

Graduate – Students with Exceptionalities: Student Observation

A. Grade Level: Kindergarten

Gender: Male

Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic

Disability: Identified as Developmentally Delayed

Relevant Physical Characteristics: Mr. Z has no obvious physical issues. It could be said that he appears slightly smaller than other boys in his class, but that is based purely on subjective observation.

B. Description of the classroom setting and what was occurring during your observation.

I have observed Mr. Z in my general education practicum classroom in the past, but on January 30, 2009, I specifically observed him taking part in his self-contained classroom setting for activities including calendar, language arts, and social studies. In this setting, Mr. Z was working along side two other boys and a girl for academic work, and the rest of the group of about seven students for the whole group review of calendar, days of the week, weather, and feelings. The classroom contains a heterogeneous group of students with disabilities including, but not limited to, autism, visually impaired, and hearing impaired. Later in the day, I observed Mr. Z when he rejoined his general education classmates for recess and rest time.

In the past, I have observed Mr. Z with the general education classroom during morning circle time (it is only within the last week that he has started having all of his morning spent in the self-contained classroom), doing math and number hand-writing worksheets, during a social studies lesson and math lesson I taught, during one-on-one work for a math problem I created involving shapes, and during one-on-one for counting assessment I administered for the first marking period report cards. Within the general education setting, Mr. Z is one of a heterogeneous group of 18 students. He is the only student who currently leaves the classroom for special services.

C. Individual student academic skills observed, including any apparent achievement problems.

Mr. Z was one of the most actively participating students among the other students with disabilities. However, his participation was unstructured. By this, I mean that he would consistently call out without first providing any signal, such as raising his hand, that he wished to give a response. During the morning circle time, Mr. Z was able to correctly respond to the question, “What season are we still in?” but incorrectly responded, “Wednesday!” to, “What month is it?” He also had difficulty with letter sound identification. When asked, “What letter does ‘Friday’ start with?” he responded, “T!” When told, “Listen again. Fffffriday,” he responded, “J!” Also during the morning circle time, Mr. Z was asked to color in the thermometer up to a line the teacher had drawn. He had to be redirected to do this because he became distracted at the board, but he did rather well using his fine-motor skills to color in the thermometer. However, he did not stop coloring at the line and his teacher needed to instruct him to stop.

During language arts, Mr. Z had some concentration issues. During the lesson (about 20 minutes), Mr. Z was redirected from doing things with his hands (putting his

fingers in his mouth, playing with items he was not supposed to have) about 4 or 5 times, redirected about doing things with his feet (kicking a lot but not in an aggressive way) 2 times, and given repeated directions about 5 times. However, Mr. Z's visual focus was general on his teacher, whether he followed directions or not. Again, his letter-sound relationships and reading ability were lacking. After copying the word "in" and asked, "What did you write?" Mr. Z responded, "Go." Throughout the other lessons, Mr. Z had to be redirected to stop touching/fidgeting with items within his reach and to have directions given more than once.

In working with Mr. Z in the general education classroom setting in the past, one of his notably lacking academic skills has been one-to-one correspondence between numbers and objects when counting. Generally, he can count accurately up to 5 or so, but will then begin saying random numbers and counting objects multiple times. His special education teacher confirmed that this is still an issue for him when she administered the report card assessment within the last month.

D. Attentiveness to task, time-on-task, task completion.

As described above, Mr. Z has difficulty staying focused sometimes because he begins to distract himself by playing with objects within his reach. Also I have found and observed that sometimes Mr. Z gets off-task because he will begin to talk about something which is unrelated to school. But despite his distractibility, I have observed Mr. Z complete his work; though it is generally not correct unless he is given guidance.

E. Motor Activity

I have not noticed Mr. Z have any gross motor skill problems. I observed that he is an active little boy on the playground, climbing and hanging on the various playground equipment.

F. Fine Motor Skills (writing, copying ability, pencil grip, scissor skills)

During his language arts lesson and his social studies lesson on January 30, I observed Mr. Z copy letters and cut paper. I immediately noted that Mr. Z wrote with his left hand. He still does not write his entire first name in legible letters, but he was able to copy words such as "in" and "China" moderately well. The size of the letters was inconsistent with one-another and the lines were very shaky, but the words were legible. When directed to do so, Mr. Z erased and wrote a capital "C" in the word "China."

Interestingly, I observed that Mr. Z cut paper with his *right* hand. When I pointed this out to a paraprofessional in the classroom, she said she had not noticed that he switched hands for cutting. I would be curious to see what he could do with a pair of left-handed scissors. While cutting right-handed, Mr. Z attempted to follow the circular line, but had several snags around the piece. I also observed that he cut very close to his fingers which were holding the paper.

G. Strategies used by the student

I am not aware of any formal strategies that Mr. Z uses to help himself academically or behaviorally.

H. Ability to follow directions, responsiveness to verbal instruction, understanding of vocabulary.

Following directions can be somewhat difficult for Mr. Z. I heard at least 15 times where Mr. Z needed to have directions repeated to him, either about completing a task or about stopping his own distracting behavior, while I observed him in the self-contained classroom. At first, it can seem that Mr. Z will do as asked, but he does not always follow through. For example, while on the playground, my classroom paraprofessional had to talk with Mr. Z because he had been too rough on the slide. The paraprofessional instructed Mr. Z that he was no longer to use the slide for that recess period. He agreed, but was back on the slide within about 1 minute. When reminded that he was not to use the slide any more that day, his expression seemed very calm but almost as if he had forgotten that he was not supposed to be on the slide. He listened to directions at this point and did not go down the slide again.

I. Oral communication skills (vocabulary and expression, articulation, voice tone, loudness, quality)

Mr. Z's speech pattern does not sound completely fluent. His parents speak Spanish in the home, and I believe the school considers him an English Language Learner. However, his use of vocabulary is generally good (when compared with his peers), but he can be difficult to understand at time and has almost a high pitch in his speech. I have *never* heard Mr. Z raise his voice or sound angry, but I have also found little differentiation in his tone. When Mr. Z seems confused or upset in some way, he seems to stop talking or just mumble, which is based on my own observations in the past and statements made by the special education teacher.

J. Social-behavioral skills (self-control, passivity, aggressiveness, social skills). If you have selected a student with a behavioral need, you need to collect data on the frequency of the behavior and the context in which it occurs!

I have not seen Mr. Z become especially aggressive with any other students. Sometimes he engages in pushing in line with other boys, but it is something they are all doing. However, Mr. Z sometimes has a harder time stopping this behavior once started than the other students do. Socially, I have seen him play with some of the other students, but I would not say that I have observed him with anyone that would be an especially strong attachment in class. I have observed that he does seem fond of and close to his older sister, who is also an elementary student.

K. Response to intervention or correction

While observing Mr. Z in the self-contained classroom setting, I have seen that he has made vast improvements in his writing ability as compared to when I first observed him in October. He also appears to have more number sense because he is accurately able to say which set of objects has "more," "less," or "same." (Note: He is able to distinguish "same" for small groups of objects numbering less than 5, according to what I observed.) I have also noticed that his special education teacher will count, "One, two, three," after repeating a direction to him to get him to pay attention to what she has said.

L. Your targeted behavior for this student (academic or behavioral)

According to the special education teacher, Mr. Z's new schedule will have him in the general education classroom during the afternoon hours only so that he can participate in the general education classroom lunch, recess, rest time, choice time, centers (art, music, PE, computers, library, and guidance), and mathematics. Therefore, I feel that the targeted academic behavior I would like to work on with Mr. Z is his one-to-one matching skills and counting. There are also a few other students in the general education classroom who could, I believe, benefit from such a lesson and would serve as good peers for Mr. Z. Also, there are several students in the class whom I feel have a level of maturity to assist as peer tutors for possible activities.

J. Your recommendations for next steps or intervention to support this child based on your observations.

In the general education classroom, I would like to see Mr. Z placed in a different area where he has fewer distractions. He is constantly redirected from touching markers and the teacher's pointer where he currently sits for circle, and I feel that he would benefit from having those temptations out of reach. The classroom space over-all is very crowded, so I feel rearranging the room to allow for more open areas without the necessity of placing all the students within reach of toys or things they are not supposed to play with would help all the students focus during group learning in the circle. I would also be interested to see if Mr. Z can focus better on his work if he is allowed to sit in his chair with his feet up. He kicked his legs under his chair a lot and had to be directed to put his feet down to the floor a few times when pulling them into his seat. He seemed to fidget and be slightly uncomfortable this way. I am curious if allowing him this posture would help him to focus.

Additionally, I think Mr. Z should be given some metacognition training to help him slow down and think before he answers. He would call out response, which were many times incorrect. Needing to take a little bit of time to think about his response might allow him to have greater comprehension.