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**Case Study**

1. **Introduction of Child**

For the past ten weeks, I have been observing a 10 year-old child in my fourth grade classroom whom I will call Blake. Blake is a Caucasian male student from an upper-middle class family. His family owns a local business that does many transactions with the university so money is not an issue that this child has encountered in his lifetime. He has two siblings, of which he is the middle child.

 Blake is very athletic and tends to thrive in learning environments where competition and athletics are included. He is a very independent student and is able to complete work without much teacher interaction. However, if he does not understand he is not afraid to ask a question. Blake tends to be a leader in the classroom. He is not fond of any perceived injustice in the classroom. He encourages other students to complete required tasks and to live up to expectations. Often, his behavior can dictate the behavior of those around him.

I chose Blake because is very middle of the road when it comes to academics. He is higher in math than he is in reading, however he is on or close to grade-level in both subject areas. I also chose him because he had a very interesting and open personality. I thought that he would be an interesting student to observe and this his personality would allow for me to make detailed observations.

1. **Analysis of Strengths**

A major strength that Blake has is writing. Throughout the year the students have been assigned several writing projects. The first was a free write where the students chose what to write about. For this assignment Blake wrote a detailed summary of the popular sports movie *The Blind Side*. In it he used correct punctuation often, had dialogue with quotation marks included, used correct capitalization most of the time, and wrote in a chronological order making the paper easy to read and understand. Writing that is completed in a shorter amount of time doesn’t always portray this same understanding of writing, but when provided ample time to complete a writing assignment, Blake does well.

 Another strength that Blake has is his vocabulary. In his writing and regular vocabulary work Blake does very well. Many students in our class struggle with vocabulary. Blake tends to understand vocabulary more quickly and can use it in a variety of situations. For example, he included the word “mystical” in his writing. We have weekly vocabulary sheets that students are required to complete. Blake often has very little trouble understanding the vocabulary given. When he does encounter a word that confuses him, he will ask for help and with a little guidance is often able to correctly identify where the word should be placed. Even our spelling sheets require that students understand the meanings of the spelling words for completion. We also have a word of the week that is focused on. Every week, students complete a word of the week sheet that requires students to complete a definition, synonym, antonym, use the word in a sentence, and illustrate the sentence. Blake’s answers are typically well thought out and accurate showing an understanding of the word.

 As far as his disposition goes, Blake is an outstanding student. He is always excited and ready to learn. He has no trouble speaking up in class, and often can encourage others to do so because of his social affluence. He has a desire to help his classmates succeed, and will ask for help when needed. He is polite and respectful and works very hard. His assignments are always turned in on time and written neatly. He is able to work both independently and in a group setting. He cares deeply about injustices and will stick up for what he believes is right. All of these dispositions aid Blake in his academic success.

1. **Analysis of Weaknesses**

Two of Blake’s major struggles are fluency and comprehension. Samples of these weaknesses were hard to obtain, because it comes from my observation of the student during small group instruction and conversations with my mentor teacher. With fluency, Blake has high word-recognition and can read many grade-level texts. However, his intonation is very monotone and he puts very little expression into what he is reading. When we can engage him with a text he enjoys, this fluency improves significantly. For example, we read *Grace and the Time Machine*, which is written in play format. Blake was assigned a part to read that he enjoyed and he was able to add in more expression and excitement as he was reading.

Blake’s comprehension is also not terribly low, but could use some improvement. As evidenced by his detailed recounting of *The Blind Side*, Blake is fully capable of reading, comprehending, and retelling anything he reads. However, in some instances he can lose his train of thought, which affects his comprehension of what he has read. Early in the school year I asked him to tell me what was happening in the book he was reading. He could give me very obvious bits and pieces but it appeared that he was missing the connection of the whole story. I included a sample of a book summary taken from Blake’s literature log. In it, Blake discusses three unrelated elements of the book without any supporting detail or reflection. While all of his details are true, he identifies the main idea of the book as several different items, none of which are actually the true overarching main idea of the book. This assessment could have come from his location in the book and how much information he knew when the section was written, but it also evidences his lack of comprehension of the whole picture.

Some dispositions that Blake could improve on are his focus. Sometimes Blake looses focus easily. He is often wiggling or moving in his chair and staring at various parts of the room. He sometimes blurts out answers in class, although this behavior has begun to subside with little teacher intervention. Blake can be very competitive with others, which sometimes causes problems during group work when Blake wants badly to succeed and perceives that others are in the way of that goal. There were many times during my observation where I wondered if Blake was paying attention to what was happening or if he was just looking around and ignoring. This behavior has become less frequent since centers have been implemented in reading.

1. **Suggested Learning Environment and Strategies**

I think that Blake would learn best in an environment where he can be active and engaged at all times, but for shorter periods of time. At the beginning of the year the reading classroom was formatted in a traditional direct-instruction manner. When this learning environment was in place Blake wiggled, squirmed, wandered the room with his eyes, and appeared less engaged than others. However, when centers were implemented many of these behaviors lessened or disappeared altogether. I believe that the shorter time frames for activities keep Blake more engaged and on-task, because he knows how much time he has to work and it allows little room for him to become bored. The activeness of getting up and moving to a different center every 15 minutes or so also seems to improve some of his behaviors. Getting Blake up and moving often is an important tool to keep him engaged.

 To help Blake improve his fluency and comprehension I believe Blake needs some more one-on-one teacher time where the focus is practicing on fluency and adding expression when we read. If I were going to work on this with Blake I would have him read books that are below grade-level so he is not having to use more brain-power on comprehension and can focus solely on fluency. You could do this in the form of reading buddies with a younger class where Blake has an authentic purpose to read these types of texts. To aid and better his comprehension Blake just needs more direct practice. Certain strategies such as monitoring inner dialogue and finding the main idea I believe could greatly improve Blake’s comprehension overall.

 Overall, Blake is an excellent student. His work-ethic and drive make up for and eliminate many of his weakness academically and bolster his strengths. Blake is successful in every subject and is able to complete most work that is given to him. He is also a really fun student to have in class and was even more fun to observe and interact with over the course of this semester.