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Exploring a Self-Regulation Program in a Multi-Grade Inclusive Classroom

by

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Abstract

This self-study explores lessons learned from teaching self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom. Using general observations and reflections in my researcher journal I explore my own teaching practice and ways to improve it as I implement the Alert Program® in an attempt to support student self-regulation in my classroom. Not everything went as planned and the self-study aspect of research enabled me to reflect on my teaching and develop new ways to approach my students' learning needs as well as my needs as the teacher. Hands-on activities, flexibility, and balancing pressures were key findings in this self-study. These findings can provide some insight for other teachers who may be looking to implement a self-regulation program such as the Alert Program® or otherwise consider self-regulation strategies in inclusive classrooms.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Welcome to my middle school classroom where the ages range from eleven to sixteen years of age and the skill level ranges from Grade 2 to Grade 8. In addition to attending to complex academic learning needs, I recognize the importance of supporting the development of self-regulation skills for students. These skills include transitioning between subjects, dealing with routine changes, persevering if the workload increases, and remaining calm when something doesn't go your way. In order to best support their learning and skill development, I have realized that I also need to ask, **“How can I best teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom?”**

Personal Context

In 2014, I moved to a remote northern community to teach a Grade 7/8 class and I was overwhelmed by all the challenges. I only had ten students but the exceptional needs within the class included fully dependent physical needs, behavioural issues, learning issues, and social emotional needs. As well as the diverse learning needs in the classroom I am aware that some have had to deal with a range of traumatic events in their young lives. A study by Learner and Kruger (1999) showed teacher attachment to be a better predictor of intrinsic value and parent attachment a better predictor of self-regulation. This suggests that if a child has attachment issues at home there may be problems with self-regulation. Adolescents with better self-regulatory abilities are also less likely to engage in transgressive behaviors and more likely to engage in pro-social behaviors (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Regalia, 2001).

In 2015, I continued in the same teaching position with a class of eleven students, three Grade 7s, two Grade 8s, and six Grade 9s and found the skill level to be similar to my class from the previous year. As I continued in the same teaching position with small classes across multiple grades, I was able to recognize more learning successes and more settled behaviour as I figured out ways to support them with providing options for assignment completion, choices in topics to be explored, and using a variety of media to convey information. My question arises from my experience and how to improve my teaching to give my students appropriate tools to deal with their social emotional issues and be successful in school.

Rationale

In Vohs and Baumeister's *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (2011) the various authors involved describe self-regulation as the ability to:

1. attain, maintain, and change one's level of energy to match the demands of a task or situation.
2. monitor, evaluate, and modify one's emotions.
3. sustain and shift one's attention when necessary and ignore distractions.
4. understand both the meaning of a variety of social interactions and how to engage in them in sustained way
5. connect with and care about what others are thinking and feeling – to empathize and act accordingly (as cited in Shanker, 2013, p. xii).

The ability to self-regulate and manage emotions in school enables students to be to be in the best state to learn. Shanker (2013) describes a five-domain model of self-regulation that includes the biological, emotional, cognitive, social, and prosocial domain. This further suggests that self-

regulation requires the involvement of many complex systems in the body to reach optimal self-regulation levels. Such complex skills develop throughout childhood and into adulthood (Eisenberg and Sulik, 2012). It is important to continue supporting self-regulation efforts in all grade levels.

In my exploration of ways to support my students in the past two years I looked at a number of resources including the Alert Program®, Zones of Regulation® and Learning in Safe Schools. My goal was to find appropriate self-regulation strategies that work best for adolescents in middle school. It is important to continue to support children as they progress through school; however, I feel that social skills teaching, while important, often gets left behind as teachers work to cover the key curricula topics in a school year. There may even be an expectation that by the time students reach upper elementary grades that they have been taught these skills and therefore do not require further instruction in this area. I would argue that this is not the case as many behavioural and learning issues stem from a lack of self-regulation skills.

This topic is important for my own practice because I feel that many of the behaviours I encounter on a daily basis are rooted in self-regulation. I need to be able to find appropriate ways to help the students calm themselves and have them prepared to learn. However, I have noticed unself-regulated behaviour in the school is often normalized, and the way they behave in school is similar to how they conduct themselves in public places. A lot of stressors are in the emotional domain and many students struggle to settle down when they come to class. It is possible that school is a safer place for them to release their emotions than in other environments in their lives. Another key stressor in my classroom is that once students complete grade nine they must move away to other communities to complete their education. I feel this adds to their disregulation, as there are a lot of unknowns about where they will attend school in the coming year. This can

manifest into explosive outbursts or complete shutdowns as the students try to deal with added pressures. I am concerned that if students do not have the ability to self-regulate that they will have more challenges when they enter a new school. When students from the community are not successful in later grades, they may have to return home or move to other communities to complete their education. I feel it is imperative to improve my teaching to support my students as best I can.

Research

For the purpose of this thesis I used self-study research to answer, “How can I best teach self-regulation skills to students in a multi-grade inclusive classroom?” I explored a variety of strategies and programs and chose ones I felt were appropriate for middle school aged students. Many teachers I have spoken to suggest taking the time to create an inclusive environment in the classroom pays great dividends later on. A concern I have is feeling the pressure to get into the curriculum too soon and not laying enough groundwork to maintain the inclusive culture throughout the school year. Another concern is in the past I have started out teaching several strategies and as we got into the middle of the school year I tended to forget to reinforce the strategies. My hope was that through my self-study research I would be able to sustain the strategies I teach throughout the school year and continue to build the inclusive classroom environment.

After implementing each of the mile markers from the Alert Program® I intended to use a questionnaire to find out students’ thinking about my instruction and note suggestions to improve my teaching. As well as questionnaires, I planned to use observations throughout each implementation to record student behaviour and my impressions of their responses. I kept a

researcher journal to reflect on my own practices throughout the research cycle. My hope was that I would be able to investigate students' responses to find similarities and differences in their experiences with the self-regulation strategies they were taught as well as my own teaching methods. In doing so I would be able to create new knowledge about how I can best teach self-regulation strategies in middle school classrooms. Another part of my research was to complete a behaviour checklist at the beginning and the end of my research cycle to see if there had indeed been a decrease in unregulated behaviours. I was unable to complete observations for the behaviour checklist and had to make generalizations about changes in my students' behaviour that would suggest an increase in self-regulation.

I was unable to obtain consent for student participation. My self-study, therefore, focused on my own learning through my researcher journal and identified themes that emerged about how to teach self-regulation in my classroom.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this literature review I will examine a variety of sources to answer some key questions surrounding my self-study research project. The main questions I will be exploring are:

1. What is self-regulation?
2. Why is self-regulation important?
3. What are the current trends in self-regulation?
4. What gaps exist in self-regulation research today?
5. How do the gaps in current research on self-regulation suggest a need for my own self-study research?

Through a careful examination of the past, present, and future trends in self-regulation research one can be better prepared to understand how new knowledge in the field can be beneficial.

What is self-regulation?

Historically, research about self-regulation has been around since before the turn of the 20th Century. In their historical examination of self-regulation, authors Post, Boyer, and Brett (2006) use a mixed method research design to complete a historical analysis of self-regulation research looking for time periods that conceptualize the study of self-regulation. The results of their literature review of 241 psychology journal articles showed four periods (1) precursory (prior to 1950), emergent (1950-1970), (3) contemporary (1970-1990), and (4) expansionist (1990 to present) (Post et al.).

In the Precursory period from 1891-1950 developmental stages were studied and there was an assumption that behaviours were beyond control. The theories being developed at this time included Behavioural (Thorndike and Pavlov), Psychoanalytical (Freud), and Social Learning (Miller and Dollard). Psychology itself was moving toward the formulation of Behaviourism by the end of this period. Thorne wrote the first article on self-regulation in 1946 (as cited in Post et al., 2006). In this article, Thorne stated that volitional behaviour and self-regulation were defined as intelligent adaptation through training and psychotherapy rather than free will (Post et al., 2006).

The Emergent period (1950-1970) was a new direction in psychology with theoretical perspectives by Piaget, Heider, and Vygotsky coming to the forefront. It was during this time that self-regulation became a legitimate area of study. The Emergent period ended with continued resistance to Behaviourism in favour of Humanism (Post et al., 2006)

Between 1970 and 1990 the contemporary period can be divided into three intervals, defining the developmental stages, the influences and effects of self-regulation, and frameworks, implications, and analogies. Flavell, Bandura and Lezak were working on prominent studies at this time involving Neo-Piagetism, Transforming Social Learning, and Information Processing respectively. While the early part of this period saw continued struggles between Behaviourism and Humanism while contemporary psychology was dominated by Cognitive Science (Post et al., 2006).

The final period defined by Post et al. (2006) is the Expansionist period where literature perspectives on self-regulation are linked to all areas of psychology and examinations of culture and different disorders are taking place. Post et al. (2006) claim that there is unlimited positivism

toward the future study of self-regulation with focus in the realm of prevention and working with technology to support learners. The future of self-regulation is to look to supporting the development of self-regulation skills for young children.

Self-regulation continues to be a popular topic in research today. It has been defined in different ways, which has led to some confusion in the fields of psychology and education. Burman, Green, and Shanker (2015) in their research on the meaning of self-regulation state that the variety of related terms contributes to the difficulty in defining self-regulation. These terms include self-control, self-management, self-observation, learning, social behaviour, and personality constructs related to self-monitoring. They further suggest the ambiguity is also a major hurdle for school teachers, especially those who want to apply ideas about self-regulation to improve their students' classroom experience, learning outcomes, and general well-being (Burman et al., 2015). Kuypers (2011) also states that self-regulation can go by many names, such as "self-control," "self-management," "anger control," and "impulse control." She further states that self-regulation is the ability to do what needs to be done in the optimal state for the given situation. Williams and Shellenberger (1994) state that self-regulation is the ability to attain, maintain, and change arousal appropriately for a task or situation. Within the definitions there are commonalities around self-regulation in that it involves some control/regulation of oneself in order to get something done.

Self-regulation involves complex systems in the body. Williams and Shellenberger (1994) state that it involves many neurological connections in the brain, including the brain stem, reticular formation, hypothalamus, thalamus, autonomic nervous system, cerebellum, limbic system, all sensory systems including the vestibular system, and cortex. Kuypers (2011) writes that to successfully self-regulate three critical neurological components need to be integrated:

sensory processing, executive functioning, and emotional regulation. While Shanker (2013) discusses self-regulation through the exploration of five domains: the biological, emotional, cognitive, social, and prosocial. Children who are successful at self-regulation are able to adjust to various pressures, accept changes in routine, and behave in a social appropriate way (Kuypers, 2011).

Why is self-regulation important?

Self-regulation is important for a number of reasons. Shanker (2013) states that self-regulation is increasingly being seen as essential for enabling children to respond efficiently and effectively to the everyday challenges they face in and out of school. There is a clear need for self-regulation education. If students are to be successful in school they need to be able to self-regulate. Krouse and Krouse (1981) suggest a major cause of underachievement is the inability of students to control their own behavior (as cited in Dembo and Eaton, 2000). Adolescents with better self-regulatory abilities are also less likely to engage in transgressive behaviours and more likely to engage in prosocial behaviours (Bandura et al. 2001). Students without the ability to self-regulate will not be as successful as their peers who can.

Eisenberg and Sulik (2012) summarize that self-regulation skills predict numerous aspects of social competence and maladjustment. Thus, self-regulation is an important construct for understanding the processes that contribute to both normative development and individual differences in diverse aspects of functioning (Eisenberg and Sulik, 2012). This indicates the importance of self-regulation and a need for it to be taught in schools.

What are the current trends in self-regulation?

Current trends in self-regulation are looking at how to support the development of self-

regulatory skills. There is a clear knowledge base that says such skills are important and now studies are looking at the best ways to teach them. The Alert Program®, The Zones of Regulation®, and Calm, Alert, and Learning are just a few examples of programs available to teach self-regulation skills to children. As noted above, self-regulation skills develop well into adulthood so any of the programs can be of use to all learners. In their Alert Program® trial, Mac Cobb, Fitzgerald, Lanigan-O'Keefe, Irwin, and Mellerick (2014) reported on a collaboration between teachers and occupational therapists to adapt and deliver the Alert Program® to eighty-five students aged 12 to 13 years in four different schools. Mac Cobb et al (2014) concluded that by adapting the Alert Program® and providing opportunity, resource materials, and strategies in the classroom setting at the appropriate developmental level, students can better manage themselves and participate in the classroom. Mac Cobb et al (2014) further reported that the feedback from the teachers in the trial resulted in Phase 2 of the project to be implemented as a teacher-led and occupational therapist supported initiative in 16 schools nationwide. Kuypers (2011) notes that the Zones curriculum was initially developed for neurological and mental health disorders but it became apparent that the curriculum could benefit a much broader population including parents and teachers. There is a trend to teach self-regulation strategies to all learners and where necessary adapt the activities to fit the needs of the students you are teaching.

There are studies that examine the self-regulation of older children as they enter middle school and high school where demands for work and responsibility increase. Cleary and Chen (2009) found that:

It may be difficult to reliably make universal claims about the specific grades or specific contexts when self-regulation programs are of greatest value and importance to youth.

What is most important, however, is to first identify when shifts towards greater

expectations for student self-sufficiency and self-directedness occur in a particular school and then implement programs prior to and during this transition to help cultivate students' sense of personal agency and self-regulatory skill (p. 312).

In their study on self-regulation and its relation to adaptive behaviours in low income youth aged 8 -18 years, Buckner, Mezzacappa, and Beardslee (2009) found that:

Youths with better self-regulation skills stated more adaptive responses both in terms of how they coped with past stressful life events and how they would deal with hypothetical stressors. This study indicates that self-regulation is robustly associated with a range of important indices of adaptive functioning across many domains (p. 19).

Furthermore, Ivrendi (2016) in examining how self-regulation skills in kindergarten can predict success in math in middle school found that “intervention programs aimed at promoting self-regulation and mathematical skills should be implemented as a way to promote school success” (p. 418).

What gaps exist in the knowledge of self-regulation?

Historically, self-regulation has been studied to improve the learning and success of children with mental health or neurobiological disorders. With the increase in children being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum disorders and the need for the development of their self-regulation skills there has been little research done on implementing self-regulation skills in an inclusive classroom. Research about self-regulation and how it leads to success in school and life exists but there is little research about what is happening in the classroom. Other than the Alert Program® trial noted above I could not find any other journal articles about teachers implementing the Alert Program® or The Zones of Regulation. There were a few articles about

teacher emotional regulation and how it impacts student learning see Jiang, Vaurus, Volet, and Wang (2015) and what teachers think about self-regulated learning (Dignath-van Ewijk and van der Werf (2012). The latter suggesting that teacher training should take place as early as possible for two reasons:

First, preservice teachers in the beginning of their career start using traditional teaching methods that they know from their own schooling experience. Second, teachers at some point develop their own (potentially incorrect) beliefs on the promotion of self-regulation based on their teaching experience. These beliefs then start influencing their perceptions of new information. (Dignath-van Ewijk and van der Werf, p.9)

How do the gaps in knowledge suggest a need for my self-study research?

The lack of knowledge about how teachers actually implement the teaching of self-regulation skills suggests a need for further research in this area. It is through self-study research that one can practice implementing such programs as the Zones of Regulation® and the Alert Program®. The trial by Mac Cobb et al. (2014) suggests that such programs are not one size fits all and adaptations and modifications need to be made in order to best fit the learners in your classroom. Many of the activities in the Alert Program® are designed for students aged 5 to 12 so in my practice I will have to modify the activities for grade level, maturity, and cognition (Williams and Shellenberger, 1994).

The literature on self-regulation is varied with a lot of research occurring within the past twenty years. While trying to understand how children develop and make sense of their world early psychologists were able to see that self-regulation was key to being able to perform everyday tasks successfully. The fact that there are various definitions of self-regulation and

different terminology used to mean the same thing is one aspect that can lead to confusion.

Educators need to be aware of the need for self-regulation education to help their students be successful in school and life. There is a huge need for self-regulation amongst all students, not just those with neurobiological and mental health disorders. As the education pendulum swings toward more inquiry based, student directed learning activities there is a greater need for self-regulation to help students cope with the increase of demands and responsibilities. By implementing strategies from research based programs like the Alert Program® teachers will be able to support their students in their self-regulation.

Chapter 3

Methodology

How can I best teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom?

What is research? According to Merriam-Webster the simple definition of research is careful study that is done to find and report new knowledge about something. I originally planned to do action research, using questionnaires, task analysis, observations, and a literature review to find the best teaching practices to help my students learn self-regulation within an inclusive classroom. However, during the research process I was unable to complete my plans because of a lack of observations. I intended to collect observations of student on- and off-task behaviours before and after I taught the Alert Program®, but the demands of starting the school year in my new role as vice principal made it difficult to complete any observations. Also, I did not receive consent or assent to use my students' questionnaire responses in my analysis. I then adopted the self-study research model and describe the methodology below. For the purpose of this project I will be creating and reporting new knowledge about my own teaching practice to find ways to improve it when teaching self-regulation.

What is self-study research? According to Samaras (2011) self-study research may include the following:

1. Personal situated inquiry
2. Critical collaborative inquiry
3. Improved learning
4. A transparent and systematic research process
5. Knowledge generation and presentation. (p. 10)

The researcher begins with a question about their practice to investigate, then looks to feedback from others to further develop alternative perspectives. The improved learning of self-study is looking at what we do as teachers in the context of our classrooms and how our own beliefs are part of that practice. The process also involves making our practice explicit to ourselves and to others and adds to development of the teacher personally and professionally. Self-study research like action research differs from traditional research and has specific characteristics but the main thing to remember is that it is about improving practice by reflecting on our own practice in relation to ourselves as well as in relation to our students within the context of our classrooms and sharing the knowledge that is generated. Self-study is about the learning from experience that is embedded within teachers' creation of new experiences for themselves and those whom they teach (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). As the main participant in the research I will use my findings to add to my own knowledge of practice and see how that works. I will focus on my self and how to make changes to best teach my students.

Participants

I am the principal participant and I will be studying my teaching practice through self-study research.

Characteristics

I have been teaching for twelve years, five in Japan and seven in the BC school system. I am currently teaching in a remote northern village in a public school with thirty students from kindergarten to Grade Nine. I know in my past teaching I have started to implement various self-regulation strategies but I tend to lose sight of the goal and get overwhelmed by having to cover all the curricula. I am reminded that the more time I spend setting the tone and culture of

my classroom the easier it will be for my students to learn and be successful in the long run. I have also accepted a new role as vice principal at my school and so I will only be teaching my class sixty percent of the time, with the remainder being administrative duties.

Recruitment

I introduced the research project to my class with the recruitment script (Appendix A) and sent a letter to all of my parents asking for permission for their children to participate in my research (Appendix B). They were to return the consent forms to the secretary in a sealed envelope that I would open after completing my data collection. All students were part of the teaching strategies and once I found out which students had given consent I would use their responses in my analysis. At the end of my research cycle I discovered none of the consent forms had been returned because of this, my data was taken from my own researcher journal.

Ethical Issues

As I was the classroom teacher I taught my whole class all of the mile markers in the Alert Program®. I intended to collect data throughout my data collection cycle. One ethical concern could have been students telling me whether or not they had signed the consent/assent forms which might influence their and my responses to the questionnaires and journal reflections. None of the consent/assent forms were returned so this was not an issue. (Appendix C)

Data

I planned to do a baseline count of the number of self-regulation behaviour issues arising prior to teaching a self-regulation strategy. I chose to include non-compliance, leaving the classroom without permission, talking out of turn, verbal outbursts, physical outbursts, swearing

(indirect), swearing (direct), on task during work times, uses classroom procedures for taking breaks, and quick transitions on my behaviour checklist. I had observed these behaviours throughout my teaching and felt that they were the best indicators of a lack of self-regulation among students. I planned to observe students from the start of the day until lunchtime. I would observe two students a day during the second week of classes using a clipboard to make tallies on the checklist. This proved to be the most difficult task in my research and I was unable to complete any checklist before or after my research cycle. (Appendix D)

I did a post-strategy survey asking students what teaching strategies helped them remember the self-regulation strategies the easiest. I also asked them for suggestions for the next time. (Appendix F)

I taught self-regulation strategies from the mile markers of the Alert Program® where students identified which senses they can stimulate to assist with self-regulation. There are twelve mile markers and I used the suggested strategies of delivery to see which ones worked best for myself as well as my students as I made observations.

In my researcher journal I recorded my own thoughts and ideas about how the students received my teaching strategies and what I could do the next time I used a strategy. (Appendix E)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

I focused my analysis on my researcher journal and general observations of the students throughout my teaching of the strategies. As a self-study I looked at knowledge of practice and how that would influence my future teaching. Self-study research explores practice, the self in relation to practice, and the self in relation to the other (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Another aspect of self-study to consider when interpreting my data was the use of dialogue and context as

processes for coming to know something unlike action research that often requires quantitative evidence of change. Dialogue is between the self (me) and the other (students) and context is the present situation that we all exist in during the data collection (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). The researcher's journal is similar to a dialogue between the self before and after an action is taken and is often a common method of collecting data in education research.

In the three months of my research project I was able to gather observations about what my teaching goals were for the lesson, how the lesson was perceived, and what I would change the next time I tried that teaching strategy. The journal allowed me to reflect on my practice and explore my beliefs and actions in the classroom. It also provided a record of issues that came up throughout the process as I adjusted to my new role as a vice principal/teacher and starting up the school year.

Limitations

As my classroom had only seven students I was limited in the range of responses I received. Other limitations were my own bias, having no confirming data to triangulate my findings and not being able to generalize my findings.

Significance

While the knowledge of practice may not be valid in other contexts it may be useful as a model for how to implement self-study, or be transferable into teaching practice in other contexts as well as influence future research.

Chapter 4

Findings

How can I best teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom? This question is the one that guided my research project from start to completion. The process began when I identified a need for self-regulation in my multi-grade inclusive classroom yet I was struggling to find the best ways to teach these strategies without losing time on teaching the core subjects and getting through all the necessary curriculum. What followed were changes in the school, classroom and my teaching position, yet through it all I was able to learn ways to improve my teaching of self-regulation.

New Beginnings

I began my research cycle in September at the beginning of the school year by introducing my project and explaining that I would be working on improving my teaching, by working through the mile markers of the Alert Program® I would reflect on my own teaching as well as ask for their feedback to improve my teaching based on their responses. I used my researcher journal for my analysis and I will include quotations from my journal as evidence to support my findings.

My first goal was to spend time collecting baseline observations of student behaviour to have some data to compare to observations of on- and off-task behaviour at the end of the research cycle and note any changes. I tried for two weeks to collect observation data of on- and off-task behaviour and I was only able to make observations on one out of seven attempts. My plan was to observe students at the start of the day and then at the beginning of a lesson. When my first attempt of observing one student during the different times of the day failed I went

home and decided to change my plan. The next day I tried to focus on the class as a whole rather than individuals. In my researcher journal I noted, “It seems more and more that all the behaviours are demonstrated by all students.” Another reason my attempts failed was that I was often called away to deal with administrative duties in my role as vice principal of the school. On three occasions I noted in my journal that I had to “deal with a staff member, needed to call for a sub, and check in on new staff members.” As a teacher this was becoming frustrating and I was feeling pressure from losing time to complete everything I had planned in my research cycle. In all my attempts to record observations I did note that there was a lot of off-task behaviour and that if I left the students to work independently they could not manage for more than five minutes. They would start talking to classmates or me, leave the classroom, play on their iPods, or just sit there with their heads on the desk. As my frustration grew I realized that I needed to give my students strategies to self-regulate so we could focus on learning. My students needed appropriate ways to change their levels of alertness in order to be able to stay on task without disrupting their learning and the learning of their classmates.

The Alert Program® uses occupational theory, sensory integration, arousal theory, as well as knowledge of how behaviour responses are part of the automatic nervous system and depending on a child’s state of alertness they may respond inappropriately to simple problems (Williams & Shellenberger, 1994). My students’ off-task behaviour was a clear indication that there was work to be done. On reflection, I also noted that I needed to plan better for the disruptions I was experiencing.

Students were to start the day with simple routines, like silent reading, journal writing, and handwriting. It would take students a long time to start working. I wanted to have simple routines to start each day because that was when I was most often called out to deal with issues as

vice principal. Using teaching and learning techniques like morning routines consistently allows students to know what to expect and helps them to focus on the task as well (Shanker, 2013).

Unfortunately, these fifteen to twenty minute routines often stretched to thirty or forty minutes because the students had difficulty starting and completing the task. Nothing seemed to fit their learning style except wanting to sit and talk with their classmates, engage in horse-play, or just sit with their heads down on their desks. They were demonstrating the high and low levels of alertness but I could not seem to find activities that would engage them enough to get into the just right level.

It was nearing the end of September with a five-day weekend off for professional development and after failing to make any observations I decided to begin with my teaching of the Alert Program® and try to get feedback from my students. The first strategy I used was a guessing game to identify the different levels of alertness after describing each level: low, just right, and high. The Alert Program® defines the levels of alertness as follows:

The low level is often described as feeling like a “couch potato,” sluggish, or feeling spacey.” The high level is often associated with words like “overexcited,” “hyper,” and “out of control. The just right level can be compared to the feeling when it is easy to learn, play, get along with others, and have fun (Williams & Shellenberger, p.2-3).

I made sure to use visual cues as well as physical and verbal cues. I invited students to share actions they came up with on their own. In general, I was able to introduce the strategies with limited disruption and complaint. Even though it appeared some students were not paying attention, when it came time for the game they were able to respond correctly. As a teacher this was important to know. In the past I would often wait and wait for undivided attention from all of

the students. As I began to know the students in my class better, I was able to identify their learning styles and rather than constantly nag at them to sit still, eyes forward, hands on their desks I slowly adjusted my responses to fit with their preferences for learning. Even before we began exploring the Alert Program® and ways for students to change their levels of alertness, I would let students sit on the floor or pedal the stationary bike while we were doing activities as long as they participated in the learning activity. I also offered a lot of breaks where students could roll a die with various preferential activities like board games, drama games, and free time on it. Choice of activity is recommended for many reasons as Shanker (2013) suggests, “Provide activities that allow for student choice. When students are highly engaged in a learning event, it is easier for them to maintain their focus” (p. 21). He further suggests that, “Autonomy can play an important role in the development of self-regulation” (p. 72). We discussed the appropriate use of iPods in the class and came up with rules that everyone agreed on as my students felt that they could concentrate better when listening to music and I also played music in class when appropriate. The Alert Program® is built on three levels of alertness or engine speeds: low, high, and just right. The goal of the program is to give students the tools to change from one level to another in order to complete the task at hand. I needed to give my students the tools to be able to identify and adjust their alert levels to self-regulate and be able to learn.

The Alert Program® mile markers use a variety of strategies to introduce and explore ways to change levels of alertness. Some strategies are more physical requiring students to get out of their desks and move around the classroom or go to the gym to participate in an obstacle course. Other strategies are hands-on with students sitting in a preferable type of seating and using their mouths, eyes, ears, and hands to experience different tools to change their levels of alertness.

Success

Overall, using hands-on activities to teach and introduce new material worked well. It is a strategy that the students were reluctant to participate in at the beginning and I noted in my journal that for the next lessons I should make sure to introduce some deep breathing before we start and give students a break between the previous learning activity and the Alert Program® activities. I decided to use deep breathing because it was something I used in the past to center students and transition from one activity to another. Deep breathing is an effective method for reducing stress and anxiety in people of all ages and enhances student performance (Paul, Elam, & Verhulst, 2007; Khng, 2016; Perciavalle et al, 2017). I also started to use a timer for activities to keep them on task and moving forward. On the days when I did not do the deep breathing the students were slower to get into the activities. This was an important reminder to continue with the deep breathing exercises for transitions between activities in the classroom. The hands-on strategies where the students got to use and manipulate the tools for changing their levels of alertness were the best lessons as I allowed students time to explore each item and discuss how each item works on our bodies to change our level of alertness. This also supported my findings of meeting different learning styles and that hands-on manipulation of items is a much better way to engage my students.

I was feeling good about how these lessons went and the students were able to identify all of the tools and strategies they had learned previously during review of the previous learning. As we learned about different tools at the start of each lesson I would offer the class items from the previous lessons that might help them adjust their level of alertness to the one appropriate for the activity we were going to do that day. I made sure that the students had hand fidgets in their desks, a variety of seats were available in the classroom, I adjusted the lighting and noise level

where possible, and offered gum, pretzels, and mints for them to chew or crunch. These sensorimotor methods are used to change levels of alertness in the Alert Program ® and are based on A. Jean Ayres (1979) work (as cited in Williams & Shellenberger, 1994, p. 1-2) on sensory integration in children. Our sensory systems provide information about the world around us to our brains and when these systems are adequately registering and processing information from tactile, vestibular, proprioceptive, olfactory, visual, auditory, and gustatory input these sensory systems will then support sensorimotor development. These systems are necessary for and need to be developed before the optimal development of cognitive and communication skills which supports academic learning (Williams & Shellenberger, 1994). I noted that the students “will ask for gum or a mint when they need to get to the right speed” even in lessons that were not about the Alert Program®. This was a good indicator that the students were learning how to manage their own alertness and understand their own sensorimotor needs to better self-regulate.

As a teacher I was feeling good that my teaching was effective and the students were demonstrating some self-regulation behaviours. They were able to focus longer on reading and writing, needed fewer breaks, and took less time transitioning between lessons. They were also able to use the various tools for their bodies, hands, and mouths as tools for regulating their levels of alertness instead of playing with them. As they improved their abilities to self-regulate, I embraced how the classroom environment was changing. Some students wanted to sit on exercise balls, other students preferred stools instead of chairs. If they wanted they wore hats and hoodies to shield the lights, listened to music, played with clay or string, chewed gum, or wandered around the classroom during instruction. I was becoming more comfortable with this level of activity because the students were able to participate in the learning activities and could demonstrate knowledge of the topics being taught. I was grateful for the strategies in the Alert

Program® mile markers as they were easy to implement and we were having some success. I had a routine going, I would start the lesson with some deep breathing, check in with students to see if they needed any tools from me, their desks, or in the classroom to get to the appropriate level of alertness, review the previous lesson and then get into the activity for the day.

A Need for Flexibility

The end of October was approaching. We had covered 6 of the 12 mile markers of the Alert Program® routine and the hands-on experiences appeared to be working well. I did notice that their responses on their questionnaires were only one or two words, and one day I commented in my journal, “They are already complaining about the questionnaires being the same every time.” This was an indication that I needed to change my routine and teaching strategies. I had to decide what I could change. I talked to the students about the questionnaire and explained that it had to be the same every time for consistency and make it easier to analyze their responses at the end of the research cycle. As a teacher taking different learning styles into account in my planning is part of differentiating instruction. There are different interpretations of what differentiated instruction should be. In their discussion on broadening the view of differentiated instruction Parsons, Dodman, and Burrowbridge (2013) suggest that, “Differentiated instruction goes beyond planning and that teachers must be able to be responsive to unanticipated issues that arise when their differentiated plans are put into action” (p. 40).

I also noted in my journal that, “I need to make sure to reinforce levels of alertness throughout all of my teaching.” This would further build their awareness of their own levels of alertness at different times of the day but it would also help them transfer their skills at self-regulating throughout their whole school day. The Alert Program® suggests that students need to

identify which levels of alertness are appropriate at the right time. For example, being in a low level of alertness is not going to help you play basketball in gym but it will be a good level of alertness for getting ready for bed or silent reading. Being in the just right level is more optimal for learning in class because if you are in the high level of alertness you are overactive and unable to take in more information (Williams & Shellenberger, 1994).

It was time to review the different ways to use our mouths, hands, bodies, eyes, and ears to change our levels of alertness and self-regulate. The mile marker called for sorting various pictures into the correct category to check and review the learning. I decided to use physical movement to change the students' level of alertness and created a short obstacle course in the gym. The students had to complete the obstacle course before picking a picture and running it to the appropriate station that matched the tool in the picture. I did note in a previous lesson where physical activity was involved that the students were reluctant to try the activities and even those who did try only did one or two activities rather than all of them. Students had varied success in participating and completing the obstacle course, ranging from a single round to multiple rounds only with the promise of extra gym time. When considering the different types of learning styles; visual/verbal, visual/non-verbal, tactile/kinaesthetic, and auditory/verbal their behaviour during the obstacle course suggests that my students may not be kinaesthetic learners who enjoy being physically active in the learning environment. There are some possible explanations for this response to the activity. It could be that the students were not confident in doing something new that combined learning with physical activity or they may have been feeling shy. They are clearly tactile learners as the hands-on learning activities were the most successful but there seems to be a disconnection when learning involves physical activity. Williams and Shellenberger (1994) suggest that the teacher incorporate favourable activities in the obstacle course and I included

basketball dribbling and scooter boards in the obstacle course. This situation may have been more successful if I differentiated on the fly as Parsons et al. (2013) suggest “If a particular form of instruction is not meeting students’ needs or a different form of instruction would be better for a specific situation, teachers need conditional knowledge to apply optimal instruction” (p. 41). As a teacher I have a constant internal dialogue about whether to just end an activity and try something new or negotiate with the students to have them complete the task. I felt that it would be better for me to plan the activities for the first time we were doing an obstacle course and then get student input for the next time we did an obstacle course. I let my own needs to complete the task as planned take over my knowledge that when students are involved in their learning they are more apt to buy into the activity. This struggle between meeting the students’ needs and letting go of my own needs ebbed and flowed throughout the research cycle. I felt bound by the timelines I set for my project and wanted to be able to get as much done as possible before time ran out. Once I moved on from my failed attempt at observations I felt more relaxed in allowing the students to explore the tools they could use for reaching the appropriate level of alertness but then as my research cycle end date approached I felt I needed to push the students through the last mile markers to say that I completed all of them. This resulted in me delivering the activities with little differentiation and consideration of my students’ learning needs. I do find as a teacher that it can be draining to be constantly negotiating to find ways to get students to complete their work and continue to be positive and encouraging.

The final few mile markers for the Alert Program® required some discussion and written work. The activity also asked students to take home their work and see how the tools and strategies they prefer at school can help them adjust their level of alertness at their homes. I was unsure about having students take this work home, as I did not think it would get done because

previous homework assignments have not been completed. I thought this activity might have been completed as the students had been working on the Alert Program® from almost two months and I felt that they should be able to explore their habits at home and the tools they use at home to help them adjust their alert levels. They did not even need to write anything down. They could have just shared their learning in our class discussion then next day. This teaching method of me guiding discussions and giving students independent time to write varied from the hands-on and physical activity methods I had used previously. I found the students to be engaged in the discussions and ready to share their ideas but when it was time to write down ideas and responses there was little work produced. In the context of the Alert Program® it was not integral that they write long responses and they could still identify the levels of alertness, tools and ways to change their levels, and identified several preferential ways to change their own levels. They continued to use various tools and strategies to self-regulate in class but not with any consistency as sometimes it would take them a long time to settle down despite using a variety of strategies and tools to change their levels of alertness.

As a teacher did I find the best ways to teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom? Yes, I found that hands-on activities worked well to engage the students in their learning but I still need to use a variety of strategies in order to keep them interested. I was able to teach my students ways to self-regulate but I still find I need to do more to help them recognize how self-regulating can help them with their learning. I noted in my researcher journal at the last lesson that “ the students couldn’t get in the just right speed no matter what I tried. It took them a long time to settle down and a lot of explaining to get any work done.” I also need to be willing to let go of plans and be ready with something different if I lose the students. I do find that negotiating seems to work best when they are reluctant to do an activity. Even after two

months of teaching strategies and ways to change their levels of alertness and the students being able to identify all the key points of the Alert Program® I did not have the impression that any of the strategies were being independently applied in their own lives outside the classroom.

Moving Forward

I have had many discussions with colleagues and reflected on my own teaching to come up with better ways to teach my students. I learned the key to teaching my students is to be flexible and willing to change an activity to keep them engaged. I learned that planning is a huge key to being able to change activities when it seems a lesson is falling apart. I also know that patience on my part is important. Often in my teaching of the Alert Program® the students were reluctant to begin an activity and I would have to negotiate and encourage them to begin. Then when they finally started an activity we would often run out of time to complete it and I would have to decide to let them continue or stop them and move on. This also speaks to time management and how to teach students to use the time allotted to complete their tasks. Even with the self-regulation strategies they have learned through the Alert Program® class time is often wasted. It was often difficult to balance this as I felt pressure to cover curriculum. This is not a new idea and one I think many struggle with. I know the more time you spend at the start of the year setting up the classroom learning environment with your students the less behaviour issues you will have in the future. However, in practice it is hard to implement.

Another insight into my teaching that I learned was how wrong I can be and it is okay to be wrong. Activities that had worked previously can fall totally flat and there is no way to change that. When we did the obstacle course in the gym I never expected students to not even try and not be able to run through four times. It was a good lesson for me to expect the

unexpected. I also need to learn strategies for supporting the students who feel overwhelmed by these activities and find ways to encourage them to persevere.

Continued Self-regulation Support

Since the research cycle ended I still need to support self-regulation in the classroom and teach students how to apply it to be better prepared to learn at school. I continue to offer hand fidgets, alternative seating, gum, mints, and pretzels to my students every day and they pick and choose what they prefer. I need to continue to revisit the Alert Program® and remind students how important it is to be at the right level of alertness for the task at hand. I also need to be mindful of how well the hands-on learning worked for teaching the Alert Program® and use this strategy to introduce more strategies for self-regulating in the future.

Balancing New Responsibilities

One of the key limitations to my entire research cycle was the inability to complete pre- and post-observations of my students to show evidence of learning. I felt compelled by time to carry on with my research cycle despite missing this component of my research plan. As a new vice-principal I was feeling pressure to make sure everything was running well and that staff members were able to focus on their own jobs without having to worry about their new administrator. I also wanted it to be a smooth transition for everyone. In taking on this role I was often pulled out of my own classroom to deal with various issues. Whether it was finding a sub for a sick teacher, making sure there was proper supervision for recess and lunch, having snacks ready for recess, answering the telephone, supporting new staff members, or dealing with student behaviour, I was the person in charge. My classroom suffered as a result because I did not get a chance to create the supportive learning environment with my students as I had planned to begin

my school year. Then when I tried to complete observations of behaviour I found that I could not take five minutes to do quick observations because the students would be asking questions, interrupting, somebody would need something and I felt if I did not respond the off-task behaviours would have escalated. As a teacher I wanted my students to be doing some learning activity while I was dealing with administrative duties. My thinking that routines and repetition would be a way to keep them on task did not work. Their behaviour indicated that the routines were not working and that perhaps including some discussion time for them to share their thinking, questions, and needs might be a better way to start their learning.

This balancing of administrative duties is something I continue to work on and while it seems to have settled there are still days when issues arise that need to be dealt with right away. One solution is to leave the phone in the office and let the answering machine get it but then I worry about if there is a family emergency and parents need to get in touch with their children. I have come up with morning routines for my class for the first fifteen minutes of the day so I can deal with any issues that come up in the morning and then we can start our lessons. I also try to remind myself daily that there is time to respond. I do not have to respond to something right away unless it is an emergency. It is okay to wait until the end of the day when I am done teaching. The other part that I need to work on is asking for help and letting my staff know that I need help. Again this goes back to my first point of wanting to be a supportive administrator and having a smooth transition for staff and students. I always encourage my students and staff to ask for help and would never say no but I seldom ask for help when I need it. This is a huge learning curve for me as an administrator and definitely an area I need to work on improving.

Overall, I have learned a lot about my teaching and being an administrator through this research project. There were aspects of my research plans that I was unable to fulfill but I think I

was able to gain insight into becoming a better teacher and being open to improving my practice for my students and myself.

I chose the Alert Program® to teach self-regulation strategies to my students because it is targeted toward students who are eight years of age or older and provides adaptations for use with older students. The mile markers were easy to implement and did not involve a lot of pre-planning and purchasing materials ahead of time. Other programs like Zones of Regulation® used materials that were cartoonish and young and I felt my middle school students would not respond as well to the activities. I would recommend the Alert Program® for use in middle school classrooms.

My research question was, “How can I best teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom?” Through examining my researcher journal entries I was able to identify three key themes:

Hands-on activities – My students responded best when the learning involved hands-on activities where they could experience the tools for changing their levels of alertness.

Flexibility – As a teacher I needed to be flexible in my planning and respond to the learning needs of my students.

Balancing pressures – In my new role as vice principal and classroom teacher I had to develop ways to support my students while making sure the needs of the staff and other students were supported as well.

I will further discuss these observations in the coming chapter and how they impacted my practice and relationship with my students.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Conclusions

This study explored my own experience as a teacher and vice principal teaching self-regulation strategies using the Alert Program® mile markers in my multi-grade inclusive classroom. The goal of this self-study project was to identify how I can best teach/model self-regulation strategies in my classroom. Through my self-study I was able to use general observations and reflections about my own teaching in my researcher journal to come up with the best ways to teach my class self-regulation skills.

Recommendations

Although the context of my research may be unique to my remote rural school classroom of seven students in grade 6 to 10 I feel I may have a few recommendations to make for other teachers who are interested in teaching self-regulation skills. As I only know my experiences I can not guarantee other teachers will have similar results but my intention is to include what went well and areas of concern when considering delivering a self-regulation program like the Alert Program®.

Hands-on activities. For those teachers wishing to teach self-regulation I would recommend using hands-on activities as much as possible as this was the best strategy for teaching my students. For my students the Alert Program® was new and unknown to them. The language of the levels of alertness; high, low, and just right, and the tools and ways to change your levels of alertness can be overwhelming if you have never heard about it. Hands-on

activities give students control over the activity and allow them to explore the tools and strategies on their own volition. These explorations are also what the Alert Program® promotes, using different objects, spaces, seats, lights, and sounds to adjust levels of alertness. For my students the hands-on activities made the Alert Program® accessible and fun and the students were able to keep many of the manipulatives as long as they used them as tools for self-regulation. The hands-on activities also allowed the students to discover what tools did not work for them. Students might feel obligated to use everything presented to them but the mile markers allow students to try things without committing. This can be a relief for those students who feel this way.

Throughout the teaching of the Alert Program® all the tools for self-regulation are offered but not imposed on the students. Continuing to offer all the tools and having them available for students to use when they need to is a great way to allow students to experience hands-on activities. The option to offer choices of tools was a positive of the program for the teachers in Ireland who implemented the Alert Program®. The teachers were able to find which strategies worked best and that the hand fidgets were not useful for one class as they could be misused (Mac Cobb et al, 2014).

Flexibility. Another of my findings highlighted the need for flexibility in my teaching and in the classroom environment. For those teachers looking to introduce a self-regulation program like the Alert Program® I recommend that you remain flexible in your planning and teaching. As teachers we can often get stuck in our agendas for delivering the curriculum and feel that taking the time to differentiate our instruction and planning for a variety of learning styles will take away from our teaching objectives. This can seem counterintuitive to our own teaching practice; however, the opposite was true as I found in this self-study. I was able to see more student engagement in learning and an increase in self-regulation behaviours when I changed my plans to

meet my students' needs. This also changed the environment in my classroom as the students' needs took precedence over my own and they were able to choose their preferential tools to self-regulate and manage their own levels of alertness. Flexibility in my teaching practice allowed my students to self-regulate in an environment that considered their own needs which helped them be successful in learning the tools and strategies of the Alert Program®.

Balancing pressures. The final finding this self-study research project resulted in was the importance of balancing pressures. I experienced a number of pressures during this research project. I was beginning the school year as a vice principal/teacher. I was feeling the pressures of time to complete my research cycle in the first term of school. I was also feeling pressure from taking on the role of vice principal and the added responsibilities beyond my classroom to the entire student body and staff. I recommend that teachers in a similar situation of implementing a self-regulation program while adjusting to their new role of vice principal/teacher need be aware of their own needs professionally as a teacher and administrator. The best way I found to deal with the pressures was to acknowledge them and make changes where possible with the best interests of the students and staff in mind. The added responsibility of administration provides new insight into how a school operates and provides new ways to interact with students beyond your own classroom. It also can take you away from teaching your students, as you may have to leave your classroom to deal with various administrative issues. Introducing self-regulation strategies from the Alert Program® gave my students tools to decrease their off-task behaviours and enabled them to get work done even when I had to step out of the classroom. Ensuring there are daily routines in place at times when I am most called to deal with administrative issues also helped me balance the pressures I was dealing with. Another recommendation I would suggest is letting your students and staff know when you need assistance in order to better balance the

pressures. I am still working on this aspect but it is important to consider when feeling overwhelmed. Finally, it is important to remember unless it is a life-threatening situation there is time. Answering emails, helping a staff member complete forms, and dealing with unexpected situations can be dealt with in time and often time will help you solve the issue more thoughtfully.

While teaching moves toward more personalized learning it is important for teachers to be attentive to each student and observation becomes a key teaching tool in meeting their needs. As my experience suggests this tool can be lost while teachers try to balance all of the tasks required to provide appropriate learning activities for their students. Being able to recognize the needs of your students enables teachers to plan better and ensure that every student can be successful so it is important to practice recording observations in a way that works best for you as a teacher without taking away from your learning activities.

Method

Self-study research is an acceptable method to create and share knowledge about my own teaching practice in relation to my students. It allows for reflection within the context of my own classroom and requires exploration of my teaching practice in relation to my students and myself. Through thoughtful reflection I was able to take a close look at how my teaching changed during the research cycle. I was able to explore different teaching methods within the Alert Program® to identify the method that worked best for teaching self-regulation to my students. I was able to learn from each lesson and improve my own practice by paying attention to the needs of my students.

Issues for Further Investigation

My research question asked: how can I best teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom? I was able to discover teaching strategies that worked well in implementing the Alert Program® in my classroom. A few issues that might invite further investigation arose while I was working on my self-study research project. One issue is to compare self-regulation strategies like those in the Alert Program® within a whole school model instead of just in one classroom. Will the students' use of the tools and strategies to identify and adjust their levels of alertness improve if the self-regulation program is delivered school wide and is practiced with the common language of the program used by the entire student body? Will there be issues with adapting the activities to a wide range of age levels? What challenges and successes would result in whole school implementation of a self-regulation program? This exploration may result in new knowledge about the best ways to deliver such a program and whether or not self-regulation program delivery is dependent or independent of the group size. It might also lead to insights about how teachers can personalize their delivery of such programs to better meet the learning needs of their students in a classroom delivery model.

Another issue that could be explored is what happens if your students are able to self-regulate and adjust their level of alertness to be ready to learn but they do not have the knowledge, skills, and abilities of learners? How do you move further along the self-regulation spectrum from behaviour self-regulation to academic self-regulation? I think this is important to explore because there may be a gap between these two types of self-regulation. My students were able to decrease their off-task behaviour but often still took a long time to engage in the learning activity.

Limitations

This self-study research project was limited by my own subjectivity, positioned as both the participant and the researcher. My reflections, observations, interpretations, and findings are limited by my own positionality and bias in this study. It should be noted that other teachers teaching self-regulation strategies would have entirely different experiences, as their bias and positionality will impact their experiences. This project was an exploration of improving teaching practice and this should also be taken in to account.

Conclusion

The goal of this self-study research project was to identify the best ways to teach self-regulation in a multi-grade inclusive classroom. I identified a need in my classroom to teach self-regulation and found research to support the use of self-regulation tools and strategies in helping students manage their levels of alertness to be better prepared to learn in school. Using self-study research methodology to explore my teaching practice in relation to my students and myself I was able to discover ways to best teach my students the self-regulation tools and strategies to my students. I found using hands-on teaching activities to be the best way to do this. Reflecting on my observations and researcher journal I was able to find that flexibility and an ability to balance pressures of time, new roles and responsibilities are also important aspects of delivering a self-regulation program to consider. As a self-study my research and findings are limited to my own practice within the context of my classroom and school. Teachers looking at implementing a self-regulation program in their classrooms may find some insights into how best to teach such programs but it should be noted that their experiences would be different as they consider their own practice, the needs of their students and their classroom environment. I would recommend that teachers try to implement self-regulation programs like the Alert Program® to support their students and give them tools and strategies to be ready to learn.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Script

Good morning class. I wanted to let you know that as well as being your vice principal and teacher I am currently a student in Master of Education in Special Education Degree program at Vancouver Island University. I am conducting a research project in an effort to improve my teaching of strategies to help students understand and manage their emotions to be alert and ready to learn. I am inviting you to be participants in my research.

Participation in this research includes participating in regular classroom activities about being alert and ready to learn from now until the beginning of December 2016. I will be assessing your needs with behavioural checklists and asking you to complete questionnaires after each strategy is taught so I can evaluate my teaching and look for ways to improve it. I will also be keeping a researcher journal where I write about my impressions of my teaching and how you respond to my teaching.

If you choose to participate in the study, you do not have to do anything different than you would in the regular classroom. Neither I nor anyone else will know whether you have chosen to participate, as consent and assent forms will not be open until after first term marks are entered.

Please take these letters and forms home to your parents. Both they and you have to sign to give consent or assent to participate, have direct quotes used from your completed questionnaires and that is explained in the letters.

If you have any questions I can be reached at 250-235-3007 or ndanuser@gmail.com.

Appendix B
Recruitment Letter and Consent Form
“Self Regulation in a Multi-grade Inclusive Classroom”
September 2016

Nancy Danuser
Masters in Education Student,
Vancouver Island University
ndanuser@gmail.com

Mary Ann Richards, Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
(250) 753-3245 Maryann.Richards@viu.ca

As well as being a teacher and vice principal here at Tahltan School, I am a student in the Master of Education in Special Education Degree program at Vancouver Island University. As part of my degree completion I will be designing and conducting a research project from September 6, 2016 to December 15, 2016 with my final thesis submitted in April 2017.

The purpose of this research is to improve my teaching of strategies to help students understand how to identify and manage their emotions to be alert and ready to learn.

I will be conducting this research with all of my students as part of the regular program. During this project students will be asked to complete short questionnaires about the value of the strategies I teach, and how they use the techniques and demonstrate, or do not demonstrate behaviours that help them be alert and ready to learn.

I am requesting your consent and your child's assent to participate in this research project. Research participants will not be asked to do anything different than the rest of the class. Participation will involve having questionnaires and behavioural checklists analyzed as part of the study.

Your child's participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw at any time until the data is analyzed in December 2016.

Responses will be kept confidential to protect privacy, however some participants may be identifiable by those who know them based on experiences they describe. I will not know who is part of the study until after first term report cards are entered at the beginning of December 2016.

There is a risk of potential identification and there are no benefits of participation, but there are potential learning benefits from the project for the whole class.

All records of participation will be kept strictly confidential, such that only my supervisor and I will have access to the information. Data will be stored in a locked cupboard in my classroom. Data will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the project, approximately three years from now, on December 2019. Electronic files will also be deleted at that time. The results from this study will be reported in a thesis paper presented as partial requirement for completion of the Master of Education in Special Education Degree program.

The use of your child's responses in my analysis is voluntary and I will not know who has given consent until after first term report cards have been entered. This will eliminate any concerns about coercion and collusion in regards to your child's participation.

If you have any concerns about your child's participation in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you do not consent to your child participating in this research project there is no need to return this form. If you consent to your child participating in this research project please complete the form below and return it to the Tahltan School Secretary in the envelope provided by November 25, 2016. Keep one copy for your own records.

I give consent for my child to take part in this research project.

I consent to the use of direct quotes from the questionnaires my child completes.

Printed name of Parent/Guardian

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Printed name of Child

Appendix C
Assent Form

“Self Regulation in a Multi-grade Inclusive Classroom”
September 2016

Nancy Danuser
Masters in Education Student,
Vancouver Island University
ndanuser@gmail.com

Mary Ann Richards, Supervisor
Faculty of Education
Vancouver Island University
(250) 753-3245 Maryann.Richards@viu.ca

As well as being your teacher and vice principal at Tahltan School, I am also a student in the Master of Education in Special Education Degree program at Vancouver Island University. I am working on a research project and would like to invite you to participate in research with the purpose of improving my teaching. The research will be part of your regular learning activities in school and you will be asked to complete questionnaires about my teaching. If you decide to participate your answers to the questionnaires will be used in my final report.

You may decide to change your mind about having your answers used in my report. That is okay. You will still do all the regular class activities and you will not be treated differently if you do not participate. No one will know if you volunteered to participate unless you tell him or her. I will not know who is part of the study until the first term report cards are entered.

Your responses will be kept locked in a cupboard and only visible by me. Your identity will be kept confidential to protect your privacy, however you may be identifiable by people who know you based on details you provide in your questionnaire.

There are no benefits of participation in the research project but there may be learning benefits from the project for all class members.

If you have any concerns about your child's participation in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.

You can ask any questions you may have about the study. If you have a question later that you can't think of now you can call or have your parents call me at 250-235-3007 or my supervisor, Mary Ann Richards at 250-753-3245.

If you choose not to participate in this research project you do not need to return this form. If you decide to participate in this research project please complete the form below with your parent's help and return it to the Tahltan School Secretary in the envelope provided by November 25, 2016. Keep one copy for your own records.

Appendix D

Behavioural Checklist

Date: _____ Student: _____

| Behaviour | Start of day | During Lesson Subject: | During Lesson Subject: | During Lesson Subject: | During Lesson Subject: |
|---|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Non-compliance | | | | | |
| Leaving the classroom without permission | | | | | |
| Talking while others are talking | | | | | |
| Verbal outbursts | | | | | |
| Physical outbursts | | | | | |
| Swearing (note if direct or indirect) | | | | | |
| On task during work times | | | | | |
| Uses classroom procedures for taking breaks | | | | | |
| Quick transitions | | | | | |
| Other observations about self-regulation. | | | | | |

Appendix E

Research Journal Focus Questions

Lesson: _____

Date: _____

1. What was the goal for the lesson?
2. What strategy did I use and how did I implement it?
3. In general, how did the students respond to the lesson?
4. What would I change if I tried this again?

Appendix F

Post-Teaching Questionnaire

Please share your thoughts about today's lesson on self-regulation. Circle the answer that best describes your experience or write a brief description to answer the questions.

1. a. Did you like the lesson?

Yes

No

1. b. Depending on your answer, describe what you enjoyed or did not enjoy about the lesson?

2. Which activities did you like?

3. How did you feel during the lesson? For example, angry, frustrated, bored, curious, interested, involved, excited, etc.

4. What do you remember most from today's lesson?

5. Do you think you will use the self-regulation strategies you have learned today? Why or why not?
