

Literacy Learner Analysis

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### **Brief Background and Reason for Project Focus**

A common misconception about struggling literacy learners is that they are not native English speakers. While the increasing number of English Language Learners in our schools is growing, there are many native speakers who are struggling just the same (Goldberg, 2008). As a second year teacher who is also a minority in a small rural town where less than one percent of the building population is White Caucasian, I wanted to focus and understand the average literacy learner of the district.

Having developed the Sophomore Composition and Literature curriculum and being the only teacher who teaches the course, I have the luxury of having most of the sophomores for an entire year. Based on the data of their freshmen year, the current sophomore class had a lexile range from 0 to 1300, with the average around 900. As the only teacher teaching the Sophomore Composition and Literature curriculum, I get to work with all of the sophomores in the building who are not on the honors track. I have been observing my students since the beginning the school year to see who would be a good candidate to be the focus of my literacy learner project. I had the idea to work with a student who was similar to the type of student I was in high school - full of potential, yet riding the wave of success and failure thereby frustrated due to a literacy gap in their education experience. I wanted to work with a student who had misplaced their motivation, like eligibility for sports, mainly because I had a similar background. I didn't have to look too hard or too far, as I had many students who fit into this generalization. I then looked to family support because I know just how important it is to partner with parents in their child's

education. My search narrowed and I was left with one student who, for the purpose of concealment, I will refer to as Chris throughout this paper.

### **Home and Family**

Chris is a White, Caucasian male who speaks English and has been born and raised in a small rural town in the Midwest. Chris has been schooled in the same district his entire life and has always been an average student. His grades have always been in the C range and while he exhibits great potential, Chris refuses to work harder than he does.

Since the first day of the trimester, Chris had a difficult time staying on task and was easily distracted in class. He came off as disrespectful with an attitude that said he could care less. He constantly would talk to his buddies in class and had a difficult time listening and following directions. Other behavior issues resulted in an individualized behavior plan within the first week of the new school year. Parents had no idea of his behavioral issues, but called when they saw their son's grade in the class. They reasoned that he always struggled with English and has always had a difficult time reading and writing. I explained that Chris's grade was more of a reflection of his behavior in class and not necessarily his abilities. He started to turn things around and began to focus and work hard; however, there was little change in his grade and it became clear through conferring with him that he did struggle in reading and writing. Chris is motivated to do well in school only so he can continue to participate in sports. His parents have used sports as a motivator and so he does well in school during season, but then stops trying the rest of the year. Chris, his mom, and I decided that it would be beneficial for him to stay after school with me once a week to work on some writing and reading strategies. His mom and I

noted that Chris works better for people he respects and has developed a relationship with and thought that the one-on-one focus would serve him well.

During a conversation, Chris shared that his mom was the one who “hounded him on getting good grades” while dad “understood that [he] was just like him” and wasn’t too smart. Chris revealed that Mom was an educated professional working in business marketing communications and studied English and communications in college. She always had a knack for reading and writing and would often get frustrated that her son didn’t excel in that area, but that he always didn’t lean on her for support and assistance. Chris explained that reading was never a big thing in the household and that the only time mom read a book was when she was on vacation. Chris has a younger sister who adores reading and he describes her as “having no life because all she does is read.” When asked about his father, Chris explained that dad was a trade professional and as well as an electrician and simply does not read. His attitude conveyed that he and his dad bonded because they were athletes and not readers or “book people.”

All of these occurrences with Chris was a result of how I normally work with students who struggle, but it normally does not start up as quickly as it did with Chris. It seemed perfectly aligned and natural that I would extend an invitation to Chris and his parents about being a participant in this literacy learner project. I also wanted to make sure that the student I worked with for this project was going to be a student I had for two consecutive trimesters so that I could continue to work with him until the end of my semester. I asked Chris and his parents to discuss it among themselves and everyone agreed and was open to trying it out. However, I quickly learned that if the choice was left up to Chris, he would have denied. Chris states that he had no

choice in the matter and that this was something he needed to do if he wanted to play hockey this year.

### **Emotional Climate**

The Sophomore Composition and Literature curriculum works through the essential question of *who are you as an individual and who are you as a member of society*. The course highly promotes independence and works to help students assess their own identities while working to help shape one another. Students receive weekly packets on Mondays that includes their homework for the entire week, accompanied by the schedule for the class. Students are instructed to work within the scope of their own schedule to get the work completed. Our district abides by the Gradual Release and Responsibility Model, which stresses both collaboration and independent work. Students are always encouraged to take risks and celebrated for their efforts rather than their results. Students are assured that I will make myself available for them when they ask. They are comforted that I am journeying with them and while I hold high expectations that I always provide all tools necessary for success. Students are perceived as highly capable and functioning adults and respected until they lose that by acting immaturely or prove that they cannot be adults.

Chris struggles to find any interest or engagement in anything academic. He refuses to try and seems to have made up his mind that academics is only important because it allows him to participate in sports. The student was more engaged at the beginning of the year than he is now. He is more consumed by his social needs and while he would like to improve his literacy skills, he does not want to invest the time or the energy into it. Chris perceived our sessions as a punishment and then later thought that he had a private one-on-one tutor session and therefore could

mess and socialize with all the pretty girls during class time. Chris is that student who pretends to understand and grow from asking a teacher for help who then adopts the attitude of telling parents and teachers exactly what they want to hear.

### **Literacy History**

Student has never read a book on his own until this year. The Sophomore Composition and Literature course requires students to read four choice books every trimester and thus he must be reading. He started reading books way below his reading level, but is currently reading a book that is above his reading level. I asked a past student who happens to be the captain of one of Chris's teams to recommend one of the books he read last year to Chris. He has been working through it although he does not use reading strategies to help make sense of what is going on in the book. Chris claims to have never read a whole class text in its entirety until this year where he read *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *Othello*.

One of the main instructional challenges the student faces is the disconnect of the information received at home. His parents have differing attitudes about his academics and the value of education in general. One parent believes that education is of utmost importance while the other parent perceives it as a means to an end. The student receives conflicting messages from home and holds conflicting attitudes about education. The student's schooling history has carried him through to his sophomore year in high school without the proper foundations. No one has given him close instruction or has caught that he was a struggling reader and writer. There are numerous students who fall below him and therefore students like him go unnoticed. The student feels that he does well and has nothing to worry about. The student fails to see that he is behind

or struggling. However, the main challenge presented by the student is his attitude and lack of motivation. He is not intrinsically motivated and only works hard when his eligibility for hockey is on the line. When his eligibility is not threatened, the student fails to complete assignments and demonstrates behavior misconduct.

Chris's mother desperately wants him to do well in English that when he struggles to get his reading assignments completed, she sits with him, reads together and has often times read the book to him in order to motivate him and work through the assignment with him. It seems that while the parents try and help motivate and encourage their son of the importance of reading and literacy, the attitude towards literacy is divided and there are other priorities that are set as more important.

### **Tests Given and Summary of Test Results**

#### **Pre-Test: Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)**

The SRI test was selected to gauge the reading ability of the student. Students in the Cedar Springs Public Schools District have been required to take SRI test every year from first grade until eighth grade. The student's file indicated that he took the SRI test his freshmen year, so I wanted to see where he was his sophomore year because I felt that it was the only longitudinal data to help me understand the student as a reader.

The student scored a lexile score of 1050. According to the table of measures of the typical reader for various grades (see chart), the student is approximately one grade level below where he should be. However, the more important data received from this assessment, is that the student's reading ability as indicated by this assessment has dropped since his freshmen year.



The data from his assessment report demonstrates that the student's reading ability has decreased for two consecutive years. This data shows that at one point the student was above average in terms of his reading ability, but is now below grade level. However, in comparison to his peers in his class he is right at the mean. The student report also shares the information gathered about student interest to better encourage and motivate students to find books within their genre of interest. This student reported to liking action and adventure, humor along with sports and hobbies.

The table below shows examples of the typical reader and text measures for various grades. Remember that about 50 percent of the students are reading higher or lower than these ranges.

Typical Reader and Text Measures

Grade	Reader Measures (Interquartile Range, Mid-Year)	Text Measures (from the Lexile Map)
1	Up to 300L	200L to 400L
2	140L to 500L	300L to 500L
3	330L to 700L	500L to 700L
4	445L to 810L	650L to 850L
5	565L to 910L	750L to 950L
6	665L to 1000L	850L to 1050L
7	735L to 1065L	950L to 1075L
8	805L to 1100L	1000L to 1100L
9	855L to 1165L	1050L to 1150L
10	905L to 1195L	1100L to 1200L
11 and 12	940L to 1210L	1100L to 1300L

Note: Text Measures were derived from a study done in the late 1980s. The texts were comprised of small convenience samples of reading materials observed in classrooms in each grade, and represent general books that appeared in those classes in addition to textbooks. Results might differ if the study could be replicated today with a more exhaustive representation of textbooks and/or general reading materials.

### Pre-Test: ACT Prototype

The ACT Prototype is an assessment given to all students at Cedar Springs High School in their English courses. The ACT Prototype is given two times every year - once at the beginning of the year and once at the end of the year. This assessment assess students on all three English sections of the ACT - English (grammar), reading comprehension and writing. The same tests are given all year to maintain a standard among all grades. The consistency allows us to see

how all students are performing within our school. The data from this assessment helps place students in the correct English course and also tells students how they are performing on a test that is to help gauge where their future plans will be. This guides conversation about which areas they are the weakest in and how to work on improving that area. I also use these results to conference with students about future plans and to map out goals and plan of action.

The data from the ACT Prototype was used to understand the students based on their abilities in grammar, reading comprehension and writing. At the end of his freshmen year, the student received a 12 in the English portion which tests grammar and mechanics. He scored a 2 in the Writing portion which tests for ideas and fluency as well as argumentative writing. And finally, the student scored a 16 in the Reading Comprehension portion of the assessment. At the start of his sophomore year, the student scores a 10, 2, and 16 respectively.

The pre-test scores at the start of his sophomore year demonstrates similar, if not, lower scores. The comparison of the student's scores can show the gap that occurs during the summer. Although the student does not show much of a difference between last year and this year, the student's scores are below the state average in the English section as well as the reading comprehension section

Assessment Types	End of 2012-13	Start of 2013-14	Michigan Average	National Average	Total Possible
English	12	10	19.1	20.2	36
Reading Comprehension	16	16	20	21.1	36
Writing	2	2	N/A	N/A	6

The results of this assessment demonstrates that the student struggles with grammar and mechanics and writing far more than the student struggles in their ability to read and understand.

### **Post-Test: Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)**

Chris initially scored a lexile score of 1050 at the beginning of Trimester One, which Scholastic explains is at the eighth grade level. At the start of Trimester Two, Chris scored a 940 bringing him below average. While the decrease in an SRI is common and could attribute to numerous factors, I am not at all surprised by Chris's results. Chris became distracted within the last couple weeks of first trimester and the first couple weeks of second trimester. He started to make bad choices and found himself hanging out with other people who made bad choices. In a period of three weeks, Chris was sent to meet with the Dean of Students on eight different occasions. Chris started to drop the ball on his academics and in an effort to try and take the easy way out, was caught cheating on the final exam and barely passed the trimester with a D-. Chris also started to skip our sessions and decided that he didn't care enough about his literacy abilities to continue working with me.

### **Post-Test: ACT Prototype**

While Chris's SRI decreased, his ACT prototype scores improved drastically and the time between the pre and post test of the prototype was much less than the time between the SRI tests. While the ACT is not a means to measure literacy, it is important to recognize that it is highly difficult to raise the reading comprehension score and the English score and Chris showed a 3 point increase on both sections. After analyzing the itemized test, it was evident that Chris had improved in the areas that tested context and strategy, which were our two major areas of focus.

This growth area is consisted as the area in which he showed growth in the Reading Comprehension portion of the test was in the context clues and inference section. Chris went from making the most inconsistent errors in these areas to getting only one or two wrong in these sections. This again was consistent in the writing portion of his Writing Section. Chris's writing was not as descriptive as it could have been, but he was able to look at the rubric and figure out what they were looking for. He included the transitions and posed the argument of the other side and added a well written conclusion.

In looking through his test booklet, it was evident that Chris utilized close reading strategies of annotating and rewording questions to process what was being asked of him. His pre-test packet was empty with doodles all over the packet, but his post-test packet showed reading strategies with "+" or "-" over words to process whether a word was a positive word or a negative word. Although I was elated about these numbers, Chris was not as happy about the jump in his score and exuded no emotions. This transitioned into what I will refer to as the exit interview.

Assessment Types	End of 2012-13	T1 2013-14	T2 2013-14	Michigan Average	National Average	Total Possible
English	12	10	15	19.1	20.2	36
Reading Comprehension	16	16	19	20	21.1	36
Writing	2	2	3+	N/A	N/A	6

**Post-Test: Exit Interview** Chris's response to a significant growth left me feeling like he wasn't telling me something. The initial plan was for us to carry our one-on-one sessions all the way through February so that he could focus on building his literacy skills to catch up to grade level or surpass grade level standards. Chris became increasingly withdrawn and started to get into more and more trouble at school. He was caught plagiarizing and cheating, which is very much not like him. It seemed as though Chris was acting out and rebelling.

In our conversation, Chris was again withdrawn and I asked him to what was going on with him because the happy young man I had met at the beginning of the year was no longer in him. I told him that I thought more of him than his latest actions demonstrated. He stayed quiet throughout most of the conversation and after an awkward moment of silence, I asked him if he was happy and he broke. Chris's eyes welled up and he looked down and whispered, "I'm tired." We continued to talk and I learned that Chris had been getting harped on at home by his mother about his grades and how he wasn't doing well. She would be pushing and pushing and he just didn't care anymore. He would leave home and come to school, only to have me say the same things to him. My heart sank even further when Chris shared that he was starting to understand why literacy was so important and was excited to share that he had finally found a book that he was enjoying.

During Chris's hour of confession, I recalled this quote I had read from Randy Bomer's *Building Adolescent Literacy in Today's English Classrooms*: "I will believe in students' competence and intelligence. I will keep faith..that they have stories to tell, things to explain, and the language with which to do these things. I will reject any notion that places in my mind a belief in students' deficits - whether those deficits be genetics, cultural, or behavioral. I will treat them as

people who can get important things done for important reasons.” Chris does not have a deficit. What was once important for Chris (keeping mom happy and doing well in school) was no longer important or rather overshadowed by not being able to make his mom happy no matter how hard he worked. Chris had been broken and he was done working hard for little to nothing in return. I understood exactly what he said and I asked him what he wanted to do from here and that I would truly listen to him and hear him out.

After much thought provoking silence, Chris looked at me and asked if we could postpone working together to later on when he was ready for it. He asked me, “What good are literacy skills when I haven’t an idea who I am and what I want?” He wanted to make it clear that he was not giving up, but that he needed the time to figure out what was important to him and not his mom. Chris wanted desperately to find his voice and figure out who he was before picking up his focus on literacy skills. Chris wanted to check in every week where he wanted me to keep him accountable for work, reading, and how he was doing, but for now we have tabled the rest of our sessions. I fully support Chris’s decision and believe that his proactivity proves that he is taking the step in the right direction.

### **Lesson Plan Matrix**

The following table provides an overview of the lesson plans created for the student. A more detailed guide of the sessions is included in the appendix. The lesson plans are specifically catered to Chris based on the data gathered from the pre tests and an evaluation of his class work in Sophomore Composition and Literature. The purpose of these sessions was not to create more work and/or anxiety for the student, but to assist the student with the assignment for the class.

<b>Lesson Foci/Date</b>	<b>Objectives</b> (include including performance, conditions, and criterion. State the <i>Common Core State Standard</i> at the end of each objective.	<b>Instructional materials</b> (what will use to deliver the main objectives of the lesson)	<b>On-going assessment</b> (to measure attainment of objectives)
<p><b>October 15, 2013</b></p> <p>Pre-Assessment: ACT Prototype English Reading Comp. Writing</p>		<p>ACT Prototype Tests: - English - Reading Comp. - Writing</p> <p>Choice Reading Log</p>	<p>ACT Prototype to be used as pre-assessment.</p> <p>Interviews conducted to understand student.</p> <p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p>
<p><b>October 22, 2013</b></p> <p>Pre-Assessment: SRI testing</p>		<p>Computer - SRI testing</p> <p>Writing journal of prompts for student to practice writing in the raw daily</p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p>
<p><b>October 29, 2013</b></p> <p>Lesson on Reading: Slow Down and Read Out Loud</p>		<p>Excerpt from <i>Geektastic</i></p> <p>Tape Recorder</p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p>
<p><b>November 5, 2013</b></p> <p>Lesson on Writing: Brainstorming to Generate Ideas</p>		<p>ACT Writing Practice Prompt</p> <p>T-chart Organizer</p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p> <p>ACT Writing Response</p>

<p><b>November 12, 2013</b></p> <p>Lesson on Reading: Using Context Clues and Inquiry to Improve Reading Comprehension</p>	<p>Please see all the Common Core State Standard Objectives below.</p>	<p>Excerpt from <i>The Yellow Birds</i></p> <p>Look at student's <i>Twelve Angry Men</i> booklet for class</p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p> <p>Context Clues Sheet.</p>
<p><b>November 19, 2013</b></p> <p>Lesson on Writing: Using Descriptions to Improve Writing Quality</p>		<p>Same excerpt from the previous week - <i>Yellow Birds</i></p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p>
<p><b>December 3, 2013</b></p> <p>Lesson on Reading: Annotating and Speaking to the Text</p>		<p>Article of the Week</p> <p>Article of the Week Questions and Response</p>	<p>Choice reading book and log with reading rate.</p> <p>Writing journal.</p> <p>AoW Questions and Response</p>

**Common Core State Standard**

English Language Arts Standards

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2** Analyze how an individual, a group, or a society is represented in a text, including figurative language and point of view (e.g., how characters in a story react to one another, how a speaker addresses an audience, how a narrator or witness relates to others, how a writer compares or contrasts characters, settings, or events, how a filmmaker or other visual artist relates to the audience, how a composer or performer relates to others in the work)

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3** Analyze how a narrator or speaker's point of view influences how events and characters are perceived.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Standard (10th grade)

Analysis of words and phrases as they are used in the text; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how a particular word evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone)

How a narrator or speaker's point of view or cultural experience reflected in a text influences how events and characters are perceived; how it influences a wide reading of world literature.

Use of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.



**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

◦ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1a** Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

◦ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1b** Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.

◦ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1c** Use words, phrases, and clauses to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

◦ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1d** Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

◦ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1e** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.5** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 9–10 [here](#).)

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.6** Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

## Reflections

The practice of reflection is essential in any given process. Students must reflect as do teachers. As I reflect over the sessions I had with Chris, I realize the complexity of working with individuals, let alone teenagers. While the data suggests that Chris grew in his literary skills and practices, he did not grow nearly as much as he could have. There was one key element missing and that was motivation.

As a teacher, I have struggled with the daunting question/task as to figure out how to teach or help students find what motivates them. It is said that, “successful readers are engaged

readers” and that they are “motivated to read” (Mande-Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). Without motivation, more specifically internal motivation, Chris will not get very far. He exhibits little to no interest in schooling and literacy and does not understand the need for it. His only motivating factor has been that his grades and performance at school is directly connected to his participation in hockey. Beyond that Chris has no interest in school and does not understand that he is below his grade level. If Chris does not address his issue with his motivation or find a sense of purpose soon, his literacy level as well as his sense of self will be in severe jeopardy. Chris needs to assume more control and accountability over his education.

Much of Chris’s success came because he had to assume responsibility and could not hide behind any other students. Chris had learned all the tactics to make it seem like he was working and that he was learning, but most of the time he was listening to me or his classmates and just putting things together. He would hardly read anything and found loopholes in the system to help weave him through. When he had no one to hide behind or rely on, he had to step up and do the work and while at first he wasn’t sure exactly what to do, he figured it out by the end. His mom has been watching over his shoulders and helping him finish assignments that he never really felt the pressure or the need to do the work for himself. Chris had been in the practice of being rescued, whether by his mother or his friends, and even some of his teachers. Working one-on-one was not something he enjoyed and in fact, he felt immense pressure from it. And while he started out well and was even excited about working with me in the beginning, there came a point when all that changed.

Chris started to slack off and then found himself getting scolded at home by mom and then at school by me. He had been hearing the same things from both of us and grew tired of it.

He had phone calls home, his parents were called in, and he started being called down to see the Dean of Students almost daily for an entire two weeks. Chris had been making a series of bad decisions and I called him to stay after school one day and touch base with me. I asked Chris what was going on and he acted much unlike the Chris I had known. He appeared indifferent and callous, which is unlike him. Rather than lecture him about *knowing better*, I spoke to him with concern, love and wisdom to demonstrate that I cared more about him than literacy and other things (Willhelm and Novak year). At that point I realized that schooling and education, let alone literacy, was the last thing he cared about. It clicked to me that he had been feeling like he had two mothers - his mom at home and me, his mom at school. There had been so much pushing and forcing the importance of grades, education and future prospects that drove him to react.

As I stated earlier, Chris struggles to know and understand anything like he knows hockey - his purpose is hockey. It is the only sure thing he has in his life, but he had the realization that hockey might not be something he could do forever. While he voiced being concerned about his future, he didn't feel like being pushed to be a straight A student when he wasn't, was helpful. I agreed and set up a meeting to meet privately with his mother where we would discuss how to encourage, and more importantly, support Chris with positivity rather than negativity.

After seeing how beat up and deflated Chris felt about his unknown future, I asked Chris's mother if it would be possible for her to stop focusing on school and grades at home if I promised to keep him in check with all of his classes at school. After much deliberation, we decided that his home life would encourage him to explore future career options, develop his interests besides hockey and engage as a citizen of the community through volunteering. His school like would be entrusted to me and I would work with Chris and keep his mother up to date and

inform her if needed. This was one of the biggest turning points for Chris and we sat down to explain this to him.

The compartmentalization helped and he stopped getting into trouble at school and started to put more effort and interest back into school. Chris felt supported, encouraged and was made accountable. Chris explained that he didn't feel like he was always screwing up everywhere he went. He finally started to feel like he was important to his mom and that it wasn't just about school and grades. He realized that he had grown to resent school because it was the only thing that mattered. The new system changed the role of school and grades for Chris and he didn't feel threatened by it. His grades were no longer something that kept him from playing hockey that week. Clearing this web created an open passageway to so much more, leading me to understand the complexity of helping students. Each student is different and understanding students is the key to guiding them to become successful individuals whether in literacy or in life (Mande-Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

I wish I had known this information about Chris from the beginning. Had I known this information, we would have been able to target that in the beginning. Rather than focus on how to “use strategies for solving problems [to recognize or comprehend]” as literacy instructions do, I could have delayed the attention to practices and understood the student in full first (Samuels & Fastrup, 2011). I would have also liked to have spent more time with Chris in terms of developing his spelling and his vocabulary, however, I felt that his spelling would improve naturally the more he read and that it was much more important to teach him strategies of context clues to help him figure out the vocabulary himself. My final piece that I would have liked to incorporate into my sessions with Chris, was successful discussions to prompt adequate compre-

hension (Samuels & Fastrup, 2011). While I pride myself on having these discussions with students, I struggled having these conversations with Chris. He would simply state “I don’t know” before he even processed the question or truly listened to what I had said. I never really figured out how to break that “I don’t know” barrier down. I feel like his attitude towards schooling, educating, and his mom was a contributing factor to his being closed off to me, but I can’t really say for sure.

One thing I am grateful for is that I have another trimester with Chris. He sits in my class and I can see him utilize some of the strategies we have worked on. He is helping himself choose his choice books and he is not picking up his usual “easy” books. Chris seems more conscientious and has been getting more involved in class discussions. I have not heard him say “I don’t know,” which in my classroom elicits a response “Ok then, tell me what you do know and what is your question that will help clarify the confusion?” Chris continues to struggle with his grades, but its mostly motivation and organization. When he does complete his assignments, the quality of his work and the level of comprehension has drastically improved. His mother and I have let go of the reigns and have let Chris take over. Chris knows to make appointments with me if he feels like he is lost and touches base with me every now and then. His mother and I do not communicate on our own without his knowledge to make sure that Chris does not get a sense of us ganging up on him. I hope that Chris will continue to on this path and that he will find his source of motivation. While his mom worries that he will find out when it is too late, I have shared with her that I believe that there isn’t such a thing as too late and that he will figure it out when he is ready. I keep telling both of them and I constantly remind myself that no one can do

this for Chris, other than Chris himself. He knows how, but needs practice and fine tuning, which he will get when he figures out how to motivate himself.

### **Recommendations to Teachers and Parents**

Upon completing these literacy sessions with Chris, several recommendations can be made in terms of growing Chris's literacy skills. Chris should continue to read his choice books, but it is recommended that he choose books that are both interesting and challenging. Christ needs to be kept accountable at school and should be given smaller tasks that are more manageable. Chris struggles to ask questions and be proactive in a large group setting, so for the mean time, it is recommended that teachers occasionally check in with Chris to check how he is doing.

While Chris should be kept accountable for his reading and his school assignments, the accountable should look more like a conference and should be student directed. Through these sessions, it became evidence that Chris was unsure about the purpose behind his education and struggled to personalize/internalize school, grades and even reading and writing. It is recommended that the reigns of the student's educational responsibilities are given to the student to control. Teachers and parents should take support roles and guide student to internalize the meaning behind growing literacy practices.

Chris demonstrated that he struggled with providing descriptive and detailed accounts of information. Therefore, it is recommended that the student be challenged to practice speaking in a detailed manner, write in a detailed manner and work towards using appropriate level of language in both his speech and his text. In growing his speech, text and even thought, it is recommended that student observes and collaborates with his peers before working independently. Student should however be kept accountable for his responsibilities and obligations.

Among all the recommendations, this final recommendation is where I believe will be the most effective, if successful. It is imperative that Chris makes sense of the bigger purpose of school and literacy practices. His priority has always been hockey and his schooling has always been a point of threat or punishment. Chris needs to change his perception of school, education and consequently literacy. The student needs to be guided to think about literacy in a much bigger way. Rather than holding his schooling against him to make it seem like a punishment or chore, it is recommended that the conversation around school and education change so that the student can work towards internalizing a greater purpose and need for continuing his focus on growing his literacy. The responsibility needs to ultimately fall on Chris and it is my final recommendation that parents and teachers take a back seat while Chris takes the lead to figure out and make sense of everything whether it be hockey, education, literacy and even his future. We need to keep him accountable instead of taking over that which he finds difficult or cannot do.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

### **Session #1: October 15, 2013**

#### ***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student  
Pre-Test: ACT Prototypes

#### ***Rationale***

The level of personalization required to effectively build literacy skills is the most significant implication for instruction. The only way to meet students' needs is to know them. This necessitates that teachers think of students as individuals, relate to them as such, and create structures whereby teachers can know students and students can better know themselves (Moore, Alvermann & Hinchman, 2000).

#### ***Materials & supplies needed:***

ACT Prototype for English, Reading Comprehension and Writing

#### ***Introduction to the lesson: (~2 minutes)***

I believe that teaching and learning is about truth and understanding. That said, I don't think we know much about one another. In order for you to let me teach you, you have to trust me and to trust me, you need to know me. In order for me to teach you, I need to know who you are and what you are all about. I need to understand your learning style and where you need more support. I think this is a great starting point for us. Is there anything you want to ask me? [Let conversation naturally take shape]

#### ***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Interview (5-10 minutes)
2. Tell student about ACT prototype pretest - "In order to plan where we want to go, we need to know where we are. I know you are familiar with ACT prototypes and I am going give you the English section and the Reading section today and then you can take the Writing section with the class tomorrow."
3. ACT English - 45 minutes
4. ACT Reading - 35 minutes

#### ***Closing summary for the lesson: (~2 minutes)***



I will grade and score this and next week I will tell you the types of questions you struggled with and we will create a plan of action. I want to honor your time so we will always just stick to 30 minutes after school when we meet. Thanks for today and I am excited to journey with you. If you would like to focus on anything specifically, let me know and we can make sure we add that in.

### **Assessment**

As this was the very first session, the initial assessment was taken to mark our starting point. The assessment I also wanted to look for is how receptive the student is of me and our once a week sessions. What is the student's attitude? What is the student's level of engagement? I am more interested in the student's engagement and willingness to meet with me than where he is starting out.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

### **Session #2: October 22, 2013**

#### ***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Student Reading Inventory (SRI) Lexile Assessment

#### ***Rationale***

Students are constantly choosing books that are too easy and choosing books based on the number of pages. The student is required to read 3-4 choice books for every trimester and it is important that the student is matched with books at an appropriate level of complexity when building literacy skills (Allington, 2006).

#### ***Materials & supplies needed:***

SRI Testing

#### ***Introduction to the lesson: (~5 minutes)***

Welcome to our second session. So, let's start by continuing to get to know each other. Do you have anything you want to know about me? [Ask student about literacy background and family literacy and share my literacy story with student.]

#### ***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Tell student that we will go to the lab and take the SRI testing and that I will take one at the same time (~20 minutes)
3. Talk over the results of the SRI, give student his Choice Book Reading Log and explain the journal entries he should use to write down summaries and page number of every time he reads, and close the session

#### ***Closing summary for the lesson: (~2 minutes)***

So this SRI test explains where you are in terms of your reading level and because you have taken this test in previous years, we can chart your growth level too. This will help us gauge your growth and more importantly which areas we can work on to help you in your growth areas. I want you to continue reading your choice book and after each time you read, fill out a journal. Write the number of pages you read, for example, "I read from page 3 to 12 in 10 minutes." And then write a summary of

what you read. Focus on writing short, but detailed summaries. This will help you for the choice book projects after you finish reading your book.

### **Assessment**

The assessment in this second session was how the student was in terms of reading comprehension abilities and whether the student was at grade level. I also wanted to see if the student had a realistic perception of himself. How did the student respond when he saw the data that he was below his grade level? Did the student realize that he struggled with reading comprehension? Did he even know what/how he struggled?

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

### **Session #3: October 29, 2013**

#### ***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Focus on Reading: Slowing down and reading aloud

#### ***Rationale***

Patrick Allen (2009) is a man whom I consider to be an extraordinary mentor when it comes to literacy. He mentions a system called "R: Review, Read Aloud, Record" where he talks about hosting a reading conferences where teachers are given the opportunity to review a reader's progress, take brief running records of listening to the reader read, and/or to record the reader read to share some insights of the text. In trying to incorporate his model, I sought to review the details of previous meetings and/or conversations, which would then lead to hearing the reader read his text, and concluding by recording the language of the student after reading.

#### ***Materials & supplies needed:***

Handout (see next page) of an excerpt from the Book *Geektastic*.  
*Highlighters*  
*Voice recording device*

#### ***Introduction to the lesson: (~5 minutes)***

Welcome to session #3. Did you have a good week? Last week we talked about our reading history and our families. Talk to me about how you read, like where and when you read. Do you like noise around you, like music? Do you read in bed before going to bed? [Goal is to find out what the ideal setting is for student for focus reading and optimal environment. Guide students to help him be more efficient and effective.]

#### ***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Tell student to use the highlighters to read through the couple pages and mark evidence of tone as that is what we have been focusing on in class the previous week (~10 minutes)
3. Ask student to go through his reading packet with me and tell me his tone noticing.
4. Ask him about his process of reading like *did you read the text out loud in your head? did you skim through?*
5. Ask him some recall questions about the text

6. Ask him to read one large section of the text out loud while I record him and then have him listen to how he read, making observations about himself as a reader and also if he knew any of the answers to the questions I asked him earlier

***Closing summary for the lesson:*** (~2 minutes)

What did you learn about yourself as a reader today? What are some tactics you used today that could help you when you read anything?

**Assessment**

The assessment in this session is about the process of becoming a skilled reader and utilizing tactics to become a better reader.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

### **Session #4: November 5, 2013**

***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Focus on Writing: Brainstorming to Generate Ideas

***Rationale***

Brainstorming is purposeful and helps students organize their thoughts and if often times mistaken for free-writing. Brainstorming is goal-directed and helps to help students discover ideas to the problem/question (Burke, 2013).

***Materials & supplies needed:***

ACT Writing Prompt  
T-Chart

***Introduction to the lesson: (~5 minutes)***

Here we are at session #4. Did you find yourself using any of the reading tactics we talked about last week? Are you still enjoying your choice book? We talked about reading last week and this week we are going to focus on writing. Tell me about your process of writing - what you do when you get a writing assignment. [Goal is to find out the student's writing process in order help student become more effective and efficient.]

***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Begin by telling student that we need a starting point with his writing, just like we did with his reading.
3. Give him the ACT Writing Prompt and give him up to 25 minutes to complete it. Instruct him to do what he normally would when given a prompt, with the exception of reading over the prompt carefully together and requiring that he complete the T-chart organizer to organize his thoughts. Observe him to see what he does.
4. Upon finishing, ask him how it went, what he did, and read the response. Allow him to compare his writings from when he uses the t-chart and one from last year when he didn't use the t-chart. Share your noticings and observations and what score his writing would have yielded and why.

5. To wrap things up, ask him what his biggest struggle or area of concern is in terms of writing and let that be the focus of his writing help.

***Closing summary for the lesson:*** (~2 minutes)

What did you learn about yourself as a writer today? What areas do you struggle with and how could we make writing easier for you in the future?

**Assessment**

The assessment in this session is setting the base mark for the student's writing calibre. It looks at student's attitude towards writing and assesses the student's process. The brainstorming, think time, and organization is the key assessment in this lesson.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

**Session #5: November 12, 2013**

***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Focus on Reading: Using Context Clues and Inquiry to Improve Reading Comprehension

***Rationale***

Comprehension is essential in literacy and using context clues is extremely important as it is a skill of many things. "Context is critical for solid comprehension strategy instruction because it is through context that students become enculturated into the language of strategies, observe strategic behaviors and actions, and participate in strategic processing firsthand (Mande-Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

***Materials & supplies needed:***

Handout (see next page) of an excerpt from the Book *The Yellow Birds*.  
*Highlighters*

***Introduction to the lesson:*** (~5 minutes)

We have been meeting for awhile now, how are feeling about it? Do you feel like our time together is productive and helpful? So we are going to go back to a focus on reading. We have been talking about this class a little and I wanted to work with you on this a little more. How have you been using context clues and inquiry to help your reading? [Discuss the need for context clues and inquiry in reading.]

***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Ask the student to judge the book by its cover and what the images mean and connect this to the idea of making sense of things using information provided. Read the opening poem and ask what this poem means and what type of book *Yellow Birds* might be (~5 minutes)
3. Read the first paragraph out loud and ask the student to tell me what this book is about and how he knows. If he doesn't know, ask him what questions he has like terminology, definitions, what the author means by something, etc. Model asking questions to make sense of something and demonstrate the process of thinking with the same first paragraph (~10 minutes)
4. Practice together with the second paragraph (~5 minutes)
5. Discuss the benefit of asking questions and using context to guide us to better understanding. Have student verbalize three take away tactics to start using today from the lesson today.

***Closing summary for the lesson:*** (~2 minutes)

Asking questions to help us make sense of things is a great not only in reading, but in general. Give me three specific tactics you learned today that you will start using to become a more skilled reader. It is much more efficient and effective.

**Assessment**

The assessment in this session is about how the student uses inquiry and context clues in practice. I will continue to look at his reading journal to see if he is in fact using these tactics.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

**Session #6: November 19, 2013*****Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Focus on Writing: Using Descriptions to Improve Writing Quality

***Rationale***

The sophomore year curriculum focuses on detailed and descriptive writing. It is imperative that all students exercise detailed writing that is coherent and adds to the purpose of their writing. The student struggles with details and descriptions and has a limited vocabulary that further makes the task difficult. He needs to start thinking about it differently and try rather than shrug his shoulders and give up. The student will work through a mentor text to see how details and descriptions are done.

***Materials & supplies needed:***

Handout (see next page) of an excerpt from the Book *Yellow Birds*.  
Photo (see attached)  
Highlighters

***Introduction to the lesson:*** (~5 minutes)

Session #6 and our focus goes back to writing. I notice that you struggle being descriptive in your writing. The best way to be more descriptive is by explaining more. Even when we have conversations, you aren't very descriptive. You give one word answers so I want you to practice and play a little game of 'I Spy' with me.

***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Ask student to take out the same piece from last week and that we are going to look at it from a writing focus - like a mentor text. Ask him what he notices about the author's writing style in the way he can be so descriptive. (~5 minutes)
3. Present student with the photo and write a descriptive summary about what he sees in the photo - what story does this photo tell? I want you to focus on being descriptive. (~10 minutes)
4. Have student read his piece and ask him where he could have added more details and how. Guide him and then read it again and reflect with the closing reflective questions (~5 minutes)

***Closing summary for the lesson:*** (~2 minutes)

How difficult/challenging is it to be descriptive? Why? What types of writing do you need to be descriptive with? (all) How can you be more descriptive? What will you do to remind yourself to be descriptive?

### **Assessment**

The assessment in this session is about the process of writing descriptively. The assessment will be ongoing as I look at student work and lead/guide him to focus on his descriptions. Student will have the opportunity to work on his writing pieces to make it more descriptive.

## ***Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan***

### **Session #7: December 3, 2013**

#### ***Objective(s) for today's session:***

Student Interview - get to know and understand a little more about the student (ongoing)  
Focus on Reading: Annotating and Speaking to the Text

#### ***Rationale***

Students who engage metacognitively demonstrate being strategic readers and are better equipped to construct meaning. Annotating is a large piece of close reading and metacognition. Students need to practice annotating in order to understand purposeful annotation that does not cost them too much time. Close reading, annotating and speaking to the text are all strategies that will aid the student grow in his literacy practice (Mande-Morrow & Gambrell, 2011).

#### ***Materials & supplies needed:***

Handout (see next page) of an Article of the Week  
*Highlighters*

#### ***Introduction to the lesson: (~5 minutes)***

Here we are at our last and final session. We have been through a pretty rigorous journey and you learned many new tactics for how to grow your literacy. I would like for you to carry with you that literacy is an ongoing process. You will never be done and I challenge you to keep working hard in all your efforts. What do you think was your biggest ah-ha moment or what one tactic has made the biggest difference for you? Our final session will focus on annotating and speaking to the text, which will help you read a text once and not have to read it again [Goal is to engage student in self-reflection]

#### ***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson:***

1. Session Opener (5-10 minutes)
2. Engage student in final analysis and reflection of his good work and recognize growth.
3. Model annotating text while reading and demonstrate how to *speak* to a text. Ask him what he notices in terms of what I am focusing on and what *speaking* to a text looks like. Ask for his observations. Have him emulate it and try it out as he verbalizes the process out loud.
4. Close by thanking student and sharing what he should focus on next.

#### ***Closing summary for the lesson: (~2 minutes)***

All of these tactics we covered will help you grow your literacy, but you have to keep using it to build it. This marks the end of our sessions together and the only thing left are your post tests to see the

change from when we started. I know that you reluctantly participated and while you may regret it and it wasn't "fun," I hope you got something out of it. Try and figure out your reasons for all of this. Make sense of it for you and not for your parents or anyone else. I never doubted your ability to do any of it, but ability alone can't make us successful people. Do your best in all that you do and you will do great. If you need anything, you know where to find me. Even if you need a refresher or want to continue working together, just ask. It is all up to you. Thanks.

### **Assessment**

The assessment in this session is about the reflection of the student and how well the student understood the process of annotating and speaking to the text - why it is done, when it is done and how it is done.

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