One Teacher's Experience of Journaling Through Email with a Student

with Emotional Disturbances

by

Laurel Justinger

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development at

The College at Brockport, State University of New York in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

Chapter Four: Findings

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Appendixes

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

When I invited Parker (a pseudonym) to respond to an open-ended story starter he reacted by saying, (curse words represented by symbols) "I can't do this $%*& no more. This is @!#$%*^ stupid! I @!#$%*^ hate this!" Then everything went silent and his head slammed down onto the desk, hands remaining at his sides not bothering to cushion the fall or soften the impact. Noticing his obvious frustration I leaned in and in a friendly whisper, cognizant of the weakness he attributes to assistance of any kind, said "Let's work on this together." His head still on the cold hard desk and hands clenched at his sides, very slowly and in a matter-of-fact way he replied, "Get the @!#% away from me."

Just one day earlier, on February 14, I observed Parker during independent leisure time cutting out red and pink construction paper hearts then writing "Happy Valentine's Day" to each of his classmates. He referenced name tags attached to individual desks for accurate spelling and then wrote "From Parker." Later that same day before dismissal he chose to go to the computer lab, as he usually did, for his end of the day reinforcement. As a reward for completing his schedule and staying out of timeout that day, we traveled down the hall to the school's computer room. He sat down in a rolling chair and slid up to one of the computers then asked, "What do I click on to write a poem?" I guided him to the icon with the blue "W" on the computer's desktop and he opened Microsoft Word. He began typing a poem for staff members at his group home. He started with "Dear Amy and Nancy" then went on to type, using his right index finger scanning the keyboard for each letter, "Rose are red violet are blue i am sweet and so are are you

from Parker i se you when i get home from Parker," periodically asking for my help with spelling.

Parker, a 16 year old student of mine diagnosed with emotional disturbance (ED), demonstrated difficulty responding to writing instruction, modeling, and guided practice. His reaction detailed in the opening paragraph of this chapter depicted a similar response of the majority of students I worked with who shared his diagnosis. They tended to avoid risk-taking behaviors, in the academic sense, because of the perceived inevitability of failure. In other words, it was safer to not even try then to try and risk, in their minds, failure. Personal analysis of Functional Behavioral Assessments of my students with ED showed increased likelihood of noncompliant, disruptive, and aggressive behaviors to occur during demand activities, such as one to one instruction or guided practice. When I tried to engage in explicit instruction, guided and/or shared writing experiences with Parker, I was frequently met with verbal aggressions and negative refusal. Occasionally Parker could be observed initiating and engaging in writing activities during leisure or choice time, but most of his "writing" was confined to the possible safety, comfort, and/or routine of completing fill-in-the-blank worksheets. During these episodes, he demonstrated the ability to copy sentences, record "true" or "false," circle the correct answer, fill in the blanks, and recall form information: first name, last name, address, phone number, birth date.

With his pencil, its barely-there eraser and canine imprints at the top, Parker made marks on paper but he was not engaging in writing the way Lucy Calkins (1994), Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell (2001) envisioned and defined it. Together they defined writers as people who wrote often, were confident in their abilities, wrote to communicate, share experiences, question, notice, remember, plan, and list. They also described writers as those who embraced feedback

and wrote to tell about their lives, awarding significance to their experiences (Calkins, 1994; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). I wanted students to feel comfortable extending their writing beyond the confines of worksheets. I wanted to help them become successful writers who engaged in meaningful and authentic activities.

Significance of the Problem

I believe proficiency in writing is an essential component to leading a successful and independent life. Writing plays a role in the organization and enjoyment of our lives. We write to communicate with others, to maintain and foster relationships with friends and family through emails, letters, cards, and valentines. We write to organize, gather, and remember information, creating grocery and "to do" lists. We also write for personal expression and enjoyment, crafting poems or sorting out our feelings in diaries. These authentic and meaningful purposes for writing increase our independence and success, which were the identified goals of the functional, life-skills curriculum at Parker's school (www.marycariola.org). In addition, the interconnectedness of writing and reading processes suggest development in one area will support development in the other (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). However, students with emotional disturbances demonstrate considerable delays in reading and writing, among other areas, enhancing the significance of the problem (Graham & Harris, 2005; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). Finding authentic ways to engage Parker and other students with ED in the act of writing was a necessary endeavor to encourage growth and development, helping to close the wide achievement gap.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study, then, was to engage an emotionally disturbed student in meaningful writing activities, to encourage his writing development and abilities, and build his confidence in himself as a writer. As shown in my own work with students as well as in the research, students with emotional disturbances demonstrate behaviors which greatly affect writing skill and strategy acquisition and development (Graham & Harris, 2005; Sutherland et al., 2008). Sousa (2007) pointed out that students with learning disabilities, such as ED, have difficulty focusing for extended periods of time, have a poor rate of retention, are often overwhelmed and frustrated in new learning situations, and have auditory processing delays. Sousa (2007) went on to connect symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, "extreme sensitivity to rejection or failure," difficulty forming and maintaining appropriate relationships, as well as increased rates of aggressive outbursts with students diagnosed with emotional disturbances (p. 51).

In addition, compared to their non-disabled peers, research showed that students with emotional disturbances possess a high incidence of negative or dissatisfied feelings about their quality of life, including feelings about themselves and their abilities (Sacks & Kern, 2008). Jones and East (2010) have shown that the process of journaling, an instructional tool used to encourage student writing characterized by frequent student entries and consistent teacher feedback, could help students increase writing self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the way a person views or perceives his or her abilities (Jones & East, 2010; Kern, DeLaney, Clarke, Dunlap & Childs, 2001). Schunk and Zimmerman (2007) as well as Lam and Law (2007) have shown the link between self-efficacy rates and motivation as well as writing achievement. They found that students with higher levels of writing self-efficacy were more engaged in writing

tasks, stayed on-task longer, and scored higher. Consequently, through a five week research study, I set out to answer the following research questions:

How does journaling through email affect the writing development of a student with emotional disturbances?

How does journaling through email affect a student's writing self-efficacy?

I designed the study to extend research on the effects of journaling with students with emotional disturbances, specifically Parker, informing my practices as a teacher. The study aligned with my educational philosophy that all students could learn. More specifically, I believed that all students, regardless of their diagnoses or abilities could succeed academically given responsive teaching, instruction that was within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky as cited in Calkins, 1994), and scaffolding that was tailored to meet their individual needs. While the sophistication to which Parker would understand and employ literacy skills and behaviors was unknown given his antecedents, it was my fundamental belief that students of all abilities could progress toward more complex thinking. This study also paralleled my philosophy as an educator which included creating confident and successful members of society who would be lifelong lovers and users of literacy. More specifically, I strived to foster young adults who read, wrote, listened, spoke, and viewed beyond that which was required by teachers or employers.

Through the process of conducting this study I hoped to refine my skills as a researcher. I anticipated this process would help me discover effective research methods and ethical practices. Cognizant of the importance of staying ahead of the ever-changing field of education, I was dedicated to professional development. By reviewing research on best-practices and setting out

to uncover their effects on the population of students I taught, I would be a better educator, increasing my toolbox of effective instructional strategies.

Study Approach

This research study followed a practical action research design. As the teacher-researcher I designed this study to extend research on the effects of journaling with students with emotional disturbances, to inform my practices as a teacher. I focused my research on improving the quality of instruction and student learning within a school setting (Creswell, 2008).

The participant of this study was from a non-profit, alternative school in western New York designed for students with multiple, severe disabilities. The participant had an ED diagnosis. Parker, age 16, was a Caucasian male student enrolled in my classroom at the time. Parker presented with significant cognitive delays and behavioral needs, as well as academic performance significantly below grade level. He had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and received special education services in a 7:1:4 classroom setting: seven students, one teacher, and four teacher aides. This intensive setting was designed to support his individual and intense academic, social-emotional, physical, and management needs. Due to the nature of the needs of students at this school, there was only one general overarching curriculum, which was considered functional. The functional curriculum followed at this school continuously evolved to meet the needs of each student serviced, adhere to New York State education laws, as well as post-graduation opportunities for students with special needs. The goals of the school's functional curriculum were to prepare students for life after school as well as help students develop the life skills they would need for maximum independence and success in adult and community settings. As assistive technology and supportive employment opportunities and day

programming for students with disabilities expanded, curriculum at this school changed to prepare its unique population of students for maximum independence.

I gathered information and data on the effects of email journaling through the use of interviews, observations, and artifacts. Specifically, I talked with Parker before we began the journaling process in order to gain insights into his views and perceptions of his abilities as a writer. I reassessed him, using the same interview questions, after he completed five weeks of email journaling. I compared and contrasted his responses to see how, if at all, journaling impacted his confidence as a writer.

I had Parker write in his email journal at least three times a week using computers in the computer lab. I was within arm's reach of him (school policy to ensure safety) during his writing in the computer lab. In order to gain an accurate picture of Parker's writing needs and abilities, however, I refrained from assisting him while he crafted his entries. I responded to each email, commenting on content, asking questions, praising good writing behaviors, and providing specific, focused feedback for improvement.

I printed and collected all entries, then analyzed them based on the following content: language was functional and effectively communicated ideas/experiences/topics; ideas, content, and meaning were understood; writer acknowledged conversation partner (teacher-researcher); writer responded to questions and comments; as well as writer demonstrated response to feedback and modeling.

I also observed Parker multiple times a week, engaged in the journal writing. I observed him in a way that I did not act as a teacher, offering neither assistance nor support, but instead as a researcher, observing behaviors and taking notes as he completed his journal entries.

Rationale

I chose Parker for this study because I found little research focused on effective writing interventions for the ED population. Regan, Mastropieri, and Scruggs (2005) confirmed this in their research, citing writing interventions for students with ED was a significantly understudied area.

I studied the effects of journaling, in particular, due to past research. For example, Nassaji and Cumming (2000) indicated that effective practices for teaching typically developing students to write included activities that were interactive, holistic, and focused on strategies and content, identifying journaling as an effective technique. Journaling has been identified as an engaging and motivating instructional strategy because it allowed for student choice, presented a non-threatening atmosphere for students to explore written language, and provided a genuine reason for writing (Lam & Law, 2007; Regan, 2003). Furthermore, journaling has been linked to academic growth for typically developing students in the areas of mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and overall composition length (Jones & East, 2010).

I engaged in journaling with Parker through electronic mail, as opposed to the traditional pencil and paper method, due to the importance of technology in education. Within our typical classroom schedule we did not have many opportunities to use computers. Journaling through email presented an attractive option for the integration of technology into our functional curriculum. In addition, Fountas and Pinnell (2001) recommended integrating computers and technology into reading and writing instruction for students with special needs in order to increase attention and engagement. Journaling through email was also selected due to Parker's observed interest in computers. Consequently, I anticipated that the act of typing versus the act

of writing with a pencil would positively influence the student's writing process, increasing enjoyment, engagement, and writing performance.

Summary

My experiences with and observations of my students illustrated a significant concern: my students who were functioning severely below grade level were resistant to writing instruction and were not engaging in meaningful and authentic writing experiences. Fountas and Pinnell (2001) clearly articulated the importance of struggling writers to write often through daily authentic shared, guided, and independent activities. With a strong influence on reading as well as connections to success and independence in adult life, uncovering ways to engage my students in authentic, functional writing was imperative to my work as a teacher. Prior research suggested journaling could be used to increase student writing engagement and motivation, performance, and self-efficacy, and could consequently provide a successful writing strategy for students with ED (Jones & East, 2010; Kern, et al., 2001; Lam & Law, 2007; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Regan, 2003; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2007). I think it was important to uncover to what extent journaling through email affected a student with emotional disturbances' writing abilities and confidence in order to identify or reject the usefulness of this writing technique. If the effects of this instructional strategy were not specifically researched, I may have failed to see its usefulness, or lack thereof, impacting my instructional decisions and student success.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

My research questions were:

How does journaling through email affect the writing development of a student with emotional disturbances?

How does journaling through email affect the self-efficacy of a student with emotional disturbances?

In order to contextualize my research, I reviewed and synthesized literature related to students who are emotionally disturbed, best practices for writing instruction and for educating students with special needs, technology and media literacy, and self-efficacy.

Emotional Disturbance & A Gap in Research

As cited in Heward (2009), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) define emotional disturbance as:

(i) [a] condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, and health factors;

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;

(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or

school problems.

(ii) Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children

who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional

disturbance under paragraph (i) of this section (p. 214).

Research on students with emotional disturbances (ED) documents significant academic

delays, which do not decrease over time, but tend to intensify (Abrams, 2005; Lane & Menzies,

2010; Lane, Wehby & Barton-Arwood, 2005; Lane, Wehby, Little, & Cooley, 2005; Niesyn,

2009; Sutherland, Lewis-Palmer, Stichter, & Morgan, 2008). These academic delays, discussed

as performance two or more grade levels below in reading, writing, and mathematics have been

found to surpass those of typically developing students as well as those diagnosed with learning

disabilities (LD), and even mental retardation (MR) (Sutherland, et. al, 2008).

In addition, students with ED demonstrate significant social-emotional and behavioral

needs. For example, Lane, Barton-Arwood, Nelson, and Wehby (2008) report that students with

ED tend to aggress physically and verbally, as well as engage in disruptive and noncompliant

behaviors. Heward (2009) goes on to state that students with emotional disturbances tend to yell,

talk out, hit or fight, argue excessively, steal, lie, destroy property, disturb peers, and tantrum. He

also points out common characteristics of students diagnosed with ED include, difficulty making

and keeping friends, lower levels of empathy toward others, poor communication skills,

exaggerated anxiety and/or fears, increased irritability, poor ability to concentrate, and social

withdrawal (Heward, 2009). Experience within my own classroom of students diagnosed with

emotional disturbance supports these observations. It is common for my students to refuse to

follow adult directions for extended periods of time, curse at teachers and peers, destroy

property, throw items, use common supplies as weapons, and/or attack others, as well as hit, kick, head butt and bite. However, it is primarily these behavioral concerns that have received attention from researchers.

That being said, a body of research exists on behavior management strategies, but not specifically related to academic interventions. For example, Heward (2009) suggests "A good classroom management system... Self-management skill instruction... [as well as] School-wide systems of positive behavior support..." as best educational approaches for working with students with ED (p. 252). Regan, Mastropieri, and Scruggs confirm this in their 2005 research, citing that specific writing interventions for students with ED is a significantly understudied area. This gap in research is recognized by other authors (Lane, Carter, Pierson, & Glaeser, 2006; Mason, Kubina, Valasa, & Cramer, 2010; Ryan, Pierce, & Mooney, 2008).

Several researchers have attempted to outline broad instructional "best practices" for students with ED. Niesyn (2009) reports on the importance of incorporating evidence-based strategies into the educational program of students with ED: specific and focused praise, appropriately matched independent work, opportunities for student choice, and a sound behavior management system. Abrams (2005), in a 'tip-sheet' type of article published in *Exceptional Children*, champions the need for authentic activities, realistic student expectations, and instruction that attends to various learning styles, intelligences, student abilities and interests.

A Best Practice for Writing Instruction: Journaling

In this section, I present literature on an effective writing instructional strategy for typically developing students with the intention of adapting this strategy to fit the needs of my ED population.

Nassaji and Cumming (2000) point out that effective practices for teaching typically developing students to write include activities that are interactive, holistic, and focused on strategies and content, pointing to journaling as an effective technique. They expanded the use of journaling in their study of second language learners. Evaluating over 95 entries between a six year old English as a Second Language (ESL) student and his Canadian teacher over ten months, Nassaji and Cumming found that the student's writing developed. More specifically, the student increased his English proficiency, and began using increased language functions, extending beyond just reporting facts and ideas to requesting information and clarification. The student also began to show understanding of conversational and classroom discourse (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000).

Journaling

While journaling can look different in different classrooms, it is generally defined as conversation between teachers and students, in written form (Regan, et al., 2005). Journaling is characterized by frequent student entries, usually daily and consistent teacher feedback (Jones & East, 2010). Studies show that interactive journaling in the classroom has led to academic growth (Jones & East, 2010). Jones and East (2010) document student improvement in the areas of mechanics, punctuation, spelling, and overall composition length, through journaling. The researchers studied fifteen student journals from one first grade classroom in Florida. The year-long written journals of eight boys and seven girls with different literacy strengths and needs were analyzed. On three separate dates, the journals were reviewed and rated in relation to three categories: total number of words, number of words spelled correctly, and proper use of

punctuation. Results of the study showed that, while individual growth varied, all the students demonstrated improvement in each area (Jones & East, 2010).

Similarly, Regan et al. (2005) showed the academic benefits of daily journal writing. Five sixth grade students who engaged in journaling over time demonstrated increases in writing quality, improved organization of thoughts and ideas, as well as length of their compositions (Regan et al., 2005).

I believe that the research on various critical components of journaling, including engagement or motivation, zone of proximal development (ZPD), choice, authenticity, and teacher feedback suggests journaling could be a successful writing intervention for students with ED.

Engagement/Motivation

The correlation between student engagement and learning is commonly known. Metsala (1996) concurs, stating "Teachers and researchers agree that motivation is central to literacy development" (p. 660). Students who are motivated to learn and are engaged in instructional activities succeed academically (Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). Tavani and Losh (2003) confirm this through their study which showed that higher levels of motivation led to higher academic performance. A review of over 4,000 surveys administered to high school students, ages 17 and older revealed significant indicators of high school success. Among these predictors were student self-confidence and motivation (Tavani & Losh, 2003). Similarly, Lam and Law (2007) found that students who were motivated and engaged increased their writing performance by producing higher quality pieces.

Findings from Regan et al.'s (2005) study showed increased student engagement through increased attention to task during journal writing. The participants in this study included five, sixth-grade students diagnosed with ED. The classroom teacher created a list of items to guide the students' use of the dialogue journals. Students were required to write for 15 minutes, focus on ideas, and engage in conversation about topics centered on their specific social/behavioral difficulties, identified by the teacher and their IEP. The teacher responded in the journals, modeling good writing behaviors, redirecting students back to the selected social topic if necessary, making suggestions, comments, and acknowledging student thoughts. The students' dialogue journal entries were analyzed in relation to performance in three categories: quality of the written piece (including choice of words, organization, and ideas), attention of students during writing, and the length of the entry. Results showed increased student attention during writing, as well as increased the length of entries and quality scores for four of five students.

In addition, Regan et al. (2005) found that journaling was motivating for students because it presented a non-threatening atmosphere for students to explore written language. This finding was revealed in a survey where the participants rated their experiences with dialogue journals.

In another study by Regan (2003), students reported a sense of ease and risk-taking associated with their journal entry writing because they were not graded. In this study, a special education teacher introduced dialogue journaling to six, eight grade students who had negative attitudes toward writing. The teacher began by setting guidelines for the journal entries, discussing with students their freedom to write about whatever they choose, and that they would not be graded. The teacher/researcher analyzed the students' journals, written from September to March. A student survey revealed that they felt better connected to their teacher and that they enjoyed the freedom of writing and expression provided through journal writing.

Zone of Proximal Development

Lam and Law (2007) administered a questionnaire to 209 seventh and eighth grade participants. The questionnaire asked students to indicate the instructional strategies that their teachers' used and then rate the effectiveness of these strategies in motivating students. Lam and Law (2007) found that students were motivated and engaged when teachers presented them with tasks that were challenging but achievable. Similarly, Kim and Lorsbach (2005), who looked at writing tasks assigned to elementary students, found that students became unmotivated when writing tasks were too difficult. Journaling, as discussed by Nassaji and Cumming (2000) is one instructional strategy that can help teachers provide individualized writing experiences for their students. Journaling presents a way for teachers to assess student abilities and push their thinking through individualized responses and feedback within student-specific reading and comprehension levels (Montgomery, 2001). This scaffolding allows for instruction to be within the student's zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), the difference between what a student can do independently and what he or she can do with support, ensuring instruction is appropriately matched to their needs and abilities, motivating students to engage in writing (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000).

Choice

Giving students opportunities to make choices is another instructional method that has been shown to be effective in motivating students to write (Lam & Law, 2007). Findings from Kern, DeLaney, Clarke, Dunlap, and Childs' (2001) study confirm that students with ED benefit from choice making opportunities during activities and writing assignments. In their study, two, eleven year old male students in different self-contained fifth grade classrooms, both students

were diagnosed with ED, were given the choice to use the computer or hand write classroom tasks. Results of the study illustrated that student engagement and on-task behaviors increased when the element of choice was presented to the students. This instructional modification had the ability to reduce inappropriate behaviors such as wandering, swearing, threatening, and noncompliance, and increased student engagement in writing tasks, affecting writing performance and productivity (Kern et al., 2001). I believe that dialogue journaling, where students write about self-selected topics, allows for this motivational autonomy.

Authenticity

Journals also present a genuine reason for writing. Lam and Law (2007) showed that writing experiences that were authentic and meaningful motivated students to write. The participants included seventh and eighth grade students from six different classrooms across four schools in Hong Kong. The researchers asked participants to complete a questionnaire, which focused on their learning and perceptions of their teachers' instructional strategies used during a specific lesson. Results of the questionnaire illustrated instructional strategies that students believed were motivating. Students reported that they were motivated when they were given some freedom of choice and when they were writing for authentic purposes. Through journaling, students and teachers use written language on a consistent basis to communicate thoughts, ideas, concerns, wants, and needs on varying topics (Jones & East, 2010).

Teacher Feedback

Writing development has been linked to the individualized nature of journaling and teacher responses and feedback. Results of Lam and Law's (2007) study showed students'

motivation and writing performance were enhanced when teacher feedback was individualized. A necessary component of journaling, teacher feedback occurs on a consistent basis. Here, teachers' recognition of student efforts, and use of praise and scaffolded responses encourage students to engage in the writing process (Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000).

Nassaji and Cumming (2000) show that dialogue journaling has the power to support a student's ZPD. Student entries allow teachers to assess a student's specific writing strengths and needs. Using this information, teachers can then scaffold and differentiate their responses, feedback, and writing instruction. Depending on a student's needs, teacher responses are used to encourage use of different language functions, focus on different writing skills or strategies, praise student efforts, or prompt deeper level thinking through questioning.

Matsumura, Patthey-Chavez, Valdes, and Garnier (2002) further document how written teacher feedback impacts student writing. Their research shows that teachers who provided written feedback on students' spelling and mechanics saw improvements in these areas in writing samples that followed. Siewert (2011) confirms the importance of teacher feedback on academic improvement. The results of his study shows that teachers' written corrective feedback that is focused, specific, and limited results in improved student writing performance. Not only does teacher corrective feedback affect student writing performance but so does the modeling involved in journaling. Nassaji and Cumming (2000) document how one teacher's responses to a student's entries can serve as models of correct spelling, grammar, organization, and punctuation for the student to pattern his/her writing after. The teacher's responses in the study intentionally included words and phrases commonly misspelled by the student. Soon, the student was picking up on the corrections and adjusting his writing accordingly (Nassaji & Cumming, 2000).

Self-Efficacy

Intertwined in engagement, motivation, and academic performance is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the way a person views or perceives his or her abilities. Studies show that self-efficacy rates are linked to motivation and writing achievement (Lam & Law, 2007). In other words, how students perceive their abilities to write affects their writing performance. Kim and Lorsbach (2005) found that high rates of self-efficacy correlate with on-task writing behaviors as well as increased writing performance. Conversely, a student's writing performance has been found to be an indicator of his or her level of self-efficacy. For example, students who express higher levels of writing development tend to have high rates of self-efficacy (Kim & Lorsbach, 2005). Kim and Lorsbach (2005) followed 18 participants through their kindergarten and first grade years at an elementary school in the Midwestern part of the United States. The researchers found that the characteristics and behaviors of young students with high and low writing self-efficacy were similar to those found in older, junior high school children. In accordance, Kim and Lorsbach (2005) found that young children with low writing self-efficacy became easily discouraged, engaged in off-task behaviors, displayed little motivation, and gave up easily during writing activities. In contrast, students with high writing self-efficacy remained on task, took risks while writing, were excited to engage in writing, and showed persistence. Results also showed that students with both high and low (as compared to moderate) self-efficacy would display an unwillingness to complete writing assignments, but for different reasons. For students with high writing self-efficacy this occurred when the writing task was perceived to be too easy or when they were given little autonomy or choice over their writing. In contrast, students with low writing self-efficacy became unwilling to complete a writing task when they perceived it to be too difficult, often engaging in off-task behaviors. Another concept illustrated in the results

was the relatively accurate indicators of self-efficacy rates on writing achievement or level. Students with high writing self-efficacy displayed more advanced writing skills and strategies than those with low rates of self-efficacy.

Self Efficacy and Students with Emotional Disturbances

The relationship of students' perceptions of their writing abilities to actual performance is concerning when looking at the ED population. In a study by Sacks and Kern (2008), students from three public middle schools, two public high schools, and two private schools servicing students with ED, were given a survey orally by their teachers. Survey questions focused on students' feelings of themselves, others, and their environment. Students were asked to circle their responses. Compared to their non-disabled peers, results showed that students with emotional and behavioral disturbances possess a high incidence of negative or dissatisfied feelings about their quality of life, including feelings about themselves and their abilities (Sacks & Kern, 2008).

The process of journaling can help students increase their perceptions of their abilities (Kern et al., 2001). Jones and East (2010) find that daily journal writing increases primary students' confidence in themselves and their writing abilities. Within this safe writing activity, students can explore written language and apply new skills and strategies modeled by the teacher. Furthermore, Kim and Lorsbach (2005) found that journaling presents an effective way for teachers to assess and develop students' self-efficacy in elementary grades. Based on observable behaviors while writing and journal entry content, teachers can evaluate student rates of self-efficacy (Kim & Lorsbach, 2005). Teachers can then use assessment information to cater their feedback and journal responses encouraging student feelings of competence. Positive

written feedback is crucial to all students' perceptions of their abilities, and consequently their growth and development (Siewert, 2011). Too much written corrective feedback can send negative messages to students presenting the idea that they are not good enough, not smart enough, or that the task will never be achievable by them, decreasing motivation and performance (Lam & Law, 2007). In other words, journaling presents a method for meaningful, specific recognition of student efforts and praise, which are effective in increasing all learners' sense of competence, motivation, and writing performance (Lam & Law, 2007; Lee & Laspe, 2003).

Technology

Literacy in the 21st century has a new definition or set of criteria to be mastered. According to O'Brien and Scharber (2008), in addition to skills and strategies required to read, write, speak, listen, and view for communication and understanding, students need to effectively navigate technology to be successful in today's world. Morrow, Barnhart, and Rooyakkers (2002), agree stating, "A responsibility of education is to prepare students for the future. We have to teach our students to use technology if we want them to succeed in today's world" (p. 218). Media, digital, or new literacy, defined as the ability to "access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms" are important components of education today (www.medialit.org). As the world in which we live and work is dominated by information and communication technologies (ITCs), it is imperative that students leave school adequately prepared to navigate through our technology rich world (O'Brien & Scharber, 2008). Students need to learn the skills and strategies to successfully participate in fast paced communication, social networking, gaming, and inquiry. Sweeny (2010) confirms this, stating, "Schools need to

embrace ITCs so that students are prepared to function in a world where new literacies are the expectation and the norm" (p. 122).

In addition, researchers support the motivating effect incorporating digital literacy into classroom routine and content areas has on students (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Morrow, Barnhart, & Rooyakkers, 2002; Sweeny, 2010). Students can then begin to see a connection between school and home, attributing value to classroom based activities and instructional experiences (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Jacobs, 2008; Sweeny, 2010). Outside of school most students are surrounded by television, video games, Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, and the Internet. Technology is ever present in their lives. As Considine, Horton, and Moorman (2009) report, this, however, does not often relate to their experiences inside school which are often dominated by traditional texts and mediums for communication, for example, pencil and paper. The authors go on to say that students today bring a wealth of knowledge and skills related to technology to school and it is the responsibility of educators to capitalize on these abilities.

Integrating technology into academic instruction will help students see the value in communication and make connections to real world experiences, making writing meaningful for them (Sweeny, 2010). Sweeny (2010) offers specific ways to integrate technology including allowing students the option to choose the medium to present their learning, extending beyond traditional paper and pencil to include formats on the Internet. Sweeny also suggests having students access the Internet to help them choose writing topics, creating Internet workshop lessons, and having students get to know other authors by visiting websites and attempting correspondence through email.

Journaling through email is one way to integrate digital literacy into the content areas, encouraging educators to commit to instruction that fosters student understanding of technology (Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009). Using email as a writing medium incorporates information and communication technologies into classroom experiences in an academically meaningful way (Jacobs, 2008; Sweeny, 2010).

Researchers have also demonstrated that technology can enhance the learning of students through increased motivation (Kern, et al., 2001). Participants were two, eleven year old male students in different self-contained fifth grade classrooms. Both students were diagnosed with ED and frequently displayed disruptive, noncompliant, and avoidant behaviors, as well as poor social relationships with others. The study began with observations of the two students in their classrooms and an interview focused on their experiences in school and preferred activities and interests. The students discussed preferred activities, including playing video games and using the computer. The students were allowed to use a computer, which they both identified as a medium of interest, to complete traditionally handwritten writing tasks. Results of the study illustrated that use of a preferred medium, or computer, for the participants was successful in reducing inappropriate behaviors and increasing on-task engagement. The students used more words in their compositions involving the computer than in their hand written compositions (Kern et al., 2001).

Conclusion

My review of the literature has revealed that engaging students in journaling has documented benefits. Research has linked journaling to increased students' engagement and motivation in the writing process. Journaling has also been shown to improve student writing

performance through its informal nature, teacher feedback, and modeling. In addition, journaling has been identified as an effective way to assess and improve the self-efficacy rates of students. With little current research available on effective strategies to improve the writing of students with ED, journaling presents an attractive option. Further studies in this area are needed in order to help students with ED increase their academic achievements, especially in the area of writing.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

The purposes of this study were to engage a student who was emotionally disturbed in a writing activity, and to examine what effects, if any, journaling via email had on the student's writing development and self-efficacy.

Research Questions

Through the five-week study, I explored the following research questions:

1. How does journaling through email affect the writing development of a student with emotional disturbances?

2. How does journaling through email affect the self-efficacy of a student with emotional disturbances?

Study Environment and Participant

The participant attended a non-profit, private school in western New York. The school serviced children with multiple disabilities from birth to 21 years of age who exhibited intense behaviors to those non-ambulatory and medically frail. Forty-four school districts, rural, urban, and suburban, spanning ten counties sent students to the school for individualized programming and supports. The school, with approximately 550 students in all, was composed of 50 school age and 10 preschool classrooms.

Due to the complexity of student needs and abilities, the school did not prescribe to a specific literacy program. The one general, overarching curriculum defined as "functional" focused on teaching students life skills to encourage independence in adult and community

settings. This "independence" meant different things for different students. For some, it meant reading and writing, and preparing their own meals; for others, it meant walking or eating with minimal assistance. The school had developed and expanded its functional curriculum based on its changing population of students (to include more behavioral and less medically frail students), New York State education requirements, and increased employment and leisure opportunities available for students with special needs following graduation. More specifically, New York State had demanded that transition statements and a coordinated set of transition activities be outlined in each student's IEP, ages fifteen and older. This had increased the school's focus on planning and preparing students for life after graduation. For further preparation for IEPs, students were also required, by the school, to complete vocational, residential, and leisure interest surveys. Their responses directed future goals, objectives, and transition planning. Today, there exists a host of adult and community programs for students with special needs. These extend from supported employment in a workshop, farm, or restaurant setting, to volunteer work, and day programs focusing on leisure skills.

In efforts to best prepare its unique students for life after graduation, the school had developed an extensive transition program, called PALS or Practical Assistance with Life Skills. Making up this program was a simulated workshop where students practiced in-seat work skills and following a job sequence. There were also immense community-based instructional experiences. Students volunteered at Meals on Wheels, served food at dining halls, helped shop for groceries, learned how to repair bikes, cleaned residences, etcetera. Students also practiced leisure skills necessary in adult and community programming. These included attending Zumba or Jazzercise classes, weight training at the YMCA, going rock climbing, bowling, hiking, snowshoeing, and skiing at a local park, in addition to attending community festivals and

performances. There was also a large cooking program, with a full kitchen designed to help students increase their independence when caring for themselves. The school had a café on site that involved students in every aspect of food preparation and customer service, as well as a school store that students helped stock, maintain, and operate.

Beginning at age fifteen and extending until graduation at age twenty-one, students were found less and less on campus and in the classrooms as their day became dominated by PALS experiences and community-based instruction. The school had also developed and implemented an extensive system of visual supports, task analyses, and data collection methods used by all teachers, staff, and students.

While the school had developed its functional curriculum over time based on a variety of factors, a textbook, *Life Beyond the Classroom: Transition Strategies for Young People with Disabilities* by Wehman (1992), found in the school's library supported their focus and programming. Wehman discussed the inadequacies of any single packaged curriculum to effectively meet the complex needs of students with severe and profound disabilities. The author went on to outline effective instructional programs for students with special needs. Essential components included a focus on domestic, community, leisure, and vocational skills to increase independence and success following graduation. For example, domestic skills included washing dishes, dressing, completing a hygiene routine, cooking, cleaning, and operating an alarm clock, etcetera. An effective educational program had also been identified to include community-based instruction. Here, students were able to generalize skills they had learned, applying them to authentic or real-life situations outside of the classroom. Wehman (1992) suggested a focus on developing skills like eating at a restaurant, crossing the street, using the public bus system, and purchasing groceries. Leisure skills instruction was another part of effective programming for

32

students with special needs. Playing board games and with age appropriate toys, as well as acting appropriately at sporting events, craft classes, going swimming, and gardening were examples of skills which needed to be developed in many students. Finally, vocational skills instruction such as returning items to their original location, attending to task for extended periods of time, following multi-step directions, operating a dishwasher, following a job sequence, and performing food service skills were important components of effective curriculum. Fading teacher presence and support was another crucial component to an effective instructional program for students with special needs, as reported by Wehman (1992). For example, moving from modeling, to physical assists, to gestural prompts, verbal prompts, and finally student independence, gradually released responsibility to the student.

The study's participant, Parker (pseudonym), was a Caucasian student within my 7:1:4 classroom. He was sixteen years, three months old, and had been diagnosed with emotional disturbances (ED). On a weekly basis he demonstrated noncompliant, disruptive, and/or aggressive behaviors, which were intense in nature. When he aggressed, or head-butt, hit, kicked, or destroyed property, it required up to five adults to get him safely inside a walled timeout room where he could begin to calm down. He took medication both at home and at school for his behaviors, and had a formal behavior program.

Parker lived in a group home due to the nature and intensity of his behaviors. He saw his family on a weekly basis through home visits. Just before the beginning of the study, however, he returned to school with staples in his head to close a large laceration. According to emergency room reports, he slammed his head into a china cabinet during a home visit when he was asked to take out the garbage.

Parker's IEP goals and objectives incorporated a functional curriculum and academics. He completed addition and subtraction with regrouping, multiplication, and was able to add mixed coins and bills. He was reading and comprehending at approximately a second grade level. His writing abilities presented as much lower. Often he blatantly refused to write. When Parker did agree, he needed constant staff support in order to stay focused, organize his thoughts, and transfer them onto paper in a way that could be understood by the reader. He was easily frustrated and tended to rush through his work in efforts to just get it done. Parker demonstrated difficulty accepting help from teachers, or receiving corrective feedback and instruction.

My Positionality as the Researcher

I was a 25 year old Caucasian female teacher living in a western New York city. I was in my fourth year teaching at the school discussed for use in this study. After receiving my bachelor's degree and certification to teach childhood and special education, grades first through sixth at The College at Geneseo, SUNY in 2007, I began teaching special education at an alternative school that September. I had experience teaching students with a variety of needs and abilities, including those with autism, intellectual disabilities (ID), multiple disabilities, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and emotional disturbances (ED). At the time of the study, I taught seven students, ranging in age from 15 to 18, with ED diagnoses. I also supervised four, female teacher aides who worked with the students in my classroom.

As a teacher-researcher, my educational philosophies shaped the way I conducted my classroom, guided my interactions with students, and planned and delivered instruction. I believed my role as a special educator was to prepare students with daily living and working skills, helping them achieve as much independence as possible following graduation. As an

educator, it was my responsibility to scaffold and differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs and abilities of my students. I believed in the value and importance of real-world, authentic activities and assessments. I believed that students who were motivated and engaged in lessons and activities learned more, so I devoted a lot of my time to finding ways to encourage their attention and participation. I thought cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, ability, and gender diversity played a central role in the classroom community and should be valued and respected, used to enhance the educational experiences of all. I championed communication with parents and guardians, believing that it established routine and consistency, enhancing student success. I thought students learned best when they felt safe and welcome. I thought they grew through praise and corrective feedback that was positively phrased. I thought students learned best through communication and collaboration, through observation and hands-on experiences. I believed learning occurred as a result of explicit teaching, modeling, reinforcement, and opportunities for shared, guided, and independent practice. Finally, as an educator I believed that there was always room for growth and improvement. Therefore, I valued professional development experiences and constantly reflected on lessons and strategies, looking for ways to improve my instruction and my students' learning.

I was also a graduate student at The College at Brockport, SUNY working toward my master's degree in childhood literacy and certification as a literacy specialist. I was in my final year of classes.

I decided upon this research topic based on observations within my own classroom and the desire to grow as an educator and researcher. The participant, Parker, was in my classroom. I had worked with him since September 2010.

Data Collection

I collected data through the use of interviews, observations, and writing samples, specifically email journal entries.

Interviews

I gained a preliminary understanding of Parker's views of and confidence in his abilities as a writer using a self-efficacy interview (see Appendix A). I created this assessment, incorporating questions that would enable Parker to think about his strengths and needs as a writer, and reflect on what he did well and how he felt about writing. After five weeks of journaling via email, I re-administered the self-efficacy interview. I administered the interview by reading each question aloud to Parker in a one on one setting. I then scribed his responses.

Observations

In addition to the interviews, I also took field notes based on observations (see Appendix B). Each day I would passively observe Parker as he constructed his journal entries via email. I observed him in the act of writing, noting the environment, his attention and engagement, or lack thereof. In addition, I recorded his affect, computer skills, and any comments he made to himself or observable strategies he used while writing, for example, his use of spell check, text features and the Internet.

Journal Entries

Following the first self-efficacy interview, I began the journaling process with a preliminary email to Parker. His response provided baseline data. I continued to correspond, in

writing, with Parker for approximately five weeks, collecting his responses by printing his email journal entries, and organizing them in chronological order.

On average, three times a week Parker and I went to the school's computer lab. There, he would log onto his existing email account through Yahoo. Parker sat at the computer, while I sat behind him at another computer. Each day Parker would read my response email which incorporated comments, questions, and feedback to his previous entry. Cognizant of his reading needs and abilities, I worked hard to create just right texts for him to read and respond to. Consequently, Parker never asked me to explain or interpret my written responses while journaling. Parker would respond to my comments, questions, feedback, and modeling, as well as incorporate experiences and thoughts of his choice.

In my journaling, I engaged Parker in conversation about weekend experiences, classroom-based activities, behaviors, thoughts and feelings. I also offered support and feedback, in terms of font, size, color, and highlighting according to his individual needs. I would read and respond using informal language to each entry, commenting on content, providing specific and focused praise on positive writing behaviors, as well as providing limited, focused, and explicit corrective feedback. In addition to modeling good writing, I provided feedback focused on the writer's ideas and content over conventions. I provided feedback based on his attention and use of the following: functional language that effectively communicated ideas/experiences/topics; ideas, content, and meaning were understandable; writer acknowledged conversation partner (teacher-researcher), responded to questions and comments, demonstrated response to feedback and modeling; innovative punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and grammar did not impact the reader's comprehension of the content.

The writing artifacts, or emails, provided the basis of my data.

37

Data Analysis

Interviews

I looked at Parker's responses to the first administration of the self-efficacy interview. I used the information he provided to gain an overall sense of his confidence in his writing abilities. Following the five week of email journaling, I re-administered the self-efficacy interview. I reviewed Parker's responses to help understand his feelings about his abilities as a writer following the journaling experience. I then compared and contrasted Parker's pre and post self-efficacy interviews, looking for any similarities, themes, patterns, or changes in responses.

Observations

I reviewed my observation field notes, looking at Parker's actions and behaviors while journaling on a weekly basis. At the completion of the observations, I looked across the data set for any patterns of behaviors that revealed or reflected Parker's confidence in his writing abilities, as well as observable writing behaviors and strategies he used.

Journal Entries

I used Parker's first email journal to establish baseline of his writing abilities. The writing Parker used to construct this preliminary email response provided clues about his present needs and abilities as a writer. This information helped me construct an understanding of his zone of proximal development that I could work within. I evaluated the next five weeks of writing samples, looking for patterns, changes, and development in his writing. More specifically, I looked at the content of his emails, how he arranged his thoughts and expressed his

ideas. In addition, I evaluated how he acknowledged me as his conversation partner; specifically how he responded to my emails and the questions I posed, as well as suggestions I made for improvement. I also analyzed his emails, looking for evidence of growth and application of writing skills and techniques that I modeled through my writing. I analyzed his writing in areas extending beyond ideas and content, looking also at his use of conventions, formatting, and composition length across time.

The process of triangulation, combining the interviews with observation data and his journal entries, was my way to gain an understanding of Parker's thinking and participation in the writing processes as well as his investment in the experience.

Procedures

Week One

- administered self-efficacy interview
- collected baseline data on Parker's writing abilities through a preliminary email

Week Two

- began five weeks of email journaling through correspondence three times a week with Parker
- conducted observations of Parker writing, recording field notes

Week Three

- continued email journaling through correspondence three times a week with Parker
- conducted observations of Parker writing, recording field notes

Week Four

- continued email journaling through correspondence three times a week with Parker

- conducted observations of Parker writing, recording field notes

- began analysis of self-efficacy interviews, observations, and student writing samples to identify trends, themes, and patterns

Week Five

- continued email journaling through correspondence three times a week with Parker

- conducted observations of Parker writing, recording field notes

- continued analysis of self-efficacy interviews, observations, and student writing samples to identify trends, themes, and patterns

Week Six

- concluded five-weeks of email journaling through final correspondence three times a week with Parker

- conducted observations of Parker writing, recording field notes

Week Seven

- re-administered self-efficacy interview

- concluded analysis of self-efficacy interviews, observations, and student writing samples to identify trends, themes, and patterns

Criteria for Trustworthiness

As a teacher-researcher, I was determined to conduct this study in an ethical and unbiased manner. Cognizant of my educational philosophies and the close relationship that I had with Parker, I was committed to staying objective during the study, collecting and analyzing data and

behaviors as they were presented. With the results of this study affecting my future instructional decisions and utility, it was imperative that all measures were taken to ensure optimal authenticity, accuracy, validity, and reliability. To ensure trustworthiness, I used a variety of data collection techniques. I used interviews, recorded observations, and journal entries to ensure triangulation. I additionally used prolonged engagement through the five week journaling process by journaling with Parker three times each week. I engaged in persistent observation of Parker as I watched him write his journal entry each day. I ensured transferability by providing detailed descriptions of Parker and the research context. In addition, my detailed descriptions of the research process ensured dependability.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was Parker's ability to clearly state his responses through the self-efficacy interview. The reliability of his statements was also a limitation. Parker may have catered his responses based on what he believed I, as his teacher, would have liked to hear instead of disclosing his true thoughts and feelings. Another limitation of the study was the time frame, due to Parker's learning styles. Five weeks was a relatively short period of time when looking at the effects of an instructional technique for a student with special needs. Experience showed that students with emotional disturbances required greater processing time, repetition, modeling, and opportunities for practice across settings in order to demonstrate consistent understanding and independence with new skills.

Chapter Four: Findings

I sat down at my computer on May 17, 2011, after the last student left the classroom and

climbed onto his bus. Breathing a sigh of relief as I reflected on the successful management of

student behaviors that day, I sank into my leather office chair and began sorting through my

emails. It was not long before I came upon one from Parker, the young man who, very bluntly,

reminded me of his distaste for writing on a regular, almost daily basis. To my surprise, I opened

his email and was greeted with:

> "...i am so happy that we are doing this to and i am so happy that we are doing
> this toweads email
>
> i am useing them as school appropriate words
>
> so i am so happy we are doing this so get back to me laurel"

Parker's positive and enthusiastic reaction to our journaling is just one example of my

experiences with him over the course of the five week study. Just two days later, Parker would

again pleasantly surprise me with his reaction to my discussion of a violent incident he had.

> "dear laurel i got your email and im gade you came with me to elmwood
>
> and i like cimechoir so much and when i get mad or upsat i will walk away
>
> next time…and im glade that you had lots of fun and i like it when you
>
> writing back to me and i love being in your classroom and i like all the
>
> nice friend i got at school and are you going to be my teacher next year
>
> and all my friends going to be in the same room
>
> from your best friends parker"

The purpose of this study was to engage a student who is emotionally

disturbed in a meaningful writing activity in order to encourage his writing

development and build his confidence in himself as a writer. Specifically, the

research questions that I used to drive this study were:

How does journaling through email affect the writing development of a student

with emotional disturbances?

How does journaling through email affect a student's writing self-efficacy?

The First Interview with Parker

I began this study by conducting a writing self-efficacy interview with Parker on May 16, 2011 at 9:20 in the morning. He and I sat side-by side, in a one to one setting during the first work session of the day. A list of questions guided my conversation with Parker (see Appendix A). I recorded his responses. In addition, I took notes related to his body language, tone of voice, attention, and overall affect during the interview.

Throughout the interview Parker cradled his head in his hands, let out long sighs periodically and appeared disengaged, often looking around the room or out the classroom window. Parker would pause and make eye contact when I would ask a new question, then put his head back down or resume his scan of the room. The interview in its entirety lasted just under five minutes. When I prompted Parker to "Tell me more" or to "Explain that thought" he responded with phrases such as "That's it" or "I don't know." His behaviors, affect, and dispositions along with hasty and vague responses led me to believe that he had little interest in the interview and in writing overall. To me, his responses also revealed his limited understanding of writing, including its function and importance.

My analysis of Parker's responses to the interview questions revealed his association of 'good writing' and 'good writers' with attention to mechanics. For example, when I asked "What

is good about your writing, what do you do well?" Parker responded "I stay on the lines." He also stated that he needs to work on "finger spac[ing] between my words" in order to make his writing better. Parker continued to focus on mechanics when I asked him to describe what is easy about writing, to which he responded "I know to end with a period." He went on to state that 'remembering to start each sentence with a capital letter' challenged him the most as a writer. Parker's responses also suggested his limited understanding of the real-world functionality of writing. He defined writing as "something you write" and talked about practicing his name as the type of writing he does well. He also talked about how he was proud of his writing because, "I do it." Overall, Parker's responses to the interview questions suggested to me that he focused mostly on mechanics, thinking that this is what defined good writing and successful writers.

Using the information gleaned from the initial interview, I wanted to show Parker, through our journaling experiences, that writers write to communicate ideas, thoughts, and feelings, extending well beyond mechanics. To achieve this, I decided that my responses and feedback to his writing would focus on his ideas and the messages he was trying to convey rather than his use of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and other mechanics.

The Journaling Process

Three times a week I accompanied Parker to our school's computer lab. I tried to blend this activity as seamlessly as possible into his daily routine in an effort to avoid adding extra demand activities, stress, and anxiety to his day. Consequently, Parker would complete his email journaling during one of three naturally occurring 30 minute work sessions set aside in the classroom for all students to work on individualized work tasks, goals and objectives. In the computer lab, Parker consistently chose the same computer. The lab was completely vacant most

days so Parker had his choice of computer. There were three to choose from, lined up against a wall. Parker preferred the computer on the end, closest to the wall. He never mentioned why, but I wondered if it was his attempt to maintain consistency or establish a routine. Parker would then log onto the computer independently and immediately type "yahoo" into Google's search box (the homepage). From there he would navigate the Yahoo website and log into his email account.

The email exchanges between Parker and I appear below. I have not changed or adapted the journal entries in any way. I have represented the font type and color, size, highlighting, and emoti-cons exactly, to show Parker's performance.

17 May 2011

Me:

Hello Parker!

I am so happy to start our journaling, or writing back and forth to each other! We can write about anything you want…as long as it is school appropriate ☺. Sometimes I will give you some tips, or things to think about when you write, so I hope you use them ☺. Also, if you don't understand something I write to you, ask me to explain it better, okay? Please feel free to use any style font that you like or add pictures, whatever you would like to do!

So, Parker, how is your day going? I know you had PALS workshop today, what did you work on while you were there? I like going to PALS. It makes me happy to see how hard you work! I bet you like getting paid, too. What did you buy at school store today?

I can't wait to hear back from you! I will talk to you soon!

From, Laurel

Parker:

i worked on staping in pals workshop and i did some cuting

i am so happy that we are doing this to and i am so happy that we are doing this toweads email

 i am useing them as school appropriate words

so i am so happy we are doing this so get back to me laurel

19 May 2011

Me:

Parker,

Thank you for reading my first email! I am happy that you are excited about this writing activity, too! I really liked how you answered my question about what you did in PALS workshop, thank you!

Today I liked going to Elmwood to watch you perform in the chime choir. I can tell that you have been practicing a lot, the choir sounded so well! How do you think you did?

I also wanted to talk about your home visit last night. I heard that it did not go well and that you got upset and hit your head on a china cabinet. While I like that you did not hit another person, what will you do next time you feel mad or upset?

Write back soon!

Laurel

Parker:

dear laurel i got your email and im gade you came with me to elmwood and i like cimechoir so much and when i get mad or upsat i will walk away next time and next time i get mad or upset i wont hit the shelf next time and i am happy that you had fun at elmwood and next time we have another one do you want to come next time and im glade that you had lots of fun and i like it when you writing back to me

and i love being in your classroom and i like all the nice friend i got at school   and are you going to be my teacher next year and all my friends going to be in the same classroom next year and am i going to have the same teachers next year what did you do lest night and what are you going to do to night

from your best friends parker

20 May 2011

Me:

Hi Parker!

How are you today? I am so happy it is Friday! I am planning on going to the Lilac Festival this weekend. Do you have any plans for Saturday and Sunday?

I like the plan you have for yourself next time you feel mad or upset. Walking away and taking some deep breaths help me when I feel upset. Sometimes being alone for a while helps me calm down too. You should try it ☺

I am happy that you like your classroom and friends this year! I do not know yet which class you will be in next year… I guess we just have to be patient until Principal Terri and Rachael decide! No matter which classroom you are in, I know that you will do very well. You are having such a good year! You are doing so well remembering your classroom and school rules. I can tell that you have grown a lot. I really like how well you are doing with having your work corrected. I remember in the beginning of the year you would get very upset when you had to go back and re-do your work. Now, you are taking your time and making corrections with a better attitude. Excellent job!!

Parker, I really enjoy reading your emails. I can tell that you are working very hard. You are taking your time and putting a lot of effort into your writing. This is what makes you such a good writer! Keep up the good work. I look forward to your next email!

From,

Laurel

Student:

i got your email on what you said for the classroom next year and i am happy it is Friday

yes in do have plans on saturday and sunday i holp that i will be in your classroom next year and i cant beleave i am grown up a lot this year i am so happy that i am doing good work this year what are you going to do at the lilacfestival this weekend i am glade i am going googd this year

what are you going to do tonight

are you glade that i am getting my lunch on tuesday i know i am happy that i am getting my lunch on tuesday so are you happy that it is friday if you are going to ask me next year i holp you are my teacher next year from your best friend parker

24 May 2011

Me:

Parker,

I am so happy that today you earned your special lunch! Thank you for writing me out your "order." Pepperoni pizza and a Pepsi sound like such a yummy lunch! I can tell that you worked hard to earn this. You have shown self-control in the classroom, by not going to timeout! Everyone in the classroom is very proud of you, Parker. Keep up the great work!

So I did end up going to the Lilac Festival this weekend, on Sunday. It was nice. I walked around and had some delicious food! I also watched a band play. Did you go to the Lilac Festival too? What was your favorite part?

I really like how well you are writing. I like that you answer my questions. I also like that you ask

ME questions too!   This shows me that you are interested in my opinions and what I have to say.

Remember what we have been learning in Circles. I am your teacher, not your "best friend." ☺ Remember, friends are people who are your age! A nice way to end your email could be: From, Parker.

You should try that!

From,

Laurel

Parker:

laurel i am so happy that i got my speciallunch to day i got your email thats good that you

want to the lilacfestival and my lunch was good what did you have for lunch to day

and i am glade i am doing well in school this year what are you going to do to night

i know a lot in circles this year what did you eat forlunch what are you going to eat for5 dinner to night

i am going good on my work this year i am slowing down on my work

and i will do good work this year i loveet at school this year and i will keep up the good work this year

and i am so happy that i got some good friends at schoolthis year and i glade that i got some good teachers this year and the pizza was good and the pop was good to think you for geting it

or me tonight ui am going to my mom house to night and i am glade that ni didnt go to timeout this year and my pizza and pop was yummy to day i kant white for the lest day of school

25 May 2011

Me:

Parker,

Thank you for your last email…you wrote a lot!! For lunch today I brought a turkey sandwich and some Doritos…my favorite!! What did you bring for lunch?

I like that you are slowing down with your work. It is not a race. Usually when we rush through our work, we make A LOT of mistakes. Then we have to go back and fix them. It is best to take our time, the first time we do something ☺.

How do you feel about getting an Independent Hall Pass ? This is a HUGE responsibility. You have to make sure you stay on-task and act appropriately at all times. I hope you work hard to keep this privilege! I am proud of you Parker, and I know that you will do well with this. Make sure you focus on yourself, and think about how well you are doing this year.

Do you notice that when I write, I really try to organize my thinking? I make a new paragraph for each thing I talk about. This helps the reader understand what I am writing. For example, I put everything I want to say about working slowly in one paragraph. Then I hit the "Enter" key 2 times before I start talking about the next thing, which is about the Independent Hall Pass. Can you try doing this? Try keeping all your thoughts on one topic in the same paragraph like I do. Let me know how this works, or if you need me to explain it more!

From,

Laurel

Parker:

laurel i am glade that i got your email and i am glade that i am geting a lidependent hall pass

to day for lunch i had a penut butter sandwishto day for lunch are you glade i am geting a hall pass becuse i have been doing good work in school this year what are you going to do to night

tall me when i get to school torrow so white back to me to torrow are you going to go some

where to night what are you going to eat for lunch torrow and i am glade n that in slowing down

with my work 😈😜😐🤐🤤 i put some thing on it for you😺😷😐🤐🤠😛 i want you to

see this that im put on there😴😌🐣so what do you think of what i put on there😎😴😎🤠

27 May 2011

Me:

Parker,

I really like the funny faces you inserted, or put into your last email!! They are so cool looking!! Do you know how to change your font, too? I like this font, don't you??

Today I am going to get your hall pass from Principal Terri. You do not have walking circuit today, but you will be able to go to the nurse at 2:00 by yourself to get your meds. What are some of the rules we went over for people using an Independent Hall Pass ?

Laurel

Parker:

hi laurel i got your email about to day and i like my hall pass i rule i now is when i   am going down to get my meds   i buzz down and let the nurse no that i am comeing down to get my med and then buzz up to the room when i get done with my meds to let them no that i am comeing bach up i see some one in the hall and if they talk to me i tall them that i cant talk to them right now and just go right to the nurse and come right back to the room when i get done

ok ok so what are you going to do to night and what are you going to do on saturday and sunday

1 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

I loved how you wrote, in your last email, about your Hall Pass rules. You gave a lot of detail, and that helps me know that you understand the rules! You also listed 2 of the most important rules: buzzing down to the nurse's office and making sure you don't stop in the hall to talk with others. Another rule is to always be honest. Even when you think being honest will "get you in trouble," remember that being honest will always be the easiest way out of a tough situation!

How was your Memorial weekend?? I really enjoyed the extra day off! I was able to spend time with friends, have a BBQ, go shopping at the mall, and spend some time outside! What did you do this weekend?

I really like the pink background you used in your last email. The flowers are pretty!! You are really good at using a computer. How did you learn?

From,

Laurel

Parker:

laurel i got your email to day i am glade that i gave you a lot of rules and i am glade that you had a goog time this weekend   you going to like what i am going to tell you that i use my hall pass for music to day

and i holp you get well soon and i holp you come in to school tomorrow what are you going to do tonight and tomorrow i am going to put a background i am going to put om it i am going home to day and tomorrow i am going to boy scouts tomorrow night so thats cool that you went to the mall and have a bbQ and went shopping and thats cool that you went outside what are you going to have for dinner to night 😮 😎 😴 😷 🐮 😺 😸

😊 😄 😬 🐔 😊 🐱 🌹 😋 👑 🐸 😎

from parker

2 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

Thank you for your well wishes yesterday! I am sorry I had to leave school...I was NOT feeling well :(I went home, laid down, and felt better by the end of the night though!! I can't believe it is already Wednesday...the week is almost over!!

Last night, because I wasn't feeling well, I just had soup for dinner. What did you have to eat? How was your home visit last night? What is one thing that you did while you were home?

Parker, you are doing such a great job writing. I like how you answer my questions, and ask me questions too! What are 3 things that you think you are doing well with?

From,

Laurel

Parker:

laurel i got your email today and at home i hit some golfball at the school down the sweet from me

and last night i ate hotdogs and hambrgers and for a drink i had some pop and and then i wached tv and then i whent in the pool and i am sorry that you was not feeling well yestday and i am so happy that you had soup and i am so happy that it is wednesday are you happy that it is wednesday and i am so happy that you are feeling better

and i no that you had soup are you feelingv better today from your best friend parker

7 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

Thank you for your last email. Have you ever felt sick before? What did you do when you weren't feeling well? How did you end up feeling better?

Let me know!

Laurel

Parker:

laurel what did you do last night what did you eatv for dinner what are you going to eat to night for dinner are you going outside to day it is nice outside

from your best friend parker

9 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

Good afternoon! Last night I had dinner with friends. We cooked hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill. It was fun!

Who is a good friend of yours? Tell me about this person! What do you like to do together??

Parker:

laurel i got your email my night was good i had a cookout and i play kickball

and i hag out with my friend kyle and zach i haged out with them

and i had hotdogs and hamburgers last night what are you going to do to night are you going outside to day it is nice outside i am going to my moms house today what are you going to do torrow white back to me torrow on what you did tonight and torrow do you got any pets whatn are your firends names so how are you doing to day

13 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

Guess what I did last night? I played kickball too!! It was a lot of fun. I have not played in soooo long...since I was in elementary school!! I am going to play again on Thursday! I can't wait :)

 I do have a pet...thanks for asking! I have one gray cat. Her name is Miss Kitty. She will turn 1 years old on September 23. She loves to play and sit on my lap! Do you have any pets? If not, what kind of pet would you like to have someday??

From,

Laurel

Parker:

laurel i got your email i got one pet and i fish my fish name is golding and my dogs name is shadow last night i went outside to ride my bike and to night i am going shopping to day what are you going to do to night and what are you going to do torrow what did you eat for dinner what are you going to eat for dinner to night what is yuour pets name what are you i am happh that i get to go to choir to day and my mom mint be there

15 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

So you have TWO pets, a dog and a fish! How lucky! Pets are a lot of work, aren't they? For my cat, named Miss Kitty, I have to make sure to give her food and fresh water every day. I also need to clean out her litter box every day.

I really enjoyed your choir concert last Thursday. I am happy that your mom and step-dad came! It was such a good show! I can tell that you have worked very hard...and it really paid off!

Our last day of school is June 23. That means summer break is coming up. What are you going to do?

Sometimes I have a hard time understanding what you write. Can you try using capital letters and periods at the end of your sentences to help me?

From,

Laurel

Parker:

i got your email i got to clean out my fishs bow and i got to walk my dog and pike up ather him what did you do last night what are you going to do to night go outside it is a nice day and have a cookout i am glade that last day of school is on june 23 o and i gor got one thing i got to put clean wather is the fishs bow 😈😃🏌️🎣😺🖐️areyou glade that june23is the last day of school🤤😵🏌️🤢😵🤮🥵😆🎰😎😵🏌️

last night i went to my mom house

16 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

I am happy that June 23rd is our last day of school. What are 3 things you will do over your summer break? Use a lot of details so I understand what you will do! For example, instead of just saying, "I will go to my mom's house" tell me MORE! Tell me what you want to DO there!

From, Laurel

55

Parker:

laurel i got your email on my summer brack i whant to go to my moms house and i whant to go on the boat with them 1.

2. i want to go to the ymca with my mom

3. and i want to go to the bach with my mom

what are you going do on your summer brack are you going out for dinner and go outside

and have a cookout and are you going to play with your pets what are you going to eat tonight and what did you eat last night you have nice andare you going to the mail

from parker

17 June 2011

Me:

Parker,

WOW!!! Thank you for really using details when you told me about your summer break! That is so great to see :) It sounds like you are going to have a lot of fun this summer!!!

On my summer break I am going to relax at home. I want to catch up on some cleaning. I also want to spend time with friends, and visit my family!

Tonight we are going to cook outside, using the grill. We are going to grill shrimp and vegetables. I am going to make a pasta salad.

What is your FAVORITE food, and why?? Again, tell me a lot about it. Use details like you did last time !

From,

Laurel

Parker:

i got your wmail on what you did last night what are you going to to to night are you going

outside are you going to cook outside to night do you go any planes for this weekend are you

going to the mall

from parker

20 June 2011

Me:

> Parker,
>
> I had a good weekend. I spent time with my dad on Sunday for Father's Day. In my last email, I asked you about your favorite food, but you never answered!
>
> What is your favorite food and why? Use lots of details to help me understand why you like it so much!
>
> From,
>
> Laurel

Parker:

> my favorite food is pizza and hotdog be cuse you can get the pizza from pizzahut nad you can get the hotdog from the store what did you do on saturday you sould go outside and cook on the grill it is nice out

22 June 2011

Me:

Oh, awesome! I like pizza, too! I prefer Papa John's pizza instead of Pizza Hut ☺ I am not sure what we are going to do for dinner tonight. You are right, it is a perfect day for grilling! Today is our last day of school, Parker! What do you think about that? What are your plans for the summer? Are you coming to summer school?
I will be teaching this summer, but I do want to find time to relax and enjoy family, friends, and the sun!

<div align="right">

From,
Laurel

</div>

Parker:

> i got your email about that i am happy that it is our last day of school i wount be back at school i am going to summer camp for this summer but i will come and see all of my teachers and friends so i will miss you guy i now that you guys will miss me this summer and i will have fun a summer camp this year when i come back i will tell you guys all about it and i will miss you guys so much from your best friend parker

Discussion

In each of my journal entries I focused on providing Parker with specific praise and words of encouragement. I wanted to encourage positive writing behaviors such as using details, providing information, as well as requesting information. To encourage Parker's writing development, I used specific language and examples. Instead of writing "You did a good job writing your last email," I wrote with more specificity, "I loved how you wrote, in your last email, about your Hall Pass rules. You gave a lot of detail, and that helps me know that you understand the rules!" I praised his appropriate response to my questions through statements like "I really liked how you answered my question about what you did in PALS workshop." In addition, I encouraged and reinforced Parker's ability to write to request information through specific praise like: "I really like how well you are writing. I like that you answer my questions. I also like that you ask ME questions too! This shows me that you are interested in my opinions and what I have to say." By doing this, I wanted to clearly describe and praise the positive writing behaviors Parker was using, such as using detail in his writing, requesting and supplying information appropriately. I crafted my responses in a way that I believed would reinforce Parker's positive writing behaviors and affirm his abilities as a writer.

Not only did I praise Parker's specific writing behaviors, I also provided him with constructive criticism, or ways to improve his writing. In my entries I would often introduce new or complex vocabulary, such as "appropriate" and "journaling." I also used natural or authentic language, avoiding substituting 'simple' or 'easy to understand' words for those I would naturally use to communicate if we were having an oral conversation.

As Parker and I progressed in our journaling, I began to incorporate more and more constructive feedback. At the start of our journaling experience, I made sure to bulk up my

entries with positive statements, not only about his writing but also regarding his performance in class. I wanted to establish a comfortable and non-threatening environment; an atmosphere where he felt confident and could take risks with his writing. I actively sought to increase his self confidence during the journaling, making sure that I limited my feedback and making sure that I provided specific praise on his writing behaviors. I gradually added constructive criticism statements to my entries to help guide and develop his writing. For example on May 24, 2011 I called attention to Parker's use of the phrase "your best friend" in his closings. I reminded him that we have a teacher-student relationship, drawing on concepts from a relationships curriculum used at school called CIRCLES. He responded to this feedback by either omitting a closing altogether or writing "From, parker" in his next four journal entries. On June 7, 2011, Parker used the 'best friend' closing once more, never to be seen again thereafter. I also introduced the importance of adding details to his writing on June 15, 2011, and encouraged him to do so during his description of three things he planned to do over summer break. Parker responded to this suggestion by numbering and describing his list of things to do. As time progressed I also began experimenting with various computer fonts and text features. On May 29, 2011 I changed my font color to blue. Then, in my next email I added an emoticon. I began to incorporate highlighting into my emails as well. On May 25th Parker began to mimic my experimentation. He added a cluster of emoticons into his email. Then, over time he began incorporating a variety of text colors, highlighting, and even more emoticons. While I did not notice a specific purpose for the features and emoticons used, I did believe he was mimicking what I was incorporating visually into my emails. I also experimented with my response lengths to see how Parker would respond. On average, I would write three to four paragraphs per entry. Then, on June 7, 2011, I

wrote only one short paragraph, to which Parker responded with an equally short response. Again, he seemed to mimic my behavior.

The Second Interview

I sat down with Parker again on June 22, 2011, 37 days after the initial interview. Sitting side-by-side, I explained to him that I was interested in his thoughts and opinions about writing and writers. I was also trying to gauge if his thinking about writing had changed over time. I asked Parker to be honest with me, letting him know that I would not be offended and he would not be penalized in any way due to his responses. I told Parker that I was looking for his true feelings and reactions.

Soon after beginning the interview, Parker expressed his familiarity with the questions, asking "Didn't we already do this?" Parker was correct. He had completed this self-efficacy interview during week one, prior to the commencement of our journaling. I felt my stomach drop. I was nervous that this somehow offended Parker, and that he would become aggressive. I bit my lip and continued on. I praised his accurate recollection and talked to him about how I was curious about his thinking now, over one month later. With a short sigh, Parker replied "Oh, word." and continued on with the interview. This positive response made by Parker was a relief. Maybe his familiarity with the interview was comforting to him, perhaps he felt better prepared, or maybe he was more confident in his abilities. Whichever the reason, I was happy that he shared his thinking with me for a second time. When I asked him to define writing, Parker replied "It's when you have to tell someone something so you write it." He went on to say that people write "to learn and get better at it." When I asked if writing was important to him, Parker replied "Yea, in case you have to tell someone something." Parker went on to say that, as a

writer, he does a good job "writing a lot of words," and that he can become a better writer by "learning how to spell good." When I asked him, "What is easy about writing" Parker responded, "It's fun." He shared that spelling was a difficult part of writing. He also said that he was proud of his writing because he could "use the computer like people who got jobs do."

As in the first interview, Parker again seemed to display resistance or difficulty engaging in a dialogue about writing. For example, when I asked him to elaborate he replied "That's it," or "I don't know." His affect during the second interview, however, showed interest and attention. He sat up in his chair, maintained appropriate eye contact with me as I spoke, appeared to take some time to think before offering a response, and overall seemed positive and engaged. As I closed the interview, I asked Parker if he had anything else he wanted me to know or any questions or comments he wanted to make. To this Parker responded, "Can we keep doin this writin thing?"

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

The purposes of this study was to engage Parker, a student who was emotionally disturbed, in meaningful writing activities and to examine what effects, if any, journaling via email had on the student's writing development and self-efficacy. I embarked on a five week research study, seeking to answer the research questions:

How does journaling through email affect the writing development of a student with emotional disturbances?

How does journaling through email affect a student's writing self-efficacy?

Analyses of the study's results indicate positive results for Parker. Specifically, he demonstrated engagement in the process of journal writing through e-mail, demonstrated positivity and optimism, as well as responded appropriately to teacher feedback. Journaling through email also positively affected the student-teacher relationship and highlighted beneficial implications for my teaching of students with emotional disturbances.

In this chapter, I discuss the conclusions I have drawn from my research, and the implications the findings have for student learning and my future teaching. I also offer several recommendations for researchers should they wish to explore the topic in their work.

Conclusions

Journaling through Email Promotes and Maintains Student Engagement

Indicators of student engagement include alert behaviors, such as participating versus refusing asking content related questions and responding to questions.

One indicator of a student's engagement is his/her asking questions related to content discussed. Consistently, throughout his emails, Parker demonstrated attention to task and interest in his communicative partner's responses by posing questions. On May 19, he asked, "...what did

you do lest night and what are you going to do to night". The next day he asked, "what are you going to do at the lilac festival this weekend". Then on May 25, he asked "...are you glade i am geting a hall pass becuse i have been doing good work in school this year". On June 2, Parker asked, "you going outside to day it is nice outside".

Parker also demonstrated engagement in the journaling activity by responding to my questions. On May 27, at 10:15 in the morning, I asked Parker to review the rules students need to follow in order to obtain and maintain the privilege of an Independent Hall pass. Three hours later I received his response email in which Parker address my question by stating, "...i like my hall pass i rule i now is when i am going down to get my meds i buzz down and let the nurse no that i am comeing down to get my med and then buzz up to the room when i get done with my meds to let them no that i am comeing bach up i see some one in the hall and if they talk to me i tall them that i cant talk to them now and just go right to the nurse and come right back to the room when i get done". Parker demonstrated understanding of hall pass rules and was thorough and detailed in his response.

On a few occasions, like June 16, Parker did not answer a specific question I posed in my email. In a follow up email I highlighted his behavior by writing "In my last email, I asked you about your favorite food, but you never answered! What is your favorite food and why?" Later that day he responded with "my favorite food is pizza and hotdog be cuse you can get the pizza from pizzahut nad you can get the hotdog from the store."

Parker also revealed his engagement through his use of mimicking behaviors. In my initial email to Parker, introducing the journaling activity, I encouraged him to use any font, pictures, and graphics that he wanted. Initially, Parker did not experiment with these text features. I began to gradually incorporate different text colors, fonts, highlighting, pictures, and

emoticons into my emails. Then, on May 25, Parker started to mimic these behaviors. He began incorporating emoticons and adding color to his emails. While I cannot make any direct connections to the emoticons or colors used, his experimentation demonstrated Parker's awareness and attention to what I was including visually in my emails and his attempt to replicate or mimic those behaviors. Additionally, on June 20, I experimented with my response length. I purposely wrote only one paragraph to see how Parker would respond. While I thought he would continue to write a lengthy response email, I noticed that was not the case. Parker seemed to mimic my short response with one of his own. In my next entry I went back to writing more, his response was longer. .

Journaling through Email Provides a Place for Authentic and Timely Feedback

Many of Parker's journal entries show his ability to accept feedback and apply it to his writing. On May 24, I corrected Parker on the appropriateness of his closings. I reminded him of our teacher-student relationship, discussing the correct way to end an email is to say "from" in place of "your best friend." Parker did not become upset being corrected and complied right away. Then, on May 25 I talked to Parker about the importance of organizing his written thoughts into paragraphs, to help the reader understand his ideas better. His email back to me showed his attention to my feedback. His writing was clearly divided into three paragraphs. On June 9, Parker wrote to me about his pets. In this email he said he had one pet, but then went on to describe his fish and dog. In my response email on June 13, I addressed the inconsistency, stating "So you have TWO pets, a dog and a fish!" Parker did not become upset after receiving this correction. Instead he commented on his pets again and then started to ask me questions about my night. On June 15, I asked Parker to describe three things he wanted to do over

summer break and asked him to be specific. In his response email, Parker took my direction and

applied it to his writing. He numbered his list of things he wanted to do and went beyond just

writing a phrase writing, "i whant to go to my moms house and i whant to go on the boat with

them".

Journaling through Email Increases Participation

In chapter one I wrote about Parker's reaction to a writing activity. He yelled and cursed,

stating "This is @!#$%*^ stupid! I @!#$%*^ hate this!" This was quickly followed by Parker

slamming his head down on his desk. When I offered assistance, Parker vehemently refused and

ordered me to "Get the @!#% away...". Although this is just one snapshot, these behaviors

represented Parker's typical response to writing activities and seemed to show his low writing

self-efficacy. Parker voiced his distaste for writing on a daily basis through language, facial

expressions, non-compliance, and negative behaviors. As a student with emotional disturbances,

Parker demonstrates difficulty trying new things. If he perceives something as too hard, he will

automatically associate that with potential failure. Parker hates to fail, and perhaps even more so,

Parker hates to have others witness him fail. He lacks confidence in his abilities and will often

not try or disengage in a task in efforts to avoid failure.

According to Bandura (1995) and Margolis and McCabe (2006), students with low self-

efficacy tend to believe they cannot be successful and typically consider "challenging tasks as

threats that are to be avoided" (as cited in Kirk, 2013). In my opinion, Parker's verbal

aggressions and noncompliance during writing activities exemplified his attempt to avoid them. I

think he knew if he made threatening and unsafe remarks to staff, his behavior program would

take effect, and no longer would the focus be on writing.

In contrast, people with high self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges and do not try to avoid them (Bandura, 1989). Parker's increased self-efficacy can be seen, then, through his successful participation in the journaling study. My analysis of observation field notes (Appendix B) showed that Parker did not make negative statements during or towards email writing; negative remarks and behaviors which were abundantly observed and documented prior to journaling. His body language and facial expressions while typing at the computer suggested interest and engagement in the writing activity. Parker would sit up straight, usually at the front of his chair, leaning in towards the computer screen. His mouth would open slightly as he read the emails, tracking his reading with his finger, which he moved across the computer screen to help keep his place. I did not observed a single moan, groan, negative remark, or eye roll while Parker engaged in journaling at the computer.

Furthermore, Parker would occasionally gain my attention during the school day to inquire about the next time we could "do our email thing." His tone, affect, and facial expressions suggested that this inquiry was not out of dread, but rather excitement. It appeared as though Parker was looking forward to journaling. When I let him know that he would be reading and responding to my email that day, I recorded observations of Parker smiling and mumbling words such as "cool" or "alright."

Journaling through Email Increases Optimism and Positivity

Low self-efficacy rates have also been linked with pessimism, negative self-perceptions, and an "I cannot" attitude (Kim & Lorsbach, 2005). Furthermore, compared to their non-disabled peers, studies show that students with emotional and behavioral disturbances possess a high incidence of negative or dissatisfied feelings about themselves and their abilities (Sacks & Kern,

66

2008). During journaling, Parker illustrated the opposite. His optimism and positivity about himself and his abilities can be seen through his own words. It is evident through Parker's emails and interviews that he thought highly of himself and his skills as a writer. He positively expressed his excitement and readiness to engage in journaling on May 17. Here, Parker repeated three times during his email "i am so happy that we are doing this." On May 19, Parker stated "...i like it when you writing back to me". Then on May 20, Parker commented on his development, stating "...i cant beleave i am grown up a lot this year i am so happy that i am doing good work this year". Then again on May 24 he stated, "i am going good on my work this year...i will do good work this year i loveet at school this year and i will keep up the good work".

Parker's interview responses further support the conclusion that journaling through email had a positive effect on his writing self-efficacy. Prior to beginning our journaling activity, I interviewed Parker in order to understanding of his thoughts regarding writing, writers, and his own abilities. In this interview, Parker had a difficult time responding to my question "What do you do well as a writer." After much consideration, he responded "I stay on the lines." It was hard to believe that this student, who had so much to offer, believed the only thing he did well was related to penmanship. When I asked him what made him proud of his writing Parker replied, "The fact that I do it." These nondescript responses, not at all indicative of his strengths as a writer, showed me that Parker had limited confidence in and awareness of his actual abilities.

Following six weeks of journaling through email, I interviewed Parker to understand his thoughts regarding writing, writers, and his own abilities. In this interview Parker demonstrated not only increased positivity in his tone, but a willingness to talk about himself as a writer. He said he was able to "write a lot of words," that he enjoyed writing, and that he was proud of his

67

abilities to "use the computer like people who got jobs do." These positive and descriptive statements suggest the Parker has developed an increased sense of confidence in his abilities as a writer.

Implications for Student Learning

The results of this study have implications for many audiences, including students with emotional disturbances. As I discussed, one positive outcome of journaling through email with a student with special needs is engagement in writing activities and acceptance and use of teacher direction and feedback. In addition, student self-efficacy rates also increased.

Journaling through Email Presents a Non-Threatening Forum for Writing

My observations of Parker prior to the start of the study suggested a disinterest in and distain for reading and writing. On a daily basis Parker would choose math activities over those involving reading and writing. His actual participation in the journaling activities pleasantly surprised me. His performance and dedication to writing emails back and forth had me interested. I wondered why a student who loathed reading and writing tasks now appeared to enjoy them. I began to speculate that his use of the computer was a factor in his new found enjoyment. I believed the use of email set an authentic purpose for reading and writing. In today's world, most communication is transferred electronically. Bills are paid online and checkbooks are balanced. Friendships are accepted and declined. Emails pile up and SPAM becomes a nuisance. Groupon shares local deals and Pinterest has replaced traditional bulletin boards. Whether or not they have access, students are surrounded by people interacting with text

electronically. These interactions with text using technology are authentic, real-world, daily activities.

I think the use of technology presented a welcomed change from traditional pencil and paper tasks. Parker's use of a computer seemed to allow him to be more at ease. The computer seemed to present a 'safe place' for him to take risks in his writing. His "mistakes" were less permanent than they were on paper. I observed Parker editing his emails each time he wrote. He would use the backspace button to remove single letters and entire sentences, demonstrating no change in facial expressions, body language of affect. I think there is something to be said about the ease to which a writing piece can be edited with the use of a computer. With just a click of a button "mistakes" and risks would vanish, leaving no visible trace of a 'struggle.' No one would see him use up his pencil eraser trying to expunge an error. Instead, I think Microsoft Word acted as a safety net. The program offered him a variety of tools and by eliminating the act of writing by hand, perhaps lessened his frustrations. The computer relieved him of his primary focus of 'staying on the lines' and 'finger spacing between words.' It is my perception that the absence of these mechanical concerns now allowed Parker to focus on his ideas.

Journaling through Email Builds Teacher-Student Relationship

Journaling also improved my communication with Parker. Through email, Parker communicated a variety of things that he never talked to me about in person, before or after journaling. Topics discussed would range from what he did the night before to instances of aggression. This communication, in turn, allowed me to encourage Parker to reflect on his choices as well as help him develop a repertoire of safe and effective coping strategies.

At the beginning of the school year (prior to the start of our journaling) Parker was suspected by the education supervisor and me of stealing a teacher aide's iPhone from my office. Parker's social worker called his group home supervisor and asked them to check his room to see if our suspicions were correct. The group home supervisor confirmed what I did not want to believe was true: Parker was in possession of the stolen iPhone. His educational team, consisting of the education supervisor, behavior therapist, social worker, school counselor, and his special education teacher met to discuss how we would confront him and hold him accountable for his actions, while keeping everyone safe. The education supervisor, lead behavior therapist, and I asked to speak to Parker in a time-out room. Three additional behavior therapists and behavior support specialists waited in the hall. Based on our previous experiences with Parker, we knew that confronting him and asking him to discuss a negative behavior, like stealing, would incite an irrational response. Because his aggression could be severe, we took preventative measures to ensure our safety as we approached him. We quickly questioned Parker, presented evidence found in his bedroom, then removed ourselves from the time out area. After immediately closing and securing the time-out door behind us, Parker removed his shoe and started slamming it on the door in a rage, while screaming "f*%$ you, mother*@#$%@# I'm going to kill you." This was Parker's typical response to confrontation.

Journaling, as it turned out, allowed me to address tough subjects, that when approached face-to-face would often result in behaviors like the incident describe above. Journaling presented a non-threatening forum to discuss past incidences, but more importantly learn from them. For example, on May 18, I addressed an incident that occurred while he was on a home visit that landed him in the emergency room. Parker became upset after his mother refused to let him play with his baby cousin. Upon hearing this, Parker began to curse, yell, and slam his head

into the dining room china cabinet. He broke the glass door with his head. The next day Parker

returned to school. I immediately took him to see the nurse so she could document his injuries

and offer suggestions on precautions to take with a student with five staples in his head. When

we arrived at the nurse's office, Parker refused to talk about what happened. I relayed the

information gathered from a phone call earlier that morning from his group home supervisor. As

in all situations, I knew there was something to be learned from this experience, but Parker

appeared guarded and unwilling to discuss the incident. I decided to use the method of our

journaling to approach the topic, understand his motives and side of the story, and encourage

behavioral reflection and growth. So, on May 19, I approached the subject. I told Parker that I

knew he became upset the night before during a home visit. I also praised Parker for showing

some self-control and refraining from hitting another person. Then, with hesitation, I asked him

to reflect on his actions and think about what he would do differently next time. I crossed my

fingers and hoped for a positive response as I clicked "send." I sat back in my chair, wondering if

this would push him too far. I wondered if he would put a stop to our journaling. The next day I

had mail waiting for me in my inbox. It was from Parker. I opened it and began to read.

Sandwiched between comments about chime choir, to my surprise, Parker wrote, "…and when i

get mad or upsat i will walk away next time and next time i get mad or upset i wont hit the

mailbox next time." I believed that, after having built a positive relationship, journaling offered a

space for addressing inappropriate behaviors. While only time will tell if Parker is able to

respond appropriately in the future, I addressed this negative behavior and Parker responded in a

socially appropriate manner.

Implications for My Teaching

Writing has many important purposes. Writers can write to think, deepen their or others understandings, and to make sense of the world. We can write to express our thoughts, share experiences, ask questions, or explore a specific person, place, or thing. We can write to inform and to reflect on ideas and moments in our lives. Writing can enhance our daily lives, helping create and deepen social relationships and communicate our wants, needs, and feelings. Writing can also help organize our lives. Compiling "to do" lists helps keep us on task, recording important events on a calendar helps us remember, creating grocery lists helps guide our purchasing, and filling out health forms helps us share critical information. Consequently, I believe the ability to write is an essential component to leading an enriched life.

As I have discovered through my work with Parker and other students, students with special needs demonstrate significant writing needs. Many of these needs stem from the effects of their diagnosis. Short attention spans, low tolerance for environmental stressors, impulsivity as well as irrational thoughts and reactions create a challenging environment for learning new skills needed for reading and writing (Graham & Harris, 2005; Sutherland et al., 2008). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) state the necessity of engaging struggling readers and writers in daily activities to teach, practice, and reinforce skills and strategies.

Teachers have a direct impact on their students' writing abilities and confidence. With strong connections to success and independence in adult life, it is imperative to my work as a teacher that I uncover ways to engage students in authentic, functional reading and writing activities. Journaling through email is one strategy that has proven successful.

Journaling through Email Provides an Effective Forum for Coaching, Feedback and Constructive Criticism

Elements of coaching, corrective feedback and criticism are essential to a student's growth. Lam and Law (2007) showed that individualized teacher feedback enhanced student motivation and performance. My observations of and interactions with Parker illustrated the difficulty he had when he was presented with constructive criticism. No matter how upbeat the tone or how positively phrased my feedback was, it often lead to him "shut down" or refuse to continue on with his day, sinking Parker into a depressed-like state. Frequently, Parker would become verbally and physically aggressive when I or another adult asked to make corrections to his work.

I was, however, able to provide feedback to Parker about his writing—both the content and mechanics—through my emails. Parker demonstrated the ability to use feedback to adjust his writing behaviors. He used appropriate closings, incorporating details into his writing, as well as using a variety of fonts and other text features as suggested by myself. Perhaps more importantly, he handled the act of receiving criticism appropriately. For example, Parker, like many students with emotional disturbances, struggles with forming and maintaining appropriate relationships. He demonstrates difficulty understanding personal boundaries and acceptable levels of touch, trust, and topics of conversation with different people in his environment. I noticed that he would try to engage strangers in conversation, talk to acquaintances about medications he was taking, and ask his teachers their age and relationship statuses. Consequently, a large part of Parker's educational program was teaching him how to develop and recognize boundaries as well as interact appropriately with friends, acquaintances, teachers, community helpers, and strangers. In Parker's initial emails, he would close his entries with

"your friend" or "your best friend." I was able to reinforce appropriate student-teacher relationship concepts and provide feedback by reminding him that teachers are not friends with their students. In subsequent e-mails, Parker used my feedback and began using more appropriate closings such as "from."

I also observed how Parker did not argue, swear, or snap his pencil in half when I corrected his writing and suggested replacement writing behaviors. His reaction to my written feedback seemed to be more effective than that delivered face to face. Perhaps email offered a comforting and more private forum for feedback. Parker did not have to 'save face' by acting out after being corrected in front of his peers. Perhaps the feedback was also perceived less as a personal attack on his character and more as a way to improve his writing. Written feedback eliminated my personal reactions as well. Any unintended facial expressions or body language that might have offended Parker or communicated my frustration were eliminated when I communicated in writing.

I also believe that my feedback was effective during journaling because it occurred during the learning process. Feedback was immediate and I suspect that the continued journaling presented Parker with opportunities to apply and practice new learning and skills in context. In addition, the feedback I gave Parker during journaling was narrative. It did not coincide with a visible letter or number grade, even though I was still assessing his work in order to provide feedback. I believe this enabled Parker to focus on my message and teaching rather than the letter grade or percentage.

Based on the results of this study, I believe feedback plays a critical role in student growth and understanding. For my future work as a teacher, I feel it is imperative that I continue to coach students, providing suggestions and provoking deeper thought and reflection on their

writing strategies and behaviors. This study has shown that feedback is more effective when presented in narrative form, rather than through simplistic red marks on a paper and/or number grade. As I more forward as a teacher, I will make sure to have conversations with students to discuss their current writing behaviors and ways to improve. Based on the results of this study, I not only believe corrective feedback is beneficial but so is identifying student strengths. I will continue to praise student behaviors in a manner that is clear and specific so the student knows not just that he or she has done a "good job," but explain why. I will continue to point out the specific areas of strength and make sure that students know, regardless of their needs, that they have strengths of which they can be proud.

Journaling through Email Increases Effective Teacher-Student Communication

The relationship that Parker and I established and then continued to cultivate over the course of the journal writing played a significant and important role in his motivation and continued investment in the process. As shown in research as well as through my work as a special educator, students who are emotionally disturbed present difficulty with social skills and development of relationships with others, peers and teachers alike. Heward (2009) reports that students with ED demonstrate low levels of empathy toward others and have "lower-quality relationships" with peers and teachers when compared to their non-disabled peers (p. 221). In the classroom, Parker demonstrated age-inappropriate social skills. He struggled with anger management, adjustment to change in his schedule and day, had a difficult time dealing with daily stressors and communicating his emotions effectively. Parker also seemed to show a distrust of adults and/or authority figures. While this distrust was never fully articulated or explained by Parker, I suspect that the unhealthy relationships with his mother and step-father

75

played a role in this negative disposition. Parker's step-father was accused and found guilty of physically abusing him as a small child. As a result, the step-father could not come in contact with Parker. Parker's mother decided to stay married to this man and sent Parker to live in a group home so she and her husband could remain together. Environmental factors and biological factors combined, Parker demonstrated extreme difficulty trusting and forming healthy relationships with others.

It is widely known and understood in the educational field that in order for students to learn, they need to feel comfortable in their environment. I believe the process of journaling helped Parker and me form and nourish a relationship that encouraged this necessary feeling of comfort. I believe he began to trust me. This can be seen in his willingness to discuss personal experiences with me. I believe that our relationship allowed Parker to feel comfortable and relaxed, creating an atmosphere conducive to learning. As a teacher, I will continue to remember the importance of building strong relationships with students. It is imperative to my future work that I strive to connect on a personal level with students, that I work hard to show them I can be trusted, and that above all I create a classroom environment that is supportive and emotionally conducive to learning.

Journaling through Email Allows for Individualized and Scaffolded Instruction

Journaling allows teachers to assess students' writing performance in authentic ways. Teachers can evaluate students' development in a way that is not obvious or under the influence of stress like so much testing is. Through journaling I was able to obtain a more accurate understanding of the development of Parker's writing abilities and needs. I was then able to use this information to describe his Present Levels of Performance, influence IEP goals and

objectives for the next school year, as well as guide future classroom based instruction. I was also able to confidentially target Parker's needs that did not appear to be classroom-wide, and develop his specific strengths through my email responses and questions. Through email, I was also able to introduce new topics, prompt for the use of various reading and writing strategies, and reinforce individual use of effective skills and strategies. Not to mention, I was able to do this all in a very time efficient and easy-to-integrate process of emailing. These discoveries are meaningful for my continued work as a teacher. The needs of my seven students are multiple and complex in nature. As students' splinter skills and diagnoses manifest themselves in various ways, the idea that 'no two students are alike' is magnified. The concept of scaffolding instruction and in a time effective and meaningful way will be imperative to my work as a teacher moving forward. The findings from this study have shown me that through thoughtful consideration of a student's needs and abilities and the use of that information to plan instruction will yield academic and emotional growth.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Future Research

</div>

Increase Length of Study

Parker's emotional and behavioral characteristics shaped the reality of my study. Based on my experiences teaching students with an ED diagnosis, I realize that I need time to establish trust in the change of routine and new activities like journaling through email.

A longer length of time, perhaps three additional months, could be beneficial in order to provide increased opportunities for repetition of writing skills, to allow for additional feedback, and to illustrate long-term benefits more fully. It may also help answer questions that lingered in my mind at the conclusion of my study. Questions such as would this activity become

monotonous for the student? What behavior effects would the monotony cause? What strategies would a teacher use during journaling to keep the student motivated and engaged for an extended period of time?

Explore Journaling with Other Students with Emotional Disturbances

Based on the results of this study, I found that Parker was more engaged in the writing process when it included journal writing through e-mail. I would suggest, then, that additional research be done to explore this strategy with other students who are diagnosed with emotional disturbances. The positive results of this study have indicated encourages the exploration of writing using the computer with more students.

<div align="center">

Final Thoughts

</div>

In the opening scenario of chapter one I shared a story of a young man unable to complete a routine writing task, who is acting irrationally as he refuses to comply with the task and begins cursing at his teacher and impulsive as he engages in self-injurious behaviors. It appears that he will do anything to escape the act of writing. Some people may look at this student's reactions and think stop trying to push his writing, just focus on getting him to control himself and work on more functional things like collating papers and sorting office supplies. To me, I saw a student crying out for help. What I was doing was not working for him. I needed to try a new approach. Abandoning writing instruction was not an option, especially for a student who had so much promise, had so many strengths. I decided to incorporate the use of journaling through email to see how it might impact the young man's performance and his beliefs in himself. I did not know what to expect. I can honestly say I did not expect the results of the study

to be as positive and powerful as they were. I saw a different student after the completion of the six week study. I saw Parker, eager to read and write, eager to communicate, accept and apply feedback. I saw a young man, still with emotional disturbances, but able to communicate and succeed as a writer, a young man who had confidence in his abilities.

References

Abrams, B. J. (2005). Becoming a therapeutic teacher for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 38*(2), 40-45.

Calkins, L. (1994). *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Considine, D., Horton, J., & Moorman, G. (2009). Teaching and reading the millennial generation through media literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(6), 471-481.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Pearson Education.

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. S. (2001). *Guiding readers and writers grades 3-6: Teaching comprehension, genre, and content literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Graham, S., & Harris, K. R. (2005). Improving the writing performance of young struggling writers: Theoretical and programmatic research from the center on accelerating student learning. *The Journal of Special Education, 39*(1), 19-33.

Heward, W. L. (2009). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Jacobs, G. E. (2008). We learn what we do: Developing a repertoire of writing practices in an instant messaging world. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(3), 203-211.

Jones, J., & East, J. (2010). Empowering primary writers through daily journal writing. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 24*(2), 112-122.

Kern, L., DeLaney, B., Clarke, S., Dunlap, G., & Childs, K. (2001). Improving the classroom behavior of students with emotional and behavioral disorders using individualized curricular modifications. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 9*(4), 239-247.

Kim, J. A., & Lorsbach, A. W. (2005). Writing self-efficacy in young children: Issues for the early grades environment. *Learning Environments Research, 8*(2), 157-175.

Kirk, K. (2013). Self efficacy: Helping students believe in themselves. *On the Cutting   Edge: Professional Development for Geoscience Faculty.* Retrieved from http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/efficacy.html

Lam, S. F., & Law, Y. K. (2007). The roles of instructional practices and motivation in writing performance. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 75*(2), 145-164.

Lane, K. L., Barton-Arwood, S. M., Nelson, J. R., & Wehby, J. (2008). Academic performance of students with emotional and behavioral disorders served in a self-contained setting. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 17*(1), 43-62.

Lane, K. L., Carter, E. W., Pierson, M. R., Glaeser, B. C. (2006). Academic, social, and behavioral characteristics of high school students with emotional disturbances or learning disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*(2), 108-117.

Lane, K. L. & Menzies, H. M. (2010). Reading and writing interventions for students with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders: An introduction. *Behavioral Disorders, 35*(2), 82-85.

Lane, K. L., Wehby, J., & Barton-Arwood, S. M. (2005). Students with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders: Meeting their social and academic needs. *Preventing School Failure 49*(2), 6-9.

Lane, K. L., Wehby, J. H., Little, M. A., & Cooley, C. (2005). Academic, social, and behavioral profiles of students with emotional and behavioral disorders educated in self-contained classrooms and self-contained schools: Part I-are they more alike than different? *Behavioral Disorders, 30*(4), 349-361.

Lee, D. L., & Laspe, A. K. (2003). Using high-probability request sequences to increase journal writing. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 12*(4), 261-273.

Mason, L.H., Kubina, R. M., Valasa, L. L., & Cramer, A. M. (2010). Evaluating effective writing instruction for adolescent students in an emotional and behavioral support setting. *Behavioral Disorders, 35*(2), 140-156.

Matsumura, L. C., Patthey-Chavez, G. G., Valdes, R., & Garnier, H. (2002). Teacher feedback, writing assignment quality, and third-grade students' revision in lower- and higher-achieving urban schools. *The Elementary School Journal, 103*(1), 3-25.

Media literacy: A definition and more. (2011). Retrieved from http://www.medialit.org/media-literacy-definition-and-more

Metsala, J. L. (Ed.). (1996). National reading research center: How children's motivations relate to literacy development and instruction. *The Reading Teacher, 49*(8), 660-662.

Montgomery, W. (2001). Journal writing: Connecting reading and writing in mainstream educational settings. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 17*(1), 93-98.

Morrow, L. M., Barnhart, S., & Rooyakkers, D. (2002). Integrating technology with the teaching of an early literacy course. *The Reading Teacher, 56*(3), 218-230.

Nassaji, H., & Cumming, A. (2000). What's in a ZPD? A case study of a young ESL student and teacher interacting through dialogue journals. *Language Teaching Research, 4*(2), 95-121.

Niesyn, M. E. (2009). Strategies for success: Evidence-based instructional practices for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure, 53*(4), 227-233.

O'Brien, R., & Scharber, C. (2008). Digital literacies go to school: Potholes and possibilities. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(1), 66-68.

Regan, K. S. (2003). Using dialogue journals in the classroom: Forming relationships with

       students with emotional disturbance. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 36*(2), 36-41.

Regan, K. S., Mastropieri, M. A., & Scruggs, T. E. (2005). Promoting expressive writing among

       students with emotional and behavioral disturbance via dialogue journals. *Behavioral*

       Disorders, 31(1), 33-50.

Ryan, J. B., Pierce, C.D., & Mooney, P. (2008). Evidence-based teaching strategies for students

       with EBD. *Beyond Behavior, 17* (3), 22-29.

Sacks, G., & Kern, L. (2008). A comparison of quality of life variables for students

       with emotional and behavioral disorders and students without disabilities. *Journal of*

       Behavioral Education, 17(1), 111-127.

Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J. (2007). Influencing children's self-efficacy and self-

       regulation of reading and writing through modeling. *Reading and Writing Quarterly,*

       23(1)*,* 7-25.

Siewert, L. (2011). The effects of written teacher feedback on the academic achievement of fifth-

       grade students with learning challenges. *Preventing School Failure, 55*(1), 17-27.

Sousa, D. A. (2009). *How the brain influences behavior: Management strategies for every*

       classroom. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sousa, D. A. (2007). *How the special needs brain learns.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Sutherland, K.S., Lewis-Palmer, T., Stichter, J., & Morgan, P. L. (2008). Examining the

       influence of teacher behavior and classroom context on the behavioral and academic

       outcomes for students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Journal of Special*

       Education , 41(4), 223-233.

Sutherland, K. S., Wehby, J. H., & Copeland, S. R. (2000). Effect of varying rates of behavior-specific praise on the on-task behavior of students with EBD. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8*(1), 2-9.

Sweeny, S. M. ((2010). Writing for the instant messaging and text messaging generation: Using new literacies to support writing instruction. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 54*(2), 121-130.

Tavani, C. M., & Losh, S. C. (2003). Motivation, self-confidence, and expectations as the predictors of the academic performances among our high school students. *Child Study Journal, 33*(3), 141-151.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wehman, P. (1992). *Life beyond the classroom: Transition strategies for young people with disabilities.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Appendix A: Writing Self-Efficacy Questionnaire
(Researcher will scribe for student)

1. What is writing?

2. Is writing important to you? Why or why not?

3. Do you like writing? Why or why not?

4. Who is a good writer that you know? What makes them good?

5. Do you think that you a good writer? Why or why not?

6. What is good about your writing, what do you do well?

7. What do you need to work on, what can you do to make your writing better?

8. What is easy about writing, why?

9. What is hard about writing, why?

10. Are you proud of your writing? Why or why not?

11. Are you able to write as well as other people? Why or why not?

12. Does your teacher think you're a good writer? Why or why not?

13. How do you feel about yourself as a writer?

Appendix B: Observation Field Notes

5/17/11 Time	Observation
2:02 pm	accessing his yahoo email
	found my email & began reading
	sitting very close to the computer, quiet
2:04 pm	began typing, using 1 hand, pecking
	rest head in "free" hand, still no speaking
	alone in computer lab, I'm on another computer pretending to do work
	looks up at computer screen periodically, then makes changes to writing (deleting and correcting)
	alternates looking down at keyboard to type, then looking up at the screen
	appears content, no negative vocalizations
2:09 pm	two students arrive to computer lab, but Parker continued working, appearing un-phased
2:12 pm	Parker stopped typing and clicked "send"

5/19/11 Time	Observation
12:33 pm	appeared excited to go to the computer lab during his work session
	no other students in computer lab
	Parker reads email, tracking his place with the mouse cursor as he reads, went back to reread
	sitting upright, leaning in close to the computer
12:34 pm	Parker stopped reading and began responding
	he looked down to type 3-4 words, then looked back up at the screen
	referred to my email address to spell my name correctly
	quietly engaged in journaling the entire time
	would scroll down and reread my email, then return to his entry
	deleted words, would begin typing
12:53 pm	ended typing, sent email

5/20/11 Time	Observation
9:00 am	upon arriving to the classroom off his bus, Parker approaches me and asks if he could go to the computer lab during ELA time "to do the email thing"
	looked excited/eager
	appeared happy when I said yes
10:06 am	went to computer lab, no other students in there
	began to read my email, using cursor to track his place
10:09 am	began typing, refers to my email periodically then returns to typing
10:19 am	another student enters computer lab and uses a computer (plays a game with music turned up loudly), accompanied by a staff
	Parker continues writing, does not appear to be affected
10:28 am	finished and sent

5/24/11 Time	Observation
1:08 pm	head to computer lab during ELA work session
	Parker signs onto yahoo mail, clicks on wrong email, then hits back button and opens my email to him
	begins reading, tracking with his mouse/cursor
1:11 pm	begins to type reply
	refers to my email during his reply (visible by cursor tracking his reading of my email)
1:21 pm	another student and staff enter computer lab
	I reposition myself and observation paper at a computer directly behind him, writing occasionally, using the Internet, printing
1:29 pm	ends typing and sends email

5/25/11 Time	Observation
12:34 pm	go to computer lab
	accesses email
	inserts emoticons using yahoo mail toolbar
	gets upset with pop-up stating "come on why the f*%^ is this happening"
	visibly frustrated, I interject
	It is a person wanting him to add them to his contact list
	I help block the constant request
12:54 pm	ends typing and sends

5/27/11 Time	Observation
12:34 pm	go to computer lab during work session
	logs onto yahoo mail, begins reading my email right away
12:37 pm	begins typing, plays with background colors, etc.
	(types first, then plays with colors, pictures, etc.)
12:54 pm	sends email

6/1/11 Time	Observation
9:33 am	goes to computer lab during ELA work session
	logs onto computer and email account
9:34 am	begins reading my email
9:36 am	begins writing
	puts head down while typing, uses 1 hand to "peck"
	plays around with colors and pictures
9:59	sends email

6/2/11 Time	Observation
12:32 pm	goes to computer lab during ELA time
	begins reading email
12:34 pm	began typing his response
12:39 pm	began playing with text features
12:44 pm	"lost email"-deleted it somehow while playing with text features
12:45 pm	begins retyping email
	doesn't appear visibly upset, posture and facial expressions appear content
12:49 pm	says "I'm done" and we leave

6/7/11 Time	Observation
12:59 pm	to computer lab
	sign onto yahoo
	begins reading my email
1:01 pm	begins typing response
1:14 pm	done typing, sends email
	we go back to classroom

6/9/11 Time	Observation
12:43 pm	go to computer lab during ELA work session
	reads and begins typing
	adds no color r pictures
12:51 pm	says he is "done" and we head back to the classroom

6/13/11 Time	Observation
	asks each morning if we are going to do our "email thing"
	voice is upbeat and positive
	when "yes" then "okay cool, when?"
	then we decide on a good time for that day, sometimes during ELA work session, during leisure or at the end of the day
12:34 pm	go to computer lab
	1 adult in there when we arrive
	types "yahoo" in google.com then searches for "yahoo" in results
	signs in to yahoo mail
	begins reading my email
	tracks reading with cursor
12:36 pm	begins typing
	uses right pointer finger to type
	on occasion will use right and left pointer fingers to type
12:41 pm	begins inserting pictures and playing with color
12:47	says "I'm done" and we return to the classroom

6/15/11 Time	Observation
12:36 pm	choice/leisure time in the classroom, we head to computer lab
12:38	Parker begins typing
12:46	Parker says he's done and we return to the classroom

6/17/11 Time	Observation
1:43 pm	head to computer lab during choice/leisure time
1:44 pm	begins typing
1:48 pm	adds colors and emoticons
1:50 pm	sends email

6/20/11 Time	Observation
10:18 am	arrive at computer lab
	takes Parker less than 1 minute to log onto his email account and locate my email
10:20 am	begins typing
10:30 am	finished and sends email

6/22/11 Time	Observation
1:45 pm	arrive at computer lab
1:47 pm	begins typing his response
1:54 pm	sends email