Case Study of a Learner

By: Alexandrea Yarmuth

November 30, 2017
The student I chose for this case study is currently in the fourth grade at Ferndale Upper Elementary part of Ferndale Public Schools. In this study I will refer to the student as Ben Jones for confidentiality reasons. Ben is a 9-year-old Caucasian male. Ben is an only child and lives in a household with his Mother and Father. Ben’s father is in contact with the Mr. Gjonaj, the lead teacher, everyday to check on Ben’s behavior and concentration throughout the day. Both of Ben’s parents attended parent teacher conferences and are easy to contact if needed. Ben shows signs of ADHD but his mother believes that doctors these days over diagnose and medicate kids, therefore, no testing has been done. Ben loves to draw, read, and sing. He does this frequently in the classroom as well as at home. Often times Ben would prefer to read a book during a lesson than participate. He does not follow direction well and sometimes needs to be told numerous times. Ben’s parents are aware of this and say that this is an issue they have at home too.

I chose Ben for my case study for many reasons. Before school started, a popsicle social was held by the principal. This was an opportunity for students and their parents to meet the building staff and to find out who their teacher was. I met Ben during this event along with his mother. Right away Ben had a hard time focusing on me to introduce himself, I believe this was because of all the commotion that was happening around us. Ben’s mother spoke to me about Ben’s great academic ability and mentioned that he does need to be redirected occasionally. As the first few days of school was underway I noticed the behavior that was mildly expressed by mom. Ben was constantly up and out of his seat, he would read the entire day and would refuse to put the books away. It even got to the point of escaping to the bathroom with the book and reading in there for over 10 minutes. My mentor teacher and I discussed what we could do to help Ben succeed in school this year, we decided to recommend him for SAT. On October 18th,
2017 we met with the SAT team to discuss options to help Ben. For these reasons, I wanted to focus on Ben and find ways meet his needs that would allow him to grow.

Ben has a DRA score of 38, meaning he reads at a fourth-grade level. His NWEA scores are at or meeting the benchmark for his grade level. In math he is in the 61%-tile, reading he is at the 59%-tile, and in language usage he is scoring in the 50%-tile. Ben’s current classroom grades do not reflect his outstanding NWEA scores. In the first quarter Ben was receiving the following grades: Math-1, Reading-2, Writing-0, Spelling-4, Science-2, Social Studies-1, and Reading Logs-4. The grading scale is as followed: 4-exceeding benchmark/standard, 3-meeting benchmark/standard, 2-on track to meet benchmark/standard, 1-not on track to meet benchmark/standard, and 0-no attempts. Ben does not often need to speak with behavior consultant or principal for his behavior, however, some occasions he does not come in from recess with his class because he being attentive when the whistle blows. Sometimes Ben’s fidgeting leads to accidents like knocking over desks and chairs.

Ben responds well to praise on his accomplishments. Often times when he is having a good day we will message his dad to let him know that Ben is exceling. Ben loves this and maintains focus throughout the day. We also use ClassDojo, when Ben receives positive points he responds with pride in his good works. Ben also will get down on himself if he knows that he has done something wrong, sometimes becoming emotional. Because of Ben’s inability to focus consistently he misses valuable information from lessons, this is the root of his frustration academically.

I conducted a detailed study for the course of a month. Although my study started the moment I met Ben and continues throughout the school year, I recorded data consistently over the span of one month. This study will be based on the time frame from beginning of October
2017 to the beginning of November 2017. I will be breaking down each observation, interpretation/hypothesis, and academic/behavioral intervention as a timeline of events.

October 11th, 2017 @ 12:35pm

Observation: Ben stole jolly ranchers from the teacher’s desk while the class and teacher were at the drinking fountain after lunch recess.

Interpretations: Often times Ben does not receive jolly ranchers as rewards because of behavior. He wanted a jolly rancher like his classmates receive, therefore, he took one without earning it or asking for one.

Hypotheses: If Ben wants a jolly rancher but does not meet the requirements for it, then we need to find ways to reward him for more than behavior alone.

Academic/Behavioral Interventions: I had a conversation with Ben about stealing things that does not belong to him. I talked to him about how as a teacher I have trust in all of my students, that they will make good decisions and that they are open and honest with me. I told Ben that my trust in him has gone away because he stole from me rather than asking me how he could get a jolly rancher. Ben also was sent to the office to complete a refocus form. The form had to be taken home and signed by a parent.

Outcome/Reflection: There were no repeat incidents have happened. His parents continue to check in daily about his behavior.
October 18th, 2017 @ 8:35am

Observation: A SAT meeting was held with resource staff to discuss strategies to help Ben succeed academically.

Interpretations: It was discussed that Ben may not being challenged enough in class, this could be a reason why he is consistently off task. Find something he excels in and integrate that into the lessons.

Hypotheses: If Ben is challenged more and rewarded with reading a book, then Ben will be on task more often.

Academic/Behavioral Interventions: Together we agreed on challenging him more in Word Study by giving him bonus words. If he gets 3 out of 4 bonus words correct on top of getting all 8 spelling words correct he will receive a jolly rancher. Also we need to provide Ben with choices, both of which we want, this will allow him to feel like he is making the decision when really he is making a choice we really wanted in the end. We also were given a visual task board to try out. The goal is that when Ben finishes all of the tasks on the board he will be rewarded with reading.

Outcome/Reflection: We started adding 4 bonus words on the spelling tests. He is very prideful of receiving bonus words. After the pre-tests on Mondays he comes to me to figure out the correct spelling so he can study them for the post test. Ben seems to like the challenge of the bonus words. Giving him choices is still a work in progress, I am not sure at this point if it is working for us. However, we will continue to work on it throughout the year.
October 19th, 2017 @ 2pm

**Observation:** Ben used his visual task board for majority of the day.

**Interpretations:** This is used to help Ben visually see what his tasks are. On the task board he can check off each task and see what more he needs to do in order to receive an award, such as reading. This helps been stay on task during instructional time and independent work.

**Hypotheses:** If Ben can see what is expected of him and strive to reach the reward, then Ben will stay on task and succeed academically.

**Academic/Behavioral Interventions:** Visual task chart is being used when possible.

**Outcome/Reflection:** The visual task chart is hard to use throughout the day, but when it is used it does seem to work. Sometimes it can be a distraction for Ben, however, on good days he will write down the tasks himself.

November 1st, 2017 @ 10am

**Observation:** During math today, the class was given a 3-question pop quiz checking their understanding of the lessons we have learned so far in the unit. Ben was having a particularly tough time focusing on the quiz.

**Interpretations:** Ben either did not understand the material he was being tested on or he was distracted.

**Hypotheses:** If Ben cannot stay focused independently, then he may need one on one when it comes to tests and quizzes.
**Academic/Behavioral Interventions:** Have Ben in the future work one on one with teacher or volunteer during tests and quizzes. We could also try and have him take the assessment on a computer, Ben is very keen to using computers.

**November 6th, 2017 @ 11:20am**

**Observation:** Ben was off task during math and not working to his potential.

**Interpretations:** Ben did either did not know what to do or how to do it. Or he was distracted by something in the classroom.

**Hypotheses:** If Ben works independently, then Ben will be more likely to be off task.

**Academic/Behavioral Interventions:** Based on previous observations made over the span of the past couple weeks Ben needs more one on one with a teacher. Because of past observations I pulled Ben to my desk and worked with him on the assignment.

**Outcome/Reflection:** While working with Ben I noticed that he needed to be shown the page he was supposed to be working on. He also refused to start working on the problems until we could figure out the process he prefers for multiplication After Ben explained a bit we determined that he was referring to algorithms as his preferred multiplication method. Ben also could not work because of the space limitations of the math book worksheet. I was able to get scrap paper for Ben to work each problem out on. He excelled on his work once we met all of his needs that were probably distracting him when he was working independently. He explained each step to me and was excited about his work. In conclusion, Ben benefits greatly with one on one attention with a teacher.
November 7th, 2017 @ 9:40am

Observation: Ben has been off task all morning. During our social studies lesson students were asked to color code landforms directed by the teacher. Ben continued to be off task during this lesson.

Interpretations: I think because there was no example sitting right in front of him he had nothing to reference or guide him. Although there was an example being done on the board, there are many distractions between his eyes and the board.

Hypotheses: If Ben does not have an example of what is expected, then he will not attempt the task.

Academic/Behavioral Interventions: From previous experience working one-on-one with Ben I decided to have him work with me following Mr. Gjonaj’s directions together. He was color coding his landforms and I was color coding my landforms.

Outcome/Reflection: Ben was on task consistently throughout the remainder of the lesson. We worked together, he asked questions and showed off his work. Ben is very prideful when he has accomplished a task. It is something that if can be continued throughout the day he will succeed academically.

Although this case study was documented over the span of over a month, staff at Ferndale Upper Elementary are continuously working to find ways to assist Ben in his journey through school. Mr. Gjonaj the homeroom teacher for Ben has requested flexible seating for the classroom that Ben will be able to utilize. The staff meet and check in on progress and convene about strategies. I believe that Ben will receive the assistance he needs, at home and in school, to help shape him into a great citizen.
## Case Study Framework

**Student:** Benjamin Altz  
**Teacher:** Mr. Gjonaj/ Ms. Yarmuth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Interpretations</th>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Academic/Behavioral Interventions</th>
<th>Outcome/Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> 12:35-12:45pm  
Ben stole Jolly Ranchers from teacher's desk while class was at drinking fountain  
*(NOTES taken)* | Because Ben does not receive JR as reward for behavior he wanted to feel like the other students who do get JR | If Ben wants a JR but does not meet requirements for it, then we need to find ways to reward him for more than behavior alone. | Conversation was had about stealing, he was given a refocus form that was to be looked at by Parents. | No repeat incidents have happened, parents check in daily about his behavior throughout the day. |
| Oct. 18<sup>th</sup> 8:35-9:35am  
SAT Meeting with resource staff to come up with strategies to help Ben academically.  
*(NOTES taken)* | Ben may not be challenged enough in class, reason for behavior. May be ADHD, need to find ways to help him. | If Ben is challenged more and rewarded with reading a book, then Ben will be on task more often. | Together we agreed on challenging him more in Word Study by giving him bonus words for a JR. We also will start using a visual task chart. Giving him choices when giving instructions, but the choices are ultimately what we want. Use reading as a reward. | He now gets 4 bonus words on Spelling tests, he likes the challenge and his getting most of them correct. The choices we are still working on daily.  
*(WS example)* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 19th</td>
<td>2:05pm</td>
<td>Ben is trying out a visual task board.</td>
<td>The visual task chart is hard to use throughout the day, but when used it does seem to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(PICTURE taken)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1st</td>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Ben was having a hard time completing his 3 question math quiz.</td>
<td>Have Ben work one on one with teacher or volunteer during tests and quizzes. Maybe try to test on a computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 6th</td>
<td>11:20am</td>
<td>Ben was off task and not working on assigned in class work.</td>
<td>Based on previous observation made, he needs more one on one interaction with teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11:45am</td>
<td>(VIDEO taken)</td>
<td>I worked with Ben one on one. He needed to be shown the page to work on. He would not work until we could figure out the process he prefers for multiplication. After explaining it to me we determined it was algorithms. He also couldn't work because of the space limitations. I gave him blank paper to work the problems. He excelled on his work and has great understanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nov. 7th 9:40-10:20am
Ben was off task all morning, during social studies students were asked to color code landforms. Ben continued to be off task.

(PICTURE taken)

I think because there was no example right in front of him, he had no clue what the task was.

If Ben does not have an example of what is expected, then he will not attempt the task.

Because working one on one worked so well yesterday, I pulled him aside to sit with me at my work table.

Ben benefits greatly with one on one from teacher.

We colored our landform sheet together. This helped him stay on task and meet the expectations of the assignment.
When giving directions give one step at a time.
- carpet area rules
  * sit on chair in carpet area
  * or sit on carpet correctly
- word study (needs to be challenged)
  * give challenging bonus words for jolly rancher
- use reading as reward? (read 5 mins when work is completed)
- ask mom/dad what their strategies are at home
- timer for the bathroom (5 min)
- give him 2 choices = he is in charge of his choice
- use chromebook for math tests?