivate us...
- Goals give us something to work towards...
- Goals let us know what we accomplished...
- *"As people work on a task they compare their current performance with a goal. Self-evaluation of strengths self-efficacy and sustains motivation"* -Pale Schunk

Setting a good goal

- **SPECIFICITY**
 - You have to be specific about your goal!
 - Write down exactly what you are going to achieve, otherwise how can you measure it?
 - The more specific a goal, the better you can judge your progress!
 - *"Explicit standards regulate performance by designating the type and amount of effort required to attain them, and they generate self-satisfaction and build personal efficacy by furnishing unambiguous signs of personal accomplishment"* -Albert Bandura
- **PROXIMITY**
 - "Goals are dreams with deadlines..."
 - In order to motivate you, you need to set a deadline for your goals. Without a deadline you will lack direction and motivation.. you will think "I will just get this done whenever... and you behave accordingly."
 - **TWO TYPES OF DEADLINES**
 - **PROXIMAL**
 - In the near future... a week, a marking period, etc.
 - This is the most motivating type of goal because you can see the light at the end of the tunnel and you are more motivated to reach it!!
 - **Distal**
 - Further away... a month, a semester, the school year.
 - Can be more problematic because the end is so far away... more likely to lapse in your motivation.
 - **WHAT YOU CAN DO:** take your proximal goals and create sub-goals that you need to achieve in order to get to your bigger goal. Set proximal deadlines for those!
- **DIFFICULTY**
 - Be reasonable about your ability... don't overshoot and don't undershoot!
 - If your goals are too easy to attain, then you won't be likely to keep going when times get tough.
 - On the other hand, if your goals are too difficult then you may get frustrated when you are met with obstacles or failures...
- **GOAL ORIENTATION**
 - **MASTERY** → looks at progress
 - **PERFORMANCE** → outside goals
 - If you make a goal that deals with your progress, then you are more likely to be intrinsically motivated.

APPENDIX F: Learning Log Entry—My Plan for Success

Learning Log Entry "My Plan for Success"

VISUALIZE:

What does achieving your goal look like? Describe what you envision when you finally reach your goal? What are the people around you saying? What are you saying about yourself? How do you feel about yourself?

PLAN:

How will you achieve your goal? What types of things will you do to make sure that you can achieve your goal?
REMEMBER: you need to be specific so that you can hold yourself accountable *and* so that you know exactly what you need to do!

DUE DATE:

When do you want to achieve this goal by? You don't need a specific date; you can use markers like "1st marking period" or "end of the 1st semester."

TROUBLESHOOTING OBSTACLES:

Be realistic... what obstacles do you think you will face along the way? For each obstacle make a plan for what you will do, so that when you face the obstacle you are prepared.

APPENDIX G: Learning Log Entry—My Progress

Learning Log Entry My Progress

For each goal, you should respond to the following prompts.

- Describe the progress you are making so far with your goals.
- If you are making progress, how can you tell you are making progress?
- If you are not making progress, what obstacles have you faced? What strategies have you used to tackle these obstacles?
- Have you met your goal? If so, what can you do to build upon the goal you just achieved?
- Has having this goal changed the way you act in the classroom? Why or why not?

APPENDIX H: Learning Log Entry—How has this helped?

Learning Log Entry How has this helped me?

No it is time to look at what you have learned from this experience! Respond to the prompts below so that I can get a better idea of how (or if) goal setting has changed the way you do business in the classroom.

- Did you achieve your goals? Why or why not? Be specific in your explanation!
- Based on the question above... how did you feel about this? Explain.
- How do you think the process of goal setting has helped you? Be specific with how you think it has helped you. Fee free to talk about other classes too!
- Do you think you will use this in the future? In what capacity?

APPENDIX I: Self-Efficacy Survey

Name: _____

Below you will find a series of prompts dealing with your classroom experiences. Rate each statement below:

- 5 → most like me
- 4 → sort of like me
- 3 → sometimes like me, sometimes not
- 2 → not really like me
- 1 → least like me

1. _____ I have great confidence in my reading, writing and language skills.
2. _____ I find that I struggle most in Social Studies.
3. _____ When I get stuck on a problem, I have no trouble asking for help.
4. _____ I always complete my assignments by the deadlines.
5. _____ I always write down my homework.
6. _____ I have a hard time concentrating in class.
7. _____ I am not likely to look up information or do work outside of school.
8. _____ I don't usually take notes in class.
9. _____ I cannot resist the temptation to talk to others in class.

APPENDIX J: Student Contract

I, _____ will follow the steps listed on this contract when encountering academic problems. If I am struggling with the academic issues, I will talk to a team teacher about additional interventions in order to ensure that I succeed this semester.

Possible Academic Problems

Failing a large test, project, etc.
Missing work due to an absence
Confusion over an assignment's directions
Confusion over a difficult passage in the textbook
Studying for a large test, quiz, etc
Not completing homework

Academic Steps and Interventions Checklist-(the asterik denotes steps that parents should be a part of monitoring)

- (1)I read the directions and materials carefully(circling or highlighting key words).
- (2)I pay attention in class, especially when oral directions for projects, homework, tests, and assignments are being given by writing down additional information.
- (3)I reread difficult passages for understanding (showing evidence of note taking or other reading strategies).
- (4)I completed all of my homework on time. *
- (5)I went to homework help after school with a team teacher.
- (6)I write down my questions and ask the teacher these questions in class or after school.
- (7)I always write down my assignments in my agenda book and use it as reminder of my homework outside of school. *
- (8)I worked with another student in a study group outside of school. *
- (9)I studied for my test(s) over several days prior to taking it by chunking the material. *
- (10)I have reviewed the day's class material at home. *

_____ (Student signature) _____ (Date)

_____ (Parent signature) _____ (Date)