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**USING SELF-REGULATION TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF  
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES**

by  
**Sandra L. Niblic**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
May 5, 2010**

**Thesis Chair: S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.**

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**Dedicated to:**

**My husband John Niblic**

**&**

**My parents**

**Leslie J. & Catherine Netter**

## ABSTRACT

Sandra L. Niblic

USING SELF-REGULATION TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF  
MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIORAL DISABILITIES

2009/10

S. Jay Kuder, Ed.D.

Masters of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this investigation was to identify and analyze the use of self-regulation techniques to improve the academic skills of language arts and mathematics for students with behavioral disabilities attending middle school. Self-regulation techniques were presented in a self-contained class during presentation of reading, writing and mathematics objectives. Students monitored their participation in class activities after signing a contract of agreement. Behaviors were monitored and assessed for preparedness for class, listening to directions, staying in assigned area and completing work assignments. Self-management, self-monitoring and self-evaluation techniques were used by two subjects. Rewards were used to increase academic skills by monitoring report card grades, *Learnia* testing, school-wide Benchmark evaluations and behavior expectations during class time. Results indicate that the use of self-regulation does increase the academic outcomes in the area of reading, writing and mathematics. The data collected identifies improved performance for reading and writing for one subject in the study and both subjects in the study scored higher in mathematics ability at the end of this study. Data collected has shown improved

time on task. Results of the monitoring are discussed and implications for further study are discussed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
List of Figures	vi
List of Tables	vii
<b>CHAPTER</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	3
<b>II. Literature Review</b>	<b>4</b>
Self-Regulation for Problem Behavior	14
<b>III. Methodology</b>	<b>19</b>
Instrumentation	21
<b>IV. Findings</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>V. Discussion</b>	<b>35</b>
Implications	41
Recommendations	42
Conclusions	44
References	45

<b>Appendices</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Appendix A Self-Regulation Contract	49
Appendix B Self-Regulation Chart	50
Appendix C Self-Evaluation Form	52

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
Figure 1	Zack's Behavior Chart	28
Figure 2	Zack's Behavior Chart	29
Figure 3	James' Behavior Chart	30
Figure 4	James' Behavior Chart	31



## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
Table 1	Zack's Earned Points	32
Table 2	James' Earned Points	33
Table 3	Grades on report Cards	34
Table 4	Benchmark Assessment	34

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

This researcher proposes to identify and analyze the use of self-regulation techniques to increase academic skills in the area of language arts and mathematics for middle school students in a behavior disability class.

Middle School students with behavior disabilities are separated from peers due to ongoing outbursts and distractible behaviors during instruction. These students have experienced a lack of success and low achievement for 7 years or longer in their academic careers. All their efforts in the classroom, so far, have produced negative and unwanted results. Academic skills are weak or contain missing links in processing in the areas of reading, writing and mathematical skills. The students rely on distractible events or create distractible events so their abilities are not on display to be corrected. Peer modeling is not available for their learning experience. Skill lessons are broken down into smaller increments for processing and producing positive results. Students with behavior disabilities see the same skills presented to them repeatedly and claim that it is “boring”. These self-defensive attitudes are further interfering with the learning process.

Teachers need to provide more positive results for these students. Positive results will provide incentives to complete the process of learning skills and putting them in to practice on a daily basis. Self-regulation is the process that provides incentives and motives for the student to achieve success.

Learning is considered a skill that lasts a lifetime. As educators, we strive to teach a child how to ask questions and find answers to those questions using the world around them. Most people are like students. Adults strive for answers to questions. They may choose to return to college for further education, a new career or a higher salary to keep up with the cost of living. Students with behavioral disabilities have many questions to answer. They use the computer to entertain themselves. The computer is the tool that most students do not have a problem using. They know how to play games on X Box, Nintendo and Play Station. They can hook it up and unhook for mobility. It is a place to play games, complete puzzles and listen to music. It is also an important up to date method of learning about music groups, the newest songs and the latest gossip. Behavioral disabilities students can learn new incentives and achieve success when the motive for learning is present.

Academic success is possible for all students. Educators strive for each student to achieve success in learning. Teachers look for methods and techniques for changing student outcomes into positive accomplishments. This Thesis paper endeavors to provide research that will lead to more positive outcomes and provide academic improvement on report cards to assist student's ability to achieve success and strive for improvement. The goal is reached for a Special Education Teacher when a student returns to the regular education class with academic success. Self-regulation techniques will provide the method to provide positive motives leading to learning success.

## Purpose of Study

Research Question: Does using a self-regulation technique improve academic outcomes for behavioral disability students in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematic skills?

My hypothesis is that the use of self- regulation technique will improve language arts and mathematics skills of behavioral disability students in Middle School. I propose that self- regulation technique will lead to the development of learning skills through success and rewards for academic achievement and improved grades on report cards. Self –regulation technique is the method for developing learning as a lifelong endeavor that leads to continued success throughout life. This hypothesis is based on building positive accomplishments in the learning process which provides attainable goals for students in academic areas. The goal of self-regulation is to provide positive motives that lead to learning success.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

Research on students with emotional / behavioral disorders (EBD) indicates that disruptive behaviors in the learning environment can affect the student's ability to learn. Aggression, impulsivity, noncompliance and distractibility occur within every learning session. These traits lead to poor academic ability because they disrupt the learning environment.

One research report (Cullinan and Sabornie, 2004) indicates that adolescents with emotional disturbance (ED) between the ages of 12 to 17 years of age have a poor school behavior experience. Students with ED usually spend 60% of their day out of general education classes compared to students with learning disabilities only spend one sixth of their day out of regular education classes. Students with ED also drop out of school at the rate of 51% while only 42% actually graduate from high school. Students diagnosed with emotional disturbance exhibit five characteristics attributed to a student's poor academic educational performance. The study used 1,210 participants with 815 students identified with ED. Teachers used The Scale for Assessing Emotional Disturbance (SAED; Epstein and Cullinan, 1998) designed to measure five characteristics used in the definition of Emotional Disturbance by the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities education Act). These characteristics displayed by students include inability to learn, relationship problems, inappropriate behavior, unhappiness or depression and physical symptoms or fears. Participants were

divided into two groups: middle school 12 to 14 years of age and high school 15 to 18 years of age.

Study results indicated middle school students were ranked as having higher incidences of distractibility, inappropriate behavior in group activities, disrespectful comments to peers, as well as, teachers and defiance of authority in the classroom. Data results were compatible with previous research for students with emotional and behavior problems exhibiting minimal personal strengths or social resources to increase self esteem. Middle School students ranked higher for incidences of relationship problems than High School students. Study results did indicate that depressive symptoms and symptoms of fear did not differ within age groups of Middle School and High School students. High occurrences of maladaptive functioning for students with ED exhibited in the five characteristics used within the 22 of 26 effect sizes in the study.

A study by (Wagner, Friend, Bursack, Kutash, Duchnowski, Sumi and Epstein, 2006) provided a national perspective on the schools and programs for students with emotional disturbances using the Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study (SEELS) and the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2). This study utilized an array of educational data from students in elementary, middle and high school levels. This information included related services and supports for students with ED in varying settings of special education services: inclusive, self-contained and regular education settings. Best practice principles suggest fostering a collaborative effort including administrative

support, staff dedicated to helping every student and providing positive behavior supports (PBS). The professionals in this study utilized interventions such as a structured teaching environment, independent learning strategies, peer mediation in class-wide and reciprocal forms, and behavior-management skills to increase pro-social behaviors in the classroom. A two-stage sampling of 245 school districts in 2005 was used. Results documented the increase of expulsions, in and out-of-school suspensions and incidents of violence increased as the ED students progressed in age and grades within school districts. Another direct implication is that students with ED are educated in schools that have more than average numbers of students with disabilities that may affect their individual educational risk levels to exasperation. The authors also indicate a need for further research to name effective accommodations in the shadow educational requirements of increased testing and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) being used as indicators of school progress and proficiency.

Students with EBD need specific strategies of instruction that are not utilized in the regular education classroom (Landrum, Tankersley, Kaufmann, 2003). This study dealt with the issue of what is special about special education for EBD students? Research has informed us these students are identified late in their educational program with poor academic abilities, a multitude of behavior incidents and poor social habits that interrupt the learning environment of all children in the classroom. Interventions are necessary to promote appropriate behavior skills that will enhance the learning environment and promote positive

feedback for the school experience. Research based-practices indicate inappropriate behavior, learning problems and ineffective interpersonal relationships need special handling in the classroom. Some of these behavioral procedures needed in the classroom include: cues or specific antecedents that prepare the learner for what is coming and consequences for the behavior that follows the directive or activity being applied in the classroom. Instructional practices need to alter antecedents for instruction and altering consequences for the resulting behavior. Applying precision requests that include consequences and delivering directives with momentum towards seeking positive outcomes before requesting what the student will most likely refuse to complete. Positive teacher responses whether praise or attention lead students toward repeating that behavior again and reducing inappropriate responses from interactions. Academic problems are dealt with using direct instruction throughout the day in small groups while utilizing peer tutoring strategies to keep student involved and interested in academic activities. A teacher using direct instruction can structure, sequence, and pace instruction while providing frequent corrective feedback in the form of positive behavior support (PBS). PBS provides increased occurrences for practice and improved academic skill for students with EBD. This study indicated the need to apply some of these greater resources must be applied to the education of EBD students to promote individual success for these students. It was further suggested to employ new technology that is available to students to



promote positive academic results and change the future of our students with EBD.

Increasing effective praise (Sutherland, Copeland and Wehby, 2001) is recommended for improving appropriate class behavior for task engagement. This study used peer coaching and self-evaluation as methods for assessing the need of praise for students with EBD. During an observation and feedback intervention, the on-task behavior of students was measured to increase approximately 36% when the teacher used behavior-specific praise in fifteen minute sessions of instruction. This research suggests that praise should be delivered immediately after the target behavior with quality and frequency to ensure repetition of desired behavior responses. Self-evaluation for the teacher and students will provide a source of reflection and documented incidences of behavior that are effective within a structured classroom environment.

A study was conducted to identify the effect of behavior-specific praise on the on-task behavior of students with EBD (Sutherland, Wehby and Copeland, 2000). The participants were two girls and four boys ranging in age from 10 to 11 years at the beginning of the study. The setting for their education was a self-contained class for students with EBD. One male teacher with three years teaching experience was utilized as the instructor to implement the job of providing behavior specific praise and non-behavior specific praise to students. Evidence was collected using Interobserver Agreement of the teacher providing both types of praise as needed in the learning environment to monitor on-task

behavior for the purpose of comparing outcomes. Comparisons were made with the use of each type of praise and identified that behavior specific praise resulted in the highest amount of on-task behavior for students in the class. The study also used a withdrawal period of the behavior-specific praise and reintroduced the intervention to increase on-task behavior of students once again. The baseline data of on-task behavior was 48.7 on average. Using behavior specific praise increased on-task behavior to a mean of 85.6 which decreased to the mean of 62.2 during withdrawal of praise. The study concluded the increase of on-task increased to an average of 83.3 during the reintroduction of behavior-specific phase. The results of this study indicate a need to provide in-service training to teachers of EBD students and behavioral intervention strategies to use in class with students having EBD. Praise is a naturalistic, nonintrusive strategy to increase on-task behavior of students with EBD in this study.

Behavior Modification is used for eliminating disruptive behavior in the learning environment to increase academic functioning. In an attempt to increase academic ability, students with EBD need to increase time on-task, improve interpersonal relationships and motivate students to increase personal accuracy of skills and social interactions. Utilizing the research –based recommendations, students’ abilities to increase learning through the use of praise as presented will increase time on task and improve assessment results of academic ability.

A study conducted by Sutherland, Wehby and Yoder (2002) used observation and inter-observer agreement estimates to study 20 self-contained

classrooms of students with EBD. The rate of opportunities to respond to academic requests (OTR) was compared to the number of praise comments received by students from the teacher. This research concluded that higher rates of on task behavior increased with higher rates of OTR by the classroom teacher. The results indicate a correlation between teacher praise and OTR to improve classroom behavior for academic learning.

Another study conducted by Sutherland, Alder and Gunter examined the increased rate of opportunities to respond (OTR) in the EBD setting (2003). Using direct observation and frequency count of interactions for 9 subjects, this research study concluded that increased opportunities to respond along with teacher praise were effective to increase time on task and rate of correct responses received, as well as, reduce disruptive behavior in the classroom.

In this study the primary observer and second observer collected data for OTR, Teacher praise, recorded correct responses and disruptive behavior. The inter-observer agreement behaviors were calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements and then multiplied by 100 for each session. The mean agreement results supported the suggested increase OTR promotes an increase for on task behavior and the number of correct responses received by the teacher. This then resulted in an increase of teacher praise and the decline of disruptive behavior in the classroom. The learning environment was more productive to increase academic ability.

A study conducted by Killu, Weber, Derby and Barretto (2006) examined practices of State education agencies, in regard to adhering to the standards on functional behavior assessment required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. Positive behavioral supports were expected to be addressed in the Functional Behavioral Assessments of students with disabilities. This study used 49 out of 50 State Education Agencies through computer access and telephone calls to submit documentation of their standard practice for Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) for the students in their district. Documentation was also collected for the appropriate and most effective Behavior Intervention plans (BIP) used in their agencies. The practices of direct observation, measurement of skills, recording of results and use of controlled procedures are considered the effective strategies to increase academic ability and deal with problem behavior in the classroom as a proactive strategy to increase academic skills in the classroom. Results indicate that state agencies only place a moderate effort on developing FBA's and BIP's. The use of FBA and BIP are reactive plans utilized when a student demonstrates poor behavior interactions and interrupts the learning process. Nine of the forty states reporting did not have relevant resources to submit to the study. Thirty- one states could provide resources for about half of the twenty-five components in the study. Twenty states reported resources on some of the components. Twenty- three states provided resource information on crisis management used in their state. The

conclusion inferred from this study claims that even with federal regulations, school district personnel design and execute BIPs/ PBSPs in their own manner.

Research in the 1990's indicates the need for a review of intervention practices for EBD students. Lane, Baryton-Arwood, Nelson and Wehby, 2008, have indicated that behavior problems usually affect the attendance of students in the learning environment due to detentions or time out efforts to change disruptive behaviors in the classroom. Even though small group instruction is utilized, students need to be present and involved to improve academic skills through peer involvement and interaction. This study utilized the *Social Skills Rating System* and *Walker-McConnell Scale of Social Competence and School Adjustment* to assess internalizing and externalizing behaviors of students. Academic performance levels were assessed using the *Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement* to indicate academic levels of achievement. Results indicate that students with EBD project lower than average academic, social and behavioral skills in the school environment. This study used a causal- comparative design of academic, social and behavioral variables accompanied by behavioral and social characteristics to predict academic performance. These results indicate the need for improving school adjustment through the use of intervention efforts to increase academic ability. Conclusions from this study include below average social skills and adjustment skills within the school environment. The secondary age students show a significantly higher rate of absenteeism. This study indicates

that school adjustment may predict reading and writing performance within the school environment indicating a need for intervention efforts in this area.

Mooney, Epstein, Reid and Nelson (2003) reviewed research to examine the status and trends of interventions designed to improve academic functioning through a database design to review about 470,000 students receiving special education and related services with the classification of emotional and behavior disability in 2003. This particular design used students between the ages of 5 and 21 years through the years of 1975 to 2002. These students received services in a self-contained classroom. Interobserver agreement was the scientific method used at 95% reporting and social validity reporting. The key link in research listed academic underachievement as the primary characteristic of students with emotional disorders. Single subject research accounts for 80% of research and dependent measures used standardized instruments, curricular measures, grades, school behavior, on- task performance and observable social interactions. This research identified treatment types as: child-mediated interventions, teacher mediated interventions and peer- mediated interventions. Child mediated treatment ranks self-management as a strategy of instruction as most effective to reverse underachievement. The teacher-mediated interventions include choice making opportunities and praise as an effective intervention. This study found problems with research design, reporting methods, measurement and intervention strategies in the analysis of treatment for students with EBD. Researchers suggest

further studies into broader issues such as violence and bullying by students with EBD.

### Self-regulation for Problem Behavior

Students with emotional behavioral disorder display characteristics that most teachers find problematic to academic achievement. These characteristics include the inability to achieve intellectual goals, maintain interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers, develop inappropriate behaviors or feelings, develop physical symptoms or fears with school problems and have a pervasive mood of depression. Self- management techniques can replace a student's problematic behavior into a more desirable response (Patton, Jolivette and Ramsey, 2006). This method has the effect of transferring responsibility of behavior to the student.

Two case studies followed a five step procedure for implementing a self-regulation plan including self- monitoring, self- evaluation and self- reinforcement to achieve behavior change. This study used a third grade boy and a tenth grade girl to follow the self- regulation steps to change specifically selected behaviors. Each individual student achieved success over time with prolonged usage of on- task behavior while being reinforced with intrinsic values to guarantee continued efforts to stay on-task and achieve success. This strategy has the potential to increase appropriate behavior and decrease aggressive behavior and anti-social behaviors that disrupted learning. The use of constant

feedback engages the student to compare what he or she is doing with what he or she should be doing to increase appropriate behavior. The student needs to take ownership of their behavior to create change and achieve success in learning.

Reid, Trout and Schwartz, 2005, researched self-regulation interventions for students with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). This research reviewed the use of self-monitoring, self-monitoring plus reinforcement, self-reinforcement and self-management of skills learned and assessed. The results indicated potential advantages for students to include: acceptance of a self-regulated behavior for learning, improvements in on task behavior and academic productivity, and improved behavioral attitudes to stay on task and reduce difficulties while completing tasks. The researchers examined sixteen studies of fifty-one participants using self-monitoring, self-monitoring plus reinforcement and self-reinforcement. The results show that this intervention is successful for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Teaching motivation to achieve success (Martin, Mithaug, Cox, Peterson, Van Dycke and Cash, 2003) is presented as sound instructional practice for students to increase achievement. This study utilized single subjects of eight boys aged nine to ten years old. Academic areas used in this study included Reading, Math, Language Arts. This study utilized the Adaptability Instructional Model that used four parts: decision making for abilities, needs and goals for individuals; planned performance based on self-monitoring strategies; self-evaluation of performance results against expectations in planning; and making adjustments to



performance by planning strategies to set new goals. These subjects have been identified as having specific disruptive behaviors that prevented academic achievement. Results found students with EBD are in need of goal attainment training to increase time on task to obtain specific skills and increase academic achievement. The most significant finding is that self-regulation/ self-determination is a process of learning that makes adjustments to individual actions as learning takes place in the classroom. Self-regulation uses adaptable instructional models to make decisions that identify interests, abilities, needs and goals to achieve academic success. A student's performance is based on planning skills and following through with the design. Students monitor and compare performance with each assessment of tasks. Learning is adjusting actions to achieve preset goals and experience success. This process of learning is considered a methodology for a lifetime of learning throughout life.

Smith and Sugai (2000) conducted a single-subject study on the use of Functional Behavior Assessment based on self management strategy to improve the academic ability and social performance of a seventh grade male. The single subject was thirteen years old attending class in a self-contained setting due to multiple incidences of talking out, defiance and class room distractions that interrupted instructional time. This study used Interobserver agreement to complete a Functional Behavior Assessment that created a coded set of behaviors that were assessed as most serious to the individuals learning environment. The subject was given a self-management card to view as needed during each class

period to assist him in self- monitoring his behavior and time on task for each class period. Using teacher observation and self- monitoring by student each identified off task behavior had a plan of action and praise toward the student for completing the plan as arranged. Results identified that on- task behavior increased and ‘talk-outs’ decreased after the use of self- regulation techniques for this seventh grade boy. The Functional Behavior Assessment identified specific details of disruptive behavior that was identified and changed through direct self- management skills used by the student as well as teacher praise for achieving each goal each class period. Academic ability had a chance to improve when the distractions of talk- outs was removed from the classroom environment.

In conclusion from the research collected for teaching techniques that provide the best strategies to instruct students with Emotional/ Behavior Disabilities, the self-regulation strategy appears to hold positive potential for improving academic skills. Using the studies collected and making comparisons, the results indicate the use of student contracts, positive behavior support and providing behavior specific praise to students will lead to improved academic ability and more consistent on-task achievement of students to reach success. Self evaluation involves the student in their own educational planning building cognitive and metacognitive skills for a life time learning ability for each student. Self –regulation strategies must include the basis of goals that are achieved through a planned set of actions and self-monitor these actions as successful or not working to achieve goal. The student monitors and makes changes to plan of

action to better achieve original goal set for academic ability. The student is responsible for rating each plan, making changes and achieving each goal set by the teacher. Most importantly the student has an opportunity to respond with a reward self-administered when success is achieved. Individual personalities and needs are accounted for in the building of skills and strategies that work for the individual to achieve success by improving academic ability through the use of cognitive strategies. Behaviors affect each student in the in a different way. Self-regulation is a method that has evidence of success to improve academic ability and build cognitive learning strategies that a student carries throughout his or her lifetime.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

This research evaluates the effectiveness of using self-regulation to improve academic outcomes for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities in areas of mathematics, reading and writing skills in a self-contained middle school classroom. The subjects participating in this study were two seventh grade males between the ages of 13 and 14 years in a self-contained class for students with behavior disorders. These subjects were identified as having emotional and behavior disabilities in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The two males were African American and lived in the suburbs with middle class socioeconomic living standards. The two subjects exhibited noncompliant, oppositional behaviors, and low academic achievement with approximately five to seven in-school and out-of -school suspensions for fighting, theft and wandering the school hallways in place of attending class.

Subject one, Zack, was classified as having specific learning disability with the diagnosis of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) but was not receiving medication for this medical condition. Continued acting out behaviors and noncompliance of school and classroom rules caused the referral and classification for needing a behavior disorder class setting for learning. He lives with his mother, step-father and three siblings. He received counseling twice a month and exhibits inappropriate attention seeking behaviors in class and home.

Subject two, James, was classified emotionally disturbed due to recurrent acting out behaviors in the classroom that interfere with learning in the classroom setting. He lives with extended family in his grandparents' home in the district. His mother lives in another town with two younger siblings.

The setting for this research was a self-contained class in a suburban middle school located in the suburbs of the northeast section of the United States. There was one certified special education teacher and one teacher's aide in the class for all academic subjects.

Self-management techniques were taught to the two subjects in an effort to transform current non-compliant behavior into more productive behavior that increases time on task and leads to improved academic assessments through testing and participation in class. Academic ability was assessed through report card grades, benchmarks and a computer software assessment program called *Learnia*. Report card grades reflect reading and writing assessment in one unit called language arts. Benchmark tests also consolidate reading and writing skills into one language arts category. This assessment tool was generated by the school district to group students and assign placement into classrooms. *Learnia* computer program assesses language arts and mathematics skills of the students as it relates to state standards for assessing skills and knowledge.

## Instrumentation

In the first step, the subjects read and signed a contract between the teacher and student to work towards improvement of skills in the area of mathematics, reading and writing. The contract required each subject to complete five statements with a 'yes' or 'no' response. Two statements were an agreement to achieve better grades in math and language arts class. The other three statements were an agreement to improve behavior, earn weekly rewards and learn self-management techniques to improve grades. Rewards were given on Friday of every week or Thursday if school was closed on Friday. Tangible rewards were pens, lead pencils, highlighters and notebooks. Intangible rewards were sitting with a friend, computer time and game day for group games (monopoly, checkers, ping pong, Rummy-O)

Four specific classroom behaviors were identified and explained as essential to creating a positive learning environment in the classroom. Subjects discussed and wrote four behaviors that enhance the learning process in a group discussion. These four behaviors were listed on the self-regulation chart for each individual to self-regulate progress each day. These behaviors were: be prepared and start assignment; listen to teacher directions; stay in assigned area; and complete assignment. Each subject's behavior was monitored through the use of a self-regulation chart by the teacher and student. Specific tasks were assigned to the students and written on a self-regulation chart. Each subject completed each

task within a given time frame and monitored progress as ‘attempted’ or ‘completed’ for each subject area: mathematics, reading and writing.

The second step involved practicing the process of self-monitoring for mathematics, reading and writing. Each subject completed listed activities on their chart and self-evaluated whether the task was ‘attempted’ or ‘completed’ as assigned on a daily basis. The order of the tasks completed were mathematics, reading and writing for each day, Monday through Friday. Individual subjects also self-evaluated the completion of the four specified behaviors as completed ‘yes’ or not completed “no”. Subjects made a check mark for each behavior completed in that subject area class time. At the end of the each class period, the subject used self-management to evaluate progress for the day. Five points were awarded for attempted but not completed assignments or tasks and ten points were awarded for successful completion of assignment or task. Check marks for appropriate behavior were tallied. At the end of five days within one week, each subject self-assessed their progress by computing score points earned. Each check mark was worth one point. A tally of three points for each behavior accumulated a perfect score. The accumulation of twelve points a day assessed into a perfect score. By the end of one week, the accumulation of 15 points for behavior was the highest score possible. Calculating into percentages, subjects were working towards accumulating 75% of appropriate behavior points which were 9 points per behavior. On Friday, all charts for the week were tallied for on-task behavior. Rewards were given for accumulated points representing

exhibition of appropriate behavior in class. Tangible and intangible rewards were given for performing appropriate behavior in class.

The third step required in self- management was readjusting behavior actions in class to earn more points and stay on-task. On the bottom of the chart each subject expressed a method or change in behavior that would increase academic performance in class. Subjects were given the opportunity to construct a plan for improving behavior in the class. A subject's progress was dependent on planning to meet behavior requirements and earn all points being given for each behavior listed on the chart. Constructing a plan of action increased the possibility for change and earning all the points available for a reward.



## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

The data collected during the weeks of January 11 through March 26 indicate the progress of the subjects using self-regulation techniques to monitor their learning program and improve academic results over this time period. Data was collected on two subjects for the term of eleven weeks.

Figure 1 diagrams subject Zack's performance for being prepared for class and listening to teacher's directions during this time period. In January the data for the first two days of self-regulation indicated a lower performance in listening ranked as less than 60 out of 100 points in comparison to being prepared for class which indicates more than 60 out of 100 points for performance. By March 26, results from the last two days indicated a performance of above 80 out of 100 points for being prepared and above 80 out of 100 for listening to teacher instruction. Figure 2 diagrams subject Zack's performance for staying in assigned area and completing work assignments within given time period. In January, the results from the first two days indicated a performance of 75 to 100 points for staying in area. Data gathered in January the last two days for completing work indicated a below 40 points out of 100 for performance. In March, the data indicated for the last two days of 11 weeks that performance to stay in assigned area ranked 75 to 100 performance points. The data of performance for

completing work ranked 58 to 83 points out of 100 for the last two days of assessment.

Table 1 represents the total performance points for all four questions in this study and their points earned while demonstrating self-regulation strategies to improve academic performance. Zack's data indicated his time away from the classroom due to out-of-school suspension (OSS) and absences (AB) during this time period. Zack was not present in school for week January 25 through January 29 of 2009. He was also not present during March 8 through March 12 in 2010.

Table 3 summarizes report card grades for marking periods one, two and three of the 2009- 2010 academic school year. Language Arts Literacy is graded as one academic area including reading and writing skills. Zack's academic performance in Language Arts Literacy scored a 58% in the first marking period during September to November. The second marking period score indicated 55% academic performance and third marking period indicated a 55% performance on skills. Zack's academic performance of Mathematics scored 55% accuracy in the first marking period. The second marking period performance increased to 82% on his report card. The third marking period performance in mathematics scored 68% accuracy on skills.

Benchmark assessments listed in Table 4 were used in the district to indicate performance in mathematics using school wide data and curriculum to

assess student progress during the year. Subject Zack's assessment indicated a score of 5% in September and a score of 9% in January.

The results of a computer program called *Learnia* that assesses the Language Arts Literacy of reading and writing as evaluated by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge state program of New Jersey. This district utilizes the program as a form of assessment to drive teaching standards. Zack's performance in the fall indicated 25% accuracy for reading and writing performance levels. The spring testing was postponed until May of 2010 and therefore unavailable for this thesis.

Figure 3 indicated the performance of subject James' for being prepared for class as between 75 to 83 points out of 100 for the first two days of self-regulation implementation. In March data indicated a performance of 67 to 83 points out of 100 for being prepared for class. Data for James' progress indicated 67 to 75 points out of 100 for listening to teacher directions the first two weeks of January. The final two weeks in March indicated the same progress as 67 to 75 points for listening to teacher directions.

Figure 4 data ranks staying in assigned area and completing work within time period for James. James performance levels for staying in assigned area were indicated as 75 to 91 points out of 100 for the first two weeks of self-regulation. In March the levels indicated were 83 to 100 out of 100 points for staying in assigned area to work. James' performance results indicated 67 points for the first two days of self-regulation in January. In March, James scored a

perfect 100 points for completing work within given time periods the last two days of the term.

Table 2 in the Appendix diagrams the overall performance of James for the eleven weeks of the study. James was not present for two weeks of the program due to out-of-school suspension and absences for the weeks of February 1 –5 and February 16 – 19 in 2010.

Report card grades were recorded on Table 3 in the Appendix. Language Arts Literacy includes reading and writing skills for students. James scored a Language Arts Literacy grade of 55% the first marking period in November. The second marking period grade was 71% in February and the third score was 83% in April. Mathematics grades were 55% for the first marking period in November, 78% the second marking period in February and 75% the third marking period in April.

Benchmark One results indicated in Table 4 show a 24% accuracy for mathematics in October 2009 and 26% accuracy in March of 2010 for James. These results are in comparison to 100 % being a perfect score.

The results of a computer program called *Learnia* that assesses the Language Arts Literacy of reading and writing as evaluated by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge state program of New Jersey. This district utilizes the program as a form of assessment to drive teaching standards. James assessed at 38% in reading and writing in the fall. The spring assessment is scheduled for May 2010. Results were not available for this thesis.

Figure 1:

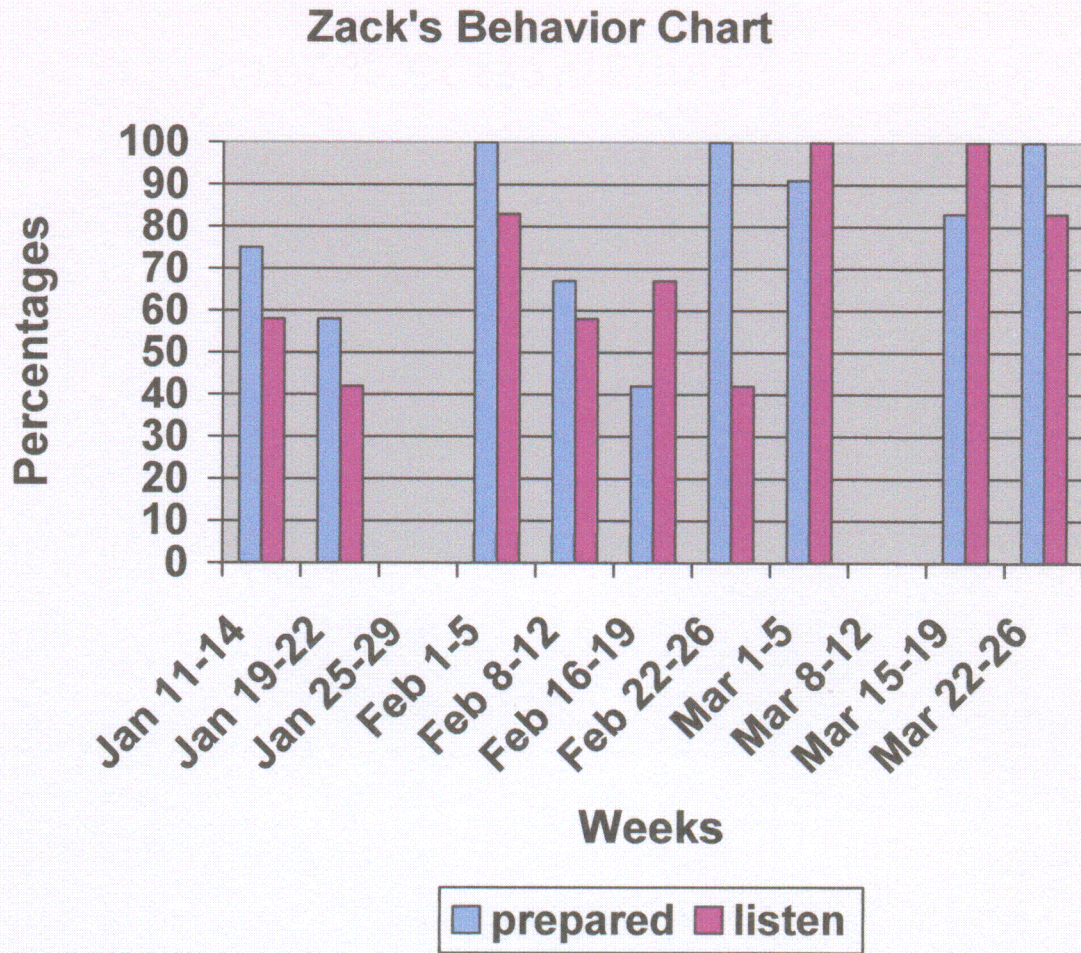


Figure 2:

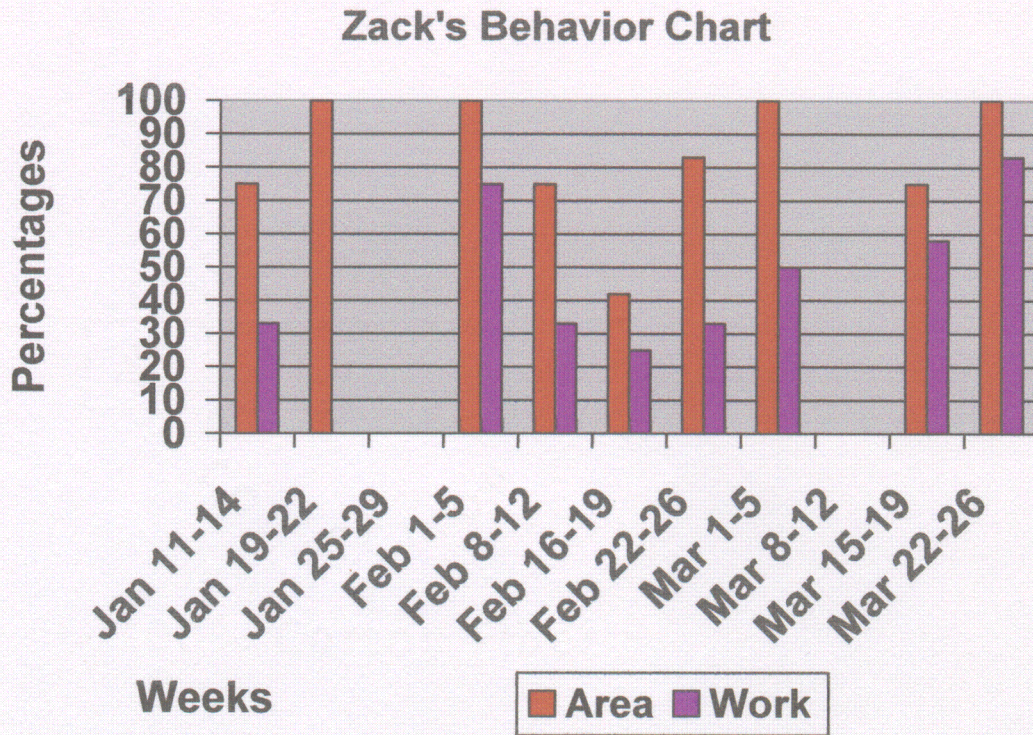


Figure 3:

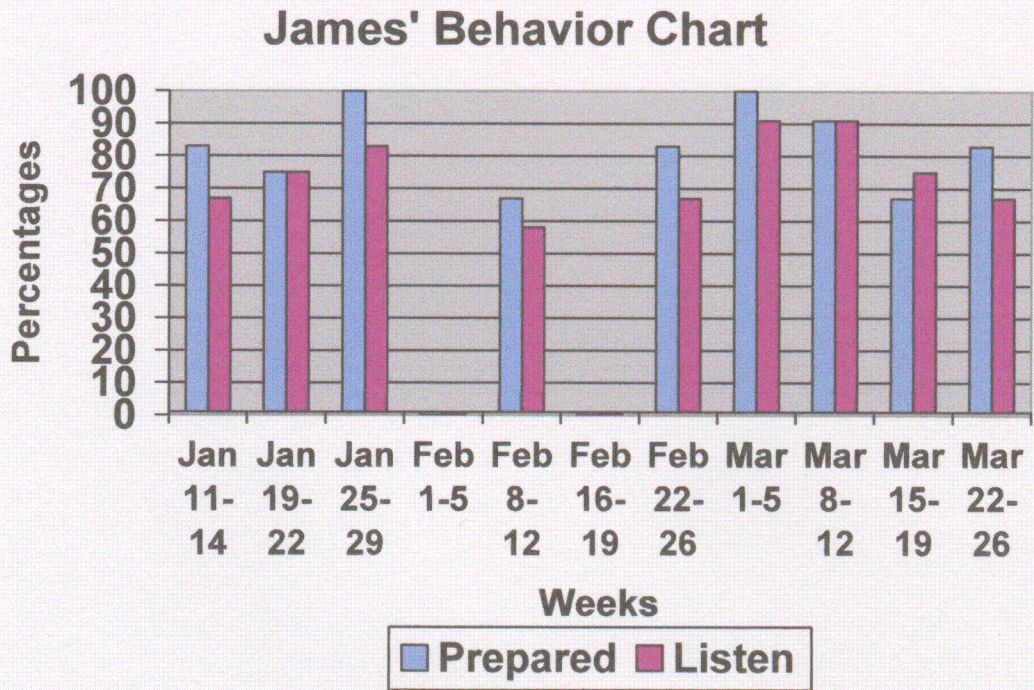


Figure 4:

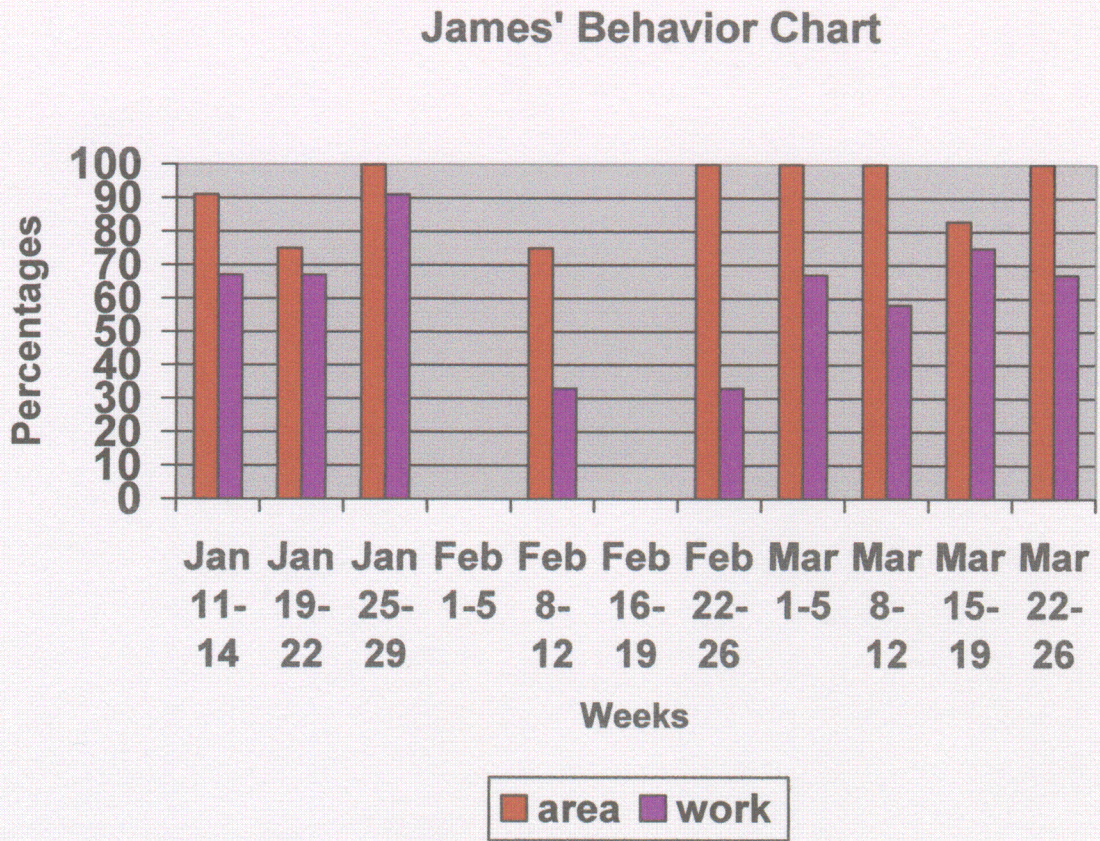




Table 1: This chart presents Zack's earned points on self-evaluation.

Week	Prepared	Listen	Area	Work
Jan 11-14	75%	58%	75%	33%
Jan 19-22	58%	42%	100%	0
Jan 25-29	OSS/AB	OSS/AB	OSS/AB	OSS/AB
Feb 1- 5	100%	83%	100%	75%
Feb 8- 12	67%	58%	75%	33%
Feb 16-19	42%	67%	42%	25%
Feb 22-26	100%	42%	83%	33%
Mar 1-5	91%	100%	100%	50%
Mar 8-12	OSS	OSS	OSS/AB	OSS/AB
Mar 15-19	83%	100%	75%	58%
Mar 22-26	100%	83%	100%	83%

OSS = out-of-school suspension. AB = absent from school.

Table 2: This chart presents James' earned points on self-evaluation.

Week	Prepared	Listen	Area	Work
Jan 11-14	83%	67%	91%	67%
Jan 19-22	75%	75%	75%	67%
Jan 25-29	100%	83%	100%	91%
Feb 1- 5	OSS/AB	OSS/ AB	OSS/AB	OSS/AB
Feb 8- 12	67%	58%	75%	33%
Feb 16-19	OSS	OSS	OSS/AB	OSS/AB
Feb 22-26	83%	67%	100%	33%
Mar 1- 5	100%	91%	100%	67%
Mar 8- 12	91%	91%	100%	58%
Mar 15-19	67%	75%	83%	75%
Mar 22-26	83%	67%	100%	67%

OSS = out-of-school suspension.

AB = absent from school.

Table 3: Grades recorded on report card for marking periods one, two and three.

Student	Marking Period 1 Sept-Nov		Marking Period 2 Nov- Feb		Marking Period 3 Feb- Apr	
	L	M	L	M	L	M
	A		A	M	A	M
Zack	58	55	55	82	55	6 8
James	55	55	71	78	83	7 5

LAL = Language Arts Literacy

M = Math

Table 4: Benchmark Assessment

Student	Benchmark	
	1	2
Zack	5%	9%
James	24%	26%

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

This study examined whether the use of self-regulation techniques for improving academic outcomes with behavioral disability students in the middle school level could be a successful method for improving academic learning of skills in the classroom. The skills reviewed involved language arts and mathematics ability in middle school. Self-regulation techniques provided expectations for learning appropriate behavioral skills through the use of rewards and self-monitoring strategies by the students in the study. Students who have experienced success also experienced higher academic achievement as shown through report card grades and Benchmark assessments.

Self-regulation techniques involved the student evaluating their own behavior and managing behavior for being prepared and starting class, listening to teacher directions, staying in assigned area and completing work assignment. The subjects used a behavior chart to evaluate progress and initiate change as needed to improve academic performance. Performance levels were evaluated by accumulated points in each of three class periods per day. The areas of reading, writing and mathematics were the targeted academic subjects chosen in this study.

The results from this study identified areas of improvement in academic ability for only one of the two subjects in the area of reading and writing. The mathematics analysis showed some improvement for both subjects. The overall advance is minimal without showing substantial growth in skill level on the report

cards. The scores indicated growth for reading and writing as 13% for only one subject while the other subject dropped in proficiency by 3%. Mathematic assessment of skills indicated an improvement by 28% and 20% respectively for both participants. Data identifies improvement shown and indicate that use of self- regulation had an effect on the students' participation in class activities. The data from the behavior charts showed substantial changes in behavior from one day to the next. Out-of-school suspensions were a deterrent to each subject's participation in the self-regulation program. The time away from the classroom prevented the continued support of rewards and positive influences to build stronger learning behaviors. The incidents of unusual snow fall closed the school during the time of using self-regulation techniques.

Data indicated completing work was the most difficult behavior to overcome using self-regulation. Data results identified only two weeks of the study achieved the needed percentage of 75% accuracy or above for each of the four behaviors used in the study. These scores occurred during the week that one subject was absent and instruction occurred on a one-to-one basis with teacher which greatly influenced the improved behavior results for each subject.

The data results showed increased academic achievement in math for both subjects. Data results for reading and writing showed increased academic ability for one of the two subjects in the study. The levels assessed in the last few weeks were below proficiency standards for reading, writing and math as indicated by report card grades. The number of weeks providing self-regulation techniques

calculated into 9 weeks of data collection when each subject missed two weeks of self-monitoring and self-assessment of own behaviors during the learning process of reading, writing and mathematics.

A research report by Cullinan and Sabornie (2004) indicated students with emotional disturbance (ED) exhibit poor school behavior which creates a poor school experience. This report identified that 60% of the day was spent out of regular education classes for students with ED. The subjects in this research report spent five periods out of eight in the self-contained class limiting their contact with peers and contributing to a poor school behavior experience. In research by Epstein and Cullinan (1998), they measured five characteristics used to define ED. These characteristics included inappropriate behavior such as disrespectful comments to peers and defiance of authority. These particular reasons applied to the subjects in this research as it led to the in-school-suspension of each subject during their time in an inclusive class with age appropriate peers. This research also identified Middle School students ranking a higher number of incidences of inappropriate behavior and distractibility than High School students.

The subjects of this thesis exhibited inappropriate behavior and defiance of authority. Therefore, both subjects received in-school-suspensions for incidences in inclusive classes in the regular education class. Absences may have deterred the subjects from achieving success in class.

Research conducted by Wagner, Friend, Bursack, Kutash, Duchnowski, Sumi and Epstein (2006) used a national perspective on the schools and programs with ED to identify best-practice principles for special education settings. Suggested interventions were structured teaching environment, independent learning strategies and behavior management skills as essential to increase social interactions in the classroom. Further research was suggested to identify effective accommodations to increase adequate yearly progress for school districts.

The procedures within this study were designed to document and collect data to show this progress through the data of report card grades and benchmark assessments. Each subject utilized behavior management strategies to increase social interactions.

Research provided by Landum, Tankersley and Kaufmann (2003) suggested the use of research based-practices on behavioral procedures to reduce the inappropriate behavior and ineffective interpersonal relationships within the classroom. Positive teacher responses were recommended to lead students to repeating a particular behavior again. Direct instruction in small groups was the preferred instructional strategy for use with Ed students. Researchers, Sutherland, Wehby and Yoder (2002), found there is a correlation between teacher praise and opportunities to respond (OTR) within each class lesson to improve academic learning. Sutherland, Alder and Gunter examined the increased rate of opportunities to respond using nine students. Their collection of data supported that OTR increased time on task and the amount of correct responses received

from the students. The added benefits were that teacher praise increased and a productive learning environment developed.

The current study provided opportunities to respond and provided positive feedback daily. Behavior charts and grades indicate use and feedback of provided positive reinforcement. Utilizing only subjects provided less data to indicate progress in the academic area of reading, writing and math.

Mooney, Epstein, Reid and Nelson (2003) examined the status of interventions to improve academic performance using 470,000 students with ED. The identified treatments were child-mediated interventions, teacher mediated interventions and peer-mediated interventions. Teacher-mediated interventions provided choice-making opportunities and teacher given praise. This study reported limitations with measuring the use of these suggested interventions. This thesis study recorded data to increase academic ability using some of these interventions. The child mediated interventions were identified in the readjustment portion on their behavior chart. Peer mediated interventions were not used in the process of this thesis.

Researchers, Patton, Jolivette and Ramsey (2006), described two case studies utilizing self-regulation strategies to create behavior change using one student in each case study. This strategy using self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-reinforcement achieved the specific behavior change used in the process of self-regulation. The use of constant feedback helped the students take ownership of their behavior and created change to specified behavior. Reid,



Trout and Schwartz (2005) utilized self-regulation interventions with Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder students to improve behavior and academic productivity. Researcher examined sixteen studies using fifty-one students to review use of Self- monitoring, Self-monitoring plus reinforcement and self-reinforcement. Results were positive for changing behaviors and increasing academic productivity for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

This current study did not utilize individual behaviors for change. The process of this thesis involved developing positive learning behaviors to achieve success with increased academic performance.

Mithaug, Cox, Paterson, Van Dycke and Cash (2003) utilized the Adaptability Instructional Model to increase the academic ability of eight males aged nine to ten years old in language arts and math. This model included using decision making by the student for needs and goals, planning performance based on self-monitoring, self-evaluation of performance, self-evaluation of performance in comparison to expectations and making adjustments to performance by planning strategies. This research identified students with emotional behavioral disorders as needing goal attainment training to increase academic achievement.

The thesis identified four specific goals named behaviors that lead to increased learning and positive rewards through achievement. The purpose of this study tried to build strategies using the self-regulation process for measuring performance.

Smith and Sugai (2000) used a single subject study on a thirteen year old male in seventh grade. Using Functional Behavior Assessment, specified behaviors were identified and coded for the self-management strategy. The subject attended a self-contained class due to acting out behaviors. The specified behaviors were changed using self-management skills and teacher praise increased for each goal achieved. This research identified success with improved academic ability when distractions and acting out behaviors were reduced. This study did not provide data on the academic progress made during the study, but focused on behavior management through self-management.

This thesis did not utilize a Functional Behavior Assessment for the two subjects in the study. The measurement of academic performance and achievement of self-monitoring goals were the priority.

### Implications

This study verifies the use of self-regulation as a method of improving academic performance in mathematics, reading and writing. The best practice principles are important for the classroom teacher to structure environment and independent learning strategies to maximize academic performance levels. Self-regulation techniques are successful for behavior management and increasing social behavior in a positive proactive manner. Teachers worked to reduce disruptive behavior and encourage positive responses that build on-task behavior and allow learning to flourish. Self-monitoring, self-reinforcement and self-management provide methods to keep track of performance levels that give the

student reasons for making adjustments to improve the results. Increasing positive behavior supports leads the way for a student to take ownership of behavior and create change to achieve success.

Teachers of EBD students strive to provide behavior specific praise to students to increase on-task behavior. The more on-task a student performs the more academic growth in performance will be assessed. The student becomes a participant in learning process that leads to increased academic growth. EBD students usually see school as an unsuccessful experience due to consequences from inappropriate behavior. Most districts at the middle school level have a behavior code that list consequences for specific inappropriate behaviors. EBD students especially in middle school express themselves using disrespectful comments with peers and adults. Outbursts showing disrespect are inappropriate behaviors that distract from learning in the classroom. The goal in education is to turn the behavior into on-task involvement and increase academic functioning in positive successful experience for all students.

### Recommendations

Further studies using self-regulation for middle school students in the beginning of the school year with a larger group are recommended. A wider range of data would support the influence of self-regulation to improve academic ability of students with ED.

The effects of out-of-school suspensions and school closings due to weather interrupted the process and repetition of self-evaluation techniques in the classroom. A longer time period or starting self-regulation in October would create a more structured influence of monitoring, managing and adjusting behaviors to provide a more positive outcome with substantial data statistics. The school days are not usually affected by weather standards and school closings in the fall months.

Comparing two different age groups or two separate classrooms would provide comparable data as evidence of improvement and use of self-regulation techniques. Larger groups provide more positive participation and competitive spirit to influence others to strive for higher academic goals. A competitive spirit lends itself to higher expectations for specified behavior changes and identified adjustments to increase academic levels. Rewards are more influential with more students working to attain the same goal.

The use of individual achievement tests and Functional Behavior Assessments would provide valuable data to record. Most districts have personnel that design and execute behavior intervention plans and positive behavioral support Plan. Skill levels could be compared for differences and increases in skill levels at end of study. Data would measure specific skills to compare percentages and verify increased academic achievement level. Data from skill assessment must be used to show actual increases in skill levels.

## Conclusions

In conclusion from the research collected for teaching techniques that provide the best strategies to instruct students with Emotional/Behavior Disabilities, the self regulation strategy appears to hold the most positive potential for improving academic skills. The results from previous studies indicate the use of contracts, positive behavior support and providing behavior specific praise to students will lead to improved academic ability and more consistent on-task achievement to reach success. Self evaluation involves the student in their own educational planning to build cognitive and metacognitive skills for a life time of learning ability for each student. Self-regulation strategies must include the basis of goals that are achieved through a planned set of actions and self monitor these actions as successful or not working to potential. The student is responsible for rating each plan and making changes to the plan of action to better achieve original goal. The responsibility for rating each plan, making adjustments and achieving goals set by teacher is the responsibility of the student. Most importantly the student has an opportunity to respond with a self-administered reward when success is achieved. Individual personalities and needs are taken into account when skills and strategies are chosen. The goal is to achieve success by increasing academic performance. Self-regulation techniques provide evidence of success to adjust behaviors to increase time on-task and increase academic performance.

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Appendix A

**Self Regulation Contract**

Circle your answer to each statement below.

- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I think I need to get better grades in Math.....        | Yes | No |
| 2. I think I need to get better grades in Language Arts... | Yes | No |
| 3. I want to have better behavior in class.....            | Yes | No |
| 4. I want to earn more rewards weekly.....                 | Yes | No |
| 5. I want to learn the self-management plan.....           | Yes | No |

If you circled 'No' to any statement, write one sentence telling why.

---

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I agree that I want to try the self-management plan.

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B

Self- regulation:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Attempted all assignments = 5 points

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed all assignments = 10 points

Points = earned points

Assignments	attempted	completed	Points
Math:			
Reading:			
Language/ Writing:			

Place a check ( / ) next to each behavior maintained within time limits of the class.

Behavior	8:11-8:54	8: 57- 9:40	9:43- 10:26	Earned 3 Each period
Be Prepared & Start Assignment				
Listen to teacher directions				
Stay in assigned area				
Complete assignment				
I met mastery today	Yes  No	Yes  No	Yes  No	Yes  No

If all points were not earned, tell why.

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## Appendix C

### Self Evaluation Form: Self-regulation

Behavior	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri.
Be prepared & Start assignment					
Listen to teacher directions					
Stay in assigned area					
Complete assignment to 80% or higher.					
I met Mastery this week.	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No

Checks earned/ percentages earned:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
8% 17% 25% 33% 42% 50% 58% 67% 75% 83% 91% 100%

Mastery Level assigned by contract:

Be Prepared & start = \_\_\_\_\_ Listen to teacher directions = \_\_\_\_\_

Stay in assigned area = \_\_\_\_\_ Complete assignment = \_\_\_\_\_

Earned:

Be Prepared & start = \_\_\_\_\_ Listen to teacher directions = \_\_\_\_\_

Stay in assigned area = \_\_\_\_\_ Complete assignment = \_\_\_\_\_

Make suggestions for improving percentage during class.

Behavior	Way to improve earned points.
Be prepared & Start assignment	
Listen to teacher directions	
Stay in assigned area	
Complete assignment to 80% or higher.	

