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Sealing the Cracks: An Examination of Using Special Education Accommodations in the General Education Classroom

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Abstract

This action research project aims to understand how accommodations typically reserved for students with documented academic needs can aid students without these plans while simultaneously preserving academic rigor and integrity. The desire for this research came out of the need to help students that slipped through cracks of the education system–they did not have or desire formal academic accommodations but may have had the need. These students may have had good enough grades to avoid detection or referrals but could have still benefited from a more intentional approach. This project surveyed students about their own views of their writing abilities, garnered feedback from students about their structured, extra help sessions that occurred outside of the class periods, excerpts from student outlines and quote guides, and teacher reflections. Overall, the researcher found that a broad spectrum of self-identities as writers exists in a classroom; some students feel that they are high powered writers, but the majority feels that they are capable but still in need of help and guidance. This help and guidance manifested itself in the extra help sessions, as participants overwhelmingly felt that having a small group to work in with more direct instruction from a teacher was integral in their accomplishment of a research paper unit. Similarly, structured outlines that supported paper organization and flow were beneficial for typically low performing students in catching up to students that are typically performing at the middle level. This research does not provide solutions to all questions about teaching writing but does provide insight to teachers of how they can better support all students in their classrooms.

Keywords: accommodations, writing pedagogy, outlines, special education, writing process

Introduction

The Research Paper is a cornerstone of English Language Arts classes in the United States education system. Just like freshmen in high school read *Romeo and Juliet* and *To Kill A Mockingbird,* students are expected to research, collect quotes, outline, draft, revise, and edit a research paper before their four years are done. While these mainstays of English classes have largely stayed the same over the decades, teachers' approach towards teaching it have changed not only in pedagogy, but within the dimension of accommodating diverse learners. More and more students are receiving necessary and well needed services to meet their learning needs; these accommodations could be for those with dyslexia, those with ADHD, or those with anxiety. Given the drive for education in the least restrictive environment, all of these students may very well be in the same class, resulting in more than twelve Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) or 504's that a teacher has to keep in line and adhere to. While this may create extra work for the general education teacher, it is not the problem in and of itself. The problem is not that teachers need to accommodate diverse learners, it is that many do not have the toolkit of strategies that can check many boxes at once.

Students outside of special education services also struggle with academics. Horowitz and Whittaker (2017) found that over 1.22 million students repeated a grade in the 2014-2015 school year, and 76% of them were not identified as having special needs or requiring academic accommodations. There could be a number of situations in which students have to repeat a year of academics, but there is a possibility that some of these students had undiagnosed learning needs (Horowtiz and Whittaker, 2017). Undiagnosed students occur for a number of reasons-such as warning or alerting signs like misbehavior and poor attendance being

misinterpreted (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017). Additionally, parents may refuse services or

evaluations for their child due to a perceived social stigma (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017). And

while technically against U.S. Department of Education guidelines, many students are not given

evaluations and accommodations due to them succeeding well in another class, or just not having

grades "low enough" to warrant intervention (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017).

Before arguing for the use of accommodations, a baseline goal for what an

accommodation can be used for should be established. The fundamental argument for

accommodations, as mandated by law, is to allow all people to have equal access to assessments

without being disadvantaged by their disability (Potter, et. al., 2016) (Byrnes, 2008).

Accommodations are also meant to be 'outcome neutral,' meaning that they are only to

guarantee equal access, not provide an advantage (Potter. Et. al., 2016). While accommodations

are meant to be for only those with specific needs, the goal of any accommodation is to provide

the most accurate measure of a student's learning (Potter, et. al., 2016). If the primary goal of

accommodations is meant to equalize a gap made by an academic disability or struggle, why not

allow them to be used in general education? Some accommodations, like extended time, or

reduced multiple choice options, may provide an advantage for those without accommodation

plans. Would the use of assistive technology, like speech to text, or a more structured, intentional

approach to writing result in a positive effect on student work?

Regardless of the ideology surrounding representation in special education or other

barriers that students face in being accommodated, teachers will have to deal with one or a

number of these situations. Teachers in the general education setting will have to teach students

that have not yet qualified or been evaluated for special education services. There are students in

the general education setting that are at risk of an unnecessary special education placement that

could otherwise be mitigated with proper intervention. Lastly, there just may be a student who really needs extra help. This begs to ask my research question: What special education accommodations could be mainstreamed into the general education classroom to aid student success?

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development* (1978) depicts a Virgilian relationship of students learning, grasping, and mastering new skills and concepts both in and outside of the classroom. The *Zone's* purgatorial nature centers the learner and their desire to pass through, or to acquire a specific skill. Like the famous Renaissance poet, the learner requires a guide to pass through the Zone (1978). This guide, a More Knowledgeable Other, as coined by Vygotsky, has knowledge and abilities outside of and above that of the learner (1978). Within the context of the classroom, this is nominally the teacher, although learning from higher achieving students could also be present. The More Knowledgeable Other's assistance to the learner is not solely centered around transmission of knowledge but through social interaction–Vygotsky believed that this "cooperative dialogue" provides potential clarifications for instructions, modeling or building of the student-teacher relationship (1978). While the More Knowledgeable Other assists the learner, the learner observes the actions and builds the ability to accomplish their task on their own, thus leaving the Zone (Vygotsky, 1978). This theoretical framework builds the foundation for this project's research goals.

This study emulates the journey of the More Knowledgeable Other and the learner in writing a research paper. The teacher and facilitator represents the More Knowledgeable Other as each individual student represents the learner. The objective at hand is to research, organize, and then write a research paper. For the sake of the study, the task is focused on the Outline and

Quote Guide in which students input direct quotes and practice contextualizing (Introduce, Cite, and Explain) and also structuring paragraphs and using topic sentences. Instead of simply asking students to write an outline and paper on their own, they are given a skeleton outline in which to structure their own writing. They are modeled to how an outline and essay structure should look and they do their best to emulate it. The students also came in during study halls and after school slots to work with the teacher on their outlines, cementing the social interaction that occurs between learner and teacher. These small group times also provided the opportunity for personal reflection for students to gauge their progress and what they need to do to accomplish their tasks. Overall, by the end of the "intervention" of structured writing guides and small group work time, they are able to accomplish the task.

Literature Review

Gaps in Special Education Services

Students outside of special education services also struggle with academics. Horowitz and Whittaker (2017) found that over 1.22 million students repeated a grade in the 2014-2015 school year, and 76% of them were not identified as having special needs or requiring academic accommodations. There could be a number of situations in which students have to repeat a year of academics, but there is a possibility that some of these students had undiagnosed learning needs (Horowtiz and Whittaker (2017). Undiagnosed students occur for a number of reasons, such as warning or alerting signs like misbehavior and poor attendance being misinterpreted (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017). Additionally, parents may refuse services or evaluations for their child due to a perceived social stigma (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017). And while technically against U.S. Department of Education guidelines, many students are not given

evaluations and accommodations due to them succeeding well in another class, or just not having grades "low enough" to warrant intervention (Horowitz and Whittaker, 2017).

Purpose of Accommodations

Before arguing for the use of accommodations, a baseline goal for what an accommodation can be used for should be established. The fundamental argument for accommodations, as mandated by law, is to allow all people to have equal access to assessments without being disadvantaged by their disability (Potter, et. al., 2016) (Byrnes, 2008). Accommodations are also meant to be 'outcome neutral', meaning that they are only to guarantee equal access, not provide an advantage (Potter. Et. al., 2016). While accommodations are meant to be for only those with specific needs, the goal of any accommodation is to provide the most accurate measure of a student's learning (Potter, et. al., 2016). If the primary goal of accommodations is meant to equalize a gap made by an academic disability or struggle, why not allow them to be used in general education?

Some accommodations, like extended time, or reduced multiple choice options, may provide an advantage for those without accommodation plans. Would the use of assistive technology, like speech to text, or a more structured, intentional approach to writing?

History of Accommodations

The understanding of learning exceptionalities has evolved over the centuries, and with it, a change of approaches of how to best accommodate learners (Scammacca, et. al., 2016). Dyslexia used to be considered an issue with visual world processing, with attempts to accommodate by aiding vision (Scammacca, et. al., 2016). The 1980's brought about a focus on the teaching of cognitive psychology, which then led into an emphasis on reading comprehension in the 1990's (Scammacca, et. al., 2016). 2002 and 2004 brought about legislative changes in

dealing with Accommodations, with the Education Sciences Reform Act and The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Scammacca, et. al., 2016). The aforementioned legal actions also expanded research on interventions in both people with learning disabilities and those without (Scammacca, et. al., 2016). In the 1980's, 83% of intervention studies focused solely on people with Learning Disabilities (LD) designation; in the space of 2010-2014, it was 7% (Scammacca, et. Al., 2016). This sets precedence for the (ironic) inclusion of students without specified academic needs in the practice of classroom accommodations.

Review of Accommodations

The following accommodations are commonly used in the general education classroom. The purpose of this section is to establish which accommodations violate the general principle of accommodations as laid out by Potter, et. al. (2016) - the accommodation should be "outcome neutral," meaning that no student is at either an advantage or disadvantage with the given.

Small Group Interventions

Hatcher, et. al. (2006) studied the efficacy of weekly small group intervention on elementary students in their reading comprehension levels. Of the 685 first graders in the area, 118 of the lowest identified spellers were invited to participate, along with 17 other students at the behest of local teachers (Hatcher, et. al., 2006). The participants worked on phoneme awareness and letter manipulation within their groups (Hatcher, et. al., 2006). The observed students did improve on their spelling abilities, but the researchers acknowledge the difficulty of deducing whether it was due to the specific interventions or merely having more individualized, direct instruction (Hatcher, et. al., 2006).

 Read Aloud

A 2016 study by Spiel, et. al. administered quizzes to 17 summer program students at an academic learning center. During quizzes, a group containing students with diagnoses of ADHD and a control group were read aloud to, as well as some silent assessments (Spiel et. al., 2016) Spiel, et. al. (2016) found that students with ADHD experienced a 7% bump in scores when read aloud compared to the silent assessment; Interestingly enough, the control group fell 1% under similar conditions. The results of students with ADHD when read aloud to were very similar to the control group during both silent and read aloud assessments (Spiel, et. al., 2016). A 2011 study by Schmitt et. al. also studied the prospect of assessments read aloud, with 25 middle school students that read at minimum two years under grade level. The students were given computerized passages to read, with 10 questions following for assessment - five factual, five inferential (Schmitt, et. al., 2011). Controlling for student ability, there was no visible difference between those who read the exam silently and those who had the exam read out to them (Schmitt, et. al., 2011). This is yet another example of an accommodation that can be used in the general education setting for all students.

Methodology

Data was collected in this research project through a variety of ways that targeted the beginning, middle, and end of the research paper writing process. The population for this action research project consisted of tenth grade students in a standard, English Language Arts classroom. The students attended a suburban, religiously sectarian, private high school. Given the school setting, the majority of the students were white and came from modest to affluent backgrounds. Having said this, there are a growing contingent of non-traditional students that break the mold, both socioeconomically and by academic ability. The school, unlike public

schools, does not have pull-out or remedial English classes, so a wide array of student abilities were present in the school population and samples used in this project.

The structure and methodology of this action research project seeks to see how learning accommodations mainstream for the whole class can increase quality of student work, in this case writing a research paper, and provide more sweeping instruction to reduce teacher workload for individual students. The first mode of data collection sought to rationalize and articulate this need; if students felt that they did not need help in writing papers and that the process as a whole was easy, then the move towards providing broad writing accommodations would not be relevant or worthwhile. This was accomplished by way of the Student Self-Identification as Writers survey (see Appendix A) that was administered prior to beginning the research paper unit. In this survey, students were asked to mark adjectives, both positive and negative, that they felt aligned with their writing abilities. Just like a wide variety of student abilities exist in a classroom, varying responses were expected. With the genesis of the unit, there were a number of long stretching methods of data collection.

A common accommodation featured in IEP's or 504's include some level of individualized work time with the student and teacher to accomplish long term tasks. This is not always feasible or realistic within the confines of the class period for a myriad of reasons: teacher needs to be constantly roving to maintain classroom management, teacher cannot dedicate more than a few minutes to one student, or student is unwilling to sacrifice social face by admitting help or working one on one with a teacher. Whatever the reason may be, time outside of the class period may be more conducive to helping students. Because of this, the second method of data collection was directed at gauging effectiveness and efficiency of working in small groups or one on one outside of the classroom. This was measured by a post work time

survey (see Appendix B) in which students logged the day they worked with the teacher, the

stage of the research project that they were working on, aids and detractors to working in this

small setting, and steps going forward to finishing missing or outstanding work. This data set

works twofold: the participant can gauge progress and effectiveness in student achievement, but

they can also use this as a way to log student interaction for potential learning team meetings or

parent updates. This survey could be completed by students multiple times and they were asked

to complete it after every help session they attended.

While some of the methods of data collection were geared towards the larger

process of writing, one method deals with a specific stage of the research paper, namely the

outline. Simply put, telling students to write a research paper and giving them a due date and

doing nothing in between is not a good way to teach writing. The outline is a crucial part in

applying the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1962) towards the process of writing. At this stage, the More

Knowledgeable Other aids the student in acquiring a particular skill before the student can

demonstrate mastery on their own. If the mastered skill is writing a research paper, the outline

represents the aforementioned aid. As titled in this action research project, the Outline and Quote

Guide (see Appendix C) activity provides a structure for students to follow while also

encouraging and demanding individual student work. The student uses concepts and skills like

contextualizing direct quotes, writing a thesis, and using introductory sentences to paragraphs

that were taught in class lecture by the teacher and forces students to apply them in real time.

The Outline and Quote Guide uses boxes that resemble a flow chart–this takes away the need to

sit and stare at a blank page wondering how to begin, or what comes next. In theory and in

practice, the researcher will witness improvements in the quality of work of typically

underperforming students, yet will not notice an increase in quality of typically high performing

students, which is the ideal goal of any accommodation. The standard completion window of the

Outline and Quote Guide was 1.5-2 school weeks of classes.

The final method of data collection occurred over the course of the research paper project

itself. Each week, the facilitator and teacher completed a reflection journal (see Appendix D) that

defined the stage of the research process the class was at as well as triumphs and failures that

they noticed in regards to the unit as a whole and the specific accommodations being given to the

classes. This would hopefully show some synchronicity between what the teacher noticed on

their end, as well as what the students put in their responses to their small group work time

surveys. One variable to be mindful of in this is certainly confirmation bias of the respondent. If

the teacher and facilitator of the action research project desired a specific outcome, they may be

more likely to note that outcome in their reflections.

Data Analysis

The data used in this action research project is to be analyzed within the scope of

supporting or refuting the goal of improving the research paper writing process through the use

of accommodations. The first method of data collection, the Self-Identification as Writers Survey

(see Appendix A), will be analyzed by comparing the percentage of respondents for a particular

adjective that they feel describes their writing ability. For example, if respondents

overwhelmingly choose positive adjectives to describe their writing abilities, then

accommodations may not be pertinent. Conversely, a low percentage of respondents choosing

largely positive adjectives would then provide basis for the introduction of simple

accommodations into the curriculum.

The Small Group Reflection Form (see Appendix B) will be analyzed in two parts.

Appendix B asks a mix of Y/N and free-response questions. The first part will gauge student

responses towards the utility or worth of the accommodation in and of itself; high numbers of "yes" responses will indicate that students found the small group work time beneficial to their writing processes. The second part of this data will feature individual student responses about why the accommodation was helpful or useful, or for those who did not find it useful, why not. The researcher will then seriate similar responses into groups that focus on a particular aspect of the accommodation, such as access to a teacher or the work space itself. This aspect of the data would then provide researchers with potential factors to try and replicate or isolate in any further accommodation.

While the first two methods of data collection provide particular sets of quantitative data, the Research Paper Outline and Quote Guide (see Appendix C) features student work in outlining their research paper. Instead of focusing on statistics, student samples will be broken down by the researcher and shown how the accommodation supports organization, structure, sentence fluency, and argumentation through use of direct quotes.

The last data set, the Teacher Reflection Journal (see Appendix D), provides weekly teacher reflection on their insight to how the accommodations have been implemented and facilitated. The researcher will provide all six reflections and provide categorical criteria for how the teacher felt accommodations went. An example of this could be that the small group accommodation can be lessened or nullified by the presence of student friends. This analysis would then inspire comment by the researcher on utility and effectiveness of the given writing accommodations.

Findings

As articulated in the methodology, before researchers could fully address the question of how special education accommodations would affect research paper performance in the general

education setting, a requisite need for accommodations would need to be established. Through

the Self-Identification as Writers survey (see Appendix A), researchers sought to articulate how

students self-identified as writers. If respondents marked overwhelmingly positive choices about

their writing, then a weak need for accommodation would be apparent. If respondents marked

negatively about their writing ability, a high need for accommodation would be apparent.

Appendix A Data

67 Total Respondents

Adjective	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents
Capable	38	56.7%
Skilled	13	19.4%
Helpless	3	4.5%
Awkward	9	13.4%
Wordy	19	28.4%
Confident	23	34.4%
Unsure	24	35.8%
Simple	27	40.3%
Complex	8	11.9%
Academic	16	23.9%
Creative	30	44.8%
Vague	8	11.9%
Messy	23	34.3%
Descriptive	23	34.4%

The data above shows a spectrum of responses, just as a spectrum of learning abilities

exist in any given classroom. The highest percentage of students, 56.4%, responded to the

adjective "capable" to describe their writing. This, complemented by the lowest percentage responded to, "helpless," with just 4.5%, shows that a fair amount of students in the sample identify with some level of competency. While low numbers of students identify with more negative adjectives, high-level, positive descriptors, such as "academic," "skilled," and "complex," have less than 25% of respondents, respectively. From there, sizable groups of students identified with middle of the road writing ability, with "unsure," "messy," and "simple" scoring in the range of 30-40%. Given this data, a number of reasonable extrapolations can be made. The first is that given the low response rates to adjectives like "helpless" (4.5%), broadscale accommodations would not be necessary for this given sample, just as most students in any given classroom do not receive overwhelming accommodations. Conversely, a relatively low percentage of students responded to the blue-chip adjectives for writing a research paper, which would indicate that the majority of the students in the room do not feel that they are top of the line writers. Finally, with the highest percentage of students responding to descriptors that show average writing ability, a positive case for the implementation of writing accommodations in general would be beneficial to the sample population at large.

With the establishment of a need for writing accommodation in the classroom based on student responses, the researcher started the inclusion of specific writing accommodations for all learners. The first accommodation was extra-help sessions that occurred either before school, during free periods, or after school. These sessions were by teacher invitation, required due to missing work, or by student incentive. They included a varying time and attendance, as some sessions could be one-on-one or attended by multiple students. An important thing to note is that this does not include one-on-one help administered during the given class period. After each session, students were to respond to a post-session survey as broken down by Appendix B.

Appendix B Data Results

33 Total Respondents

Question	Responses
What part of the writing process did you work on today?	- Brainstorming Activity (2/33-6%) - Notecard Activity (11/33-33%) - Outline and Quote Guide (20/33-61%) - Rough Draft (0/33-0%) - Rough Draft Checklist (0/33-0%) - Final Draft (0/33-0%)
Do you feel that you made progress?	Yes: 32/33 (97%) No: 1/33 (3%)
What about the small group sessions were helpful? *as the responses were open-ended, researchers distilled them down into the following categories. Some responses met multiple category criteria* -less distractions -access to instructor -time -reduction of stigma	- less distractions (11/33-33%) - access to instructor (13/33-39%) - Time (7/33-21%) - reduction of stigma (2/33-6%)
What about the small group sessions were not helpful as compared to regular class work time? If you marked "yes" in Question 2, disregard this question	Student response did not correlate to given question.

With the implementation of the Extra Help Session accommodation, students solely used it for the front half of the research paper unit, namely the Brainstorming Activity in which they researched possible topics, the Notecard Activity, in which students gathered direct quotes to build argument, and the Outline and Quote Guide, also known as Appendix C, which helped students structure and organize their writings. The Outline and Quote Guide garnered the most need for help, with 61% of attendees focusing on completing the given stage. This logically follows as the Outline and Quote Guide had the most substance of the entire unit - the meat and

potatoes of the paper itself. It is also interesting to note that with the completion of the Outline and Quote Guide, no students needed extra help sessions to complete the Rough Draft and Final Drafts; these two stages were able to be completed either in class or without the help of the instructor on their own time. A very telling statistic in this dataset is the rate to which students responded to the utility of the given accommodation - 97% of respondents viewed the accommodation positively. While it may borderline redundancy to assert that extra help sessions were helpful to students that needed them, it does go to show that the confines of the class period may not solely suffice for all students. Student responses favored Access to Instructor (39%) and Less Distractions (33%) as the dominant reasons to defend the utility of accommodation. Both of these factors are visibly diminished in a small group setting compared to the general classroom environment. Overall, the institution of this accommodation into any general education classroom setting would be recommended.

As referenced in the responses for the Data for Appendix B, students spent most of their time and energies on the Outline and Quote Guide (see Appendix C). This accommodation is traditionally used in plans for students with IEP's or 504's; the issuance of writing guides or supports for students in writing long essays. The Outline and Quote Guide models the structure for the essay and provides guidance for contextualizing direct quotes using the ICE method (Introduce, Cite, and Explain). Students fill out the Outline and Quote Guide in its entirety, but for the sake of brevity, a paragraph long sample from three selections of students (one high level, one medium level, and one low level) will be included in this section. According to Potter et. al. (2016), accommodations should not give higher performing students an innate advantage over anyone, but help lower achieving students in need close the gap between the two ends of the spectrum.

Appendix C Data Findings

Student A

Detail Paragraph

      A.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

          1. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

> The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement does not helpfully contribute to the immigration problem in the U.S., it in fact hurts people in the process.

      B.   Three Quotes (minimum)

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph
The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, otherwise known as ICE, is a widely known federal agency that deports "illegal" immigrants.	"In fiscal year 2020, ICE deported an estimated 185,884 people and detained an average of 20,000 people every day—especially egregious considering the dangers posed by COVID-19 to people detained amid unsanitary conditions and receiving inadequate health care" (AFSC, 2021).	ICE's deportation of immigrants hinder any real progress against illegal immigration. An average of 20,000 people being detained a day in 2020 shows that detainment and deportation shows that the real problem is not solved. The problem of "illegal" immigration itself lies in the immigration process. It can take up to 3 to 24 years for a person to fully gain citizenship in the United States. This long wait time can lead to people marry for visas, overstay visas, and other forms of "illegal" immigration.
Children of undocumented immigrants are also affected.	"A 2020 study analyzed the educational outcomes of Latino students in school districts	Children are the most vulnerable when it comes to deportation. They are both physically and physiology affected when they witness their family members being taken away from them. That damage causes them to not be able

	located in communities where large numbers of deportations were taking place. The study found that the number of deportations occurring in the larger community correlated with greater gaps between white and Latino students in terms of math achievement and chronic absenteeism" (American Immigration Council, 2021).	to focus in school and other aspects in their life. There is already a huge gap between children of color and white students due to systemic racism, but the personal lives of those children of color make it worse for them to excel in school.
ICE have also been reported for other inhumane actions.	"The agency has also been the subject of more than 1,200 complaints of sexual and physical abuse" (AFSC, 2021).	Having already gone through the traumatic experience of being detained, many people have to go through violations of human dignity. Rape and other physical abuse done by employees of ICE show that illegal immigrants are not treated with human respect.

      C.   Conclusion sentence

          1. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

ICE has been proven to negatively affect immigrants and have not solve the problem of illegal immigration.

Student A has been classified as a "high performing student" for the purpose of this data analysis. Student A began their paragraph with a clear and concise introductory sentence and seamlessly transitioned into the argument of their paragraph, namely that the current apparatus

that regulates immigraiton in the country does not actually help the problem. Student A uses the ICE method to perfection to use direct quotes and finishes with a straightforward conclusion sentence. By all intents and purposes, based on the quality of the work, Student A did not need this accommodation to be successful in completing their research paper. But, there is also nothing to infer that Student A was at an advantage to other students by having access to this accommodation, which is an important factor in weighing accommodations.

Student B

III.   Detail Paragraph

D. Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

2. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

Another thing that contributes to anorexia nervosa is age.

E.   Three Quotes

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph
This quote tells us that.A lot of girls that are teenage girls usually way and unhealthy weight.	"Over 50% of teenage girls use unhealthy weight control behaviors such as skipping meals, fasting, smoking cigarettes to suppress their appetite, vomiting, and taking laxatives. (Tolman)"	Most girls do this because of social media or bullying and being criticized for a very long time about their body.

A lot of the people who are diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are woman.	"Approximately 90 percent of all people diagnosed with anorexia nervosa are women, and most report onset of the illness between ages 12 and 25. An estimated 0.5–3.7 percent of women in the United States suffer from anorexia nervosa at some time in their life. (Emery)"	The main people usually being diagnosed are women mostly because they have that stereotype of their body and men usually don't.
This quote tells us and characterizes anorexia nervosa into an explanation of what happens.	"Anorexia nervosa, eating disorder characterized by the refusal of an emaciated individual to maintain a normal body weight. A person with anorexia nervosa typically weighs no more than 85 percent of the expected weight for the person's age, height, and sex, and in some cases much less. (Emery)"	It is very scary to think of somebody losing over 80% of their body weight, but that is what happen because of cyberbullying and these stereotypes.

      F.   Conclusion sentence

          2. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

In conclusion a great contributor to anorexia nervosa is age and the difference between woman and men in this case.

Student B has been classified as a "middle level" student for the purpose of this analysis. Student B was able to accomplish all the objectives that Student A did; Student B had an introductory sentence, properly contextualized direct quotes, and had a conclusion sentence. Student B had access to the same accommodations that Student A did in terms of sequencing, organization, and structure. However, there are examples in which Student A outperformed Student B. Student A had more complex introductory and concluding sentences in the paragraph and more seamlessly transitioned through the stages of ICE. Student B, while having completed the Outline and Quote Guide correctly, had more simpler quote introductions ("this quote shows") and struggled with redundancy in their explanations. Yet, the accommodation provided guidance for Student B in their organization and sequencing for their paper.

Student C

        II.   Detail Paragraph

            A.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

                1. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

War has a big impact on the mental health of the people involved.

            B.   Three Quotes (minimum)

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph
Mental health of people involved in wars has been heavily studied in recent years.	"During the last year, a large number of books and documents have addressed the effects of war on mental	The mental health of soldiers and people involved in the recent conflict's in the world have not been talked about alot in history. But in recent years mental health has been a big speaking point for anti war activists because.

	health"(Srinivasa 2006).	They feel like it is causing more damage to the mental state of soldiers than good.
Mental health is a big problem in the topic and discussion of war.	"Symptoms of depression were found in 67.7% of respondents, symptoms of anxiety in 72.2%, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 42%"(Srinivasa 2006)	These statistics show that war has a direct correlation with the mental health of the soldiers involved. This also shows the struggles that a lot of soldiers go through after being discharged from service.
Some people think World War 2 was the last war. While it may have been one of the biggest wars it was the most recent.	"Though there have not been any world wars since the Second World War, there have been wars and conflicts throughout the last 60 years. For example, in the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region of the World Health Organization (WHO), over 80% of the population either is in a conflict situation or has experienced such a situation in the last quarter of century"(Srinivasa 2006).	This is a huge problem because this means that there is still a lot of war going on and alot of peoples mental health and families getting damaged.this is a big problem in the war with russia and ukrane because russia is bombing apartments and big citys so people are having to move to different countries.

C.   Conclusion sentence

        1.   This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

In conclusion war can take a huge toll on a person's mental health and there mental state.

Student C has been classified as a "low level" performer for this data set. Student C did not have any diagnosed learning disability but struggled with work organization, focus, and meeting deadlines. Student C consistently came in for Extra Help Sessions and did still turn in their final draft past the deadline. Like Student B, Student C met all the objectives of the Outline and Quote Guide. They had complete, objective introductory and conclusion sentences, contextualized quotes correctly, and had a visible and followable flow to their argument. Also like Student B, Student C did not have the same articulation and flow that Student A had, but they still demonstrated an acceptable and commendable level of competency in their writing. Overall, the Outline and Quote Guide helped varying levels of achieving students without providing an innate advantage to one group over the others.

Appendix D Findings

The last method of data collection, the Teacher Reflection Journal (see Appendix D), features reflections of the researcher as students engaged with the implementation of the accommodations and the research paper unit as a whole. There is of course the variable of confirmation bias in which the researcher could be looking for things that support the research question, but the drive towards objectivity was conscious and intentional.

Week	One
Stage in the Writing Process	Brainstorming Sheet

| Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures | Today we introduced the Brainstorming sheet. The sheet requires students to evaluate three potential topics of research for them, find sources, and identify arguments for and against. It is my hope that students will not try and research information for their already formed opinion, and instead form opinions based on their research. I had a small group of regular students come in for help and we identified topics for them to peruse.

I have noticed that many students are drifting towards argumentative topics with two clear sides. It is my hope that we can establish analytical theses about specific topics too.

The brainstorming sheet is not something that they can do in just 10 minutes, and I am starting to see some apathy/learned helplessness about completing it |
|---|---|

Week	Two
Stage in the Writing Process	Notecard Activity
Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures	This week we worked on the Notecard Activity, which mimics the research gathering practice of old where every individual citation was put on a notecard. Students copy and paste information from potential sources. Some students who have a general idea of their argument were finding sources, whereas some students were more focused on completing the process, opting to copy and paste random bits of information as opposed to citations that may be more directly beneficial to their paper. Students were hesitant to come in during their free periods for help. A few students needed help finding sources, but most students just needed a quiet place to focus and not be distracted by friends. I need to be more intentional about trying to get students to come in for help/the space to work. Positives were that students were getting a good idea of where to go with their research. We are also approaching spring break, so some students are already mentally checking out. Spring sports also began, so many students are now prioritizing their sports more.

Week One and Two featured the setting of the pace for various learning speeds in the sample. As these first few activities in the research paper process were simple and achievable, nearly all students were able to keep pace with one another. Only a handful of students needed

help with the Brainstorming Activity, with a few more needing help on the Notecard Activity.

The implementation of the Extra Help Sessions were beneficial more so for the instructor as they

were able to do preventative measures before Spring Break, where many students can fall

behind. Overall, the Extra Help Sessions were useful for both students and teacher in the early

stretches of the unit.

Week	Three
Stage in the Writing Process	Annotated Bibliography
Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures	This week was the week before spring break, so I had a lots of absences. The classes were a mix of students still finishing up their notecard activity and some students that were working through their annotated bibliography. Getting students to come in after school or during their free periods continues to be an issue. I have started emailing parents and counselors to persuade students to come in for extra help. Most students echo the need for time and focus to complete their work, not that they cannot do the work in general. I have hand picked some of my higher needs students to work with me one on one for extra help. With a number of students being gone for days before and after our standard spring break, I anticipate a high number of students being behind when they return to school, so I will need to be proactive about catching them up

Week	Four
Stage in the Writing Process	Outline and Quote Guide
Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures	The outline and quote guide was where the gap between the lower performing students and higher performing students began to widen. The higher performing students were more likely to input their direct quotes more fluidly and were able to structure their arguments rather seamlessly. The lower performing students were somewhat stuck with the size of the paper in general. However, students that came in for extra help consistently were getting more done. The general class time was pretty energetic, borderline chaotic at times, and certain students got overwhelmed by friends and tech distractions. The lowest tier of students required individualized help. The extra help

	sessions were nice because it afforded me more one on one time.

Week	Five
Stage in the Writing Process	Outline and Quote Guide/Rough Draft
Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures	This week was a real mixed bag with progress on the outlines. The upper tier of students were done on time and many were already starting on their rough drafts. The middle third were a mix of just finishing their outlines and getting started on the rough draft. There were a startling number of students in the middle third and lower third that had very little progress on the outline. I became more proactive about mandating certain students to come in for the extra help sessions. I also leveraged learning specialists and counselors to push students to come in as well. There is a lack of urgency and apathy that can be frustrating to overcome. Students are making progress in the extra help sessions, but they consistently are not doing their work at home, which makes progress difficult

With Weeks 3, 4, and 5, the students slugged through their Outline and Quote Guide (see Appendix C), which was understandable, given the magnitude of the assessment. It was in these weeks that students started breaking off from the pack, both plowing ahead forward, full steam, and falling behind, slowly digging themselves into a mental hole that can be hard to escape from. It was in these weeks that the instructor also noticed that "students that came in for extra help consistently were getting more done." It is also worth noting that the sessions were not silver bullets; students were getting work done, but were not finishing the play at home. Students also seemed to struggle with focusing in the general class setting. This may require further investigation for possible management techniques. Tangentially, a further question to research could be if students are more likely to slack off in class knowing that they have more controlled work time later in the day. Overall, the observations of the instructor and facilitator concur with the student responses to the validity and effectiveness of the Extra Help Session accommodation.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this action research project, the researcher sought to evaluate how accommodations usually reserved for students with specific needs would affect student writing performance in a general education classroom. To accomplish this, the researcher implemented two accommodations–reserved, individual time with the teacher outside of the structured class time, and a comprehensive outline and quote guide (see Appendix C) for students to engage with. In addition to these accommodations, students were surveyed about their own self-identification as writers (see Appendix A) and their views of how effective the small group help sessions were (see Appendix B). Teacher reflection journals were also included as relevant data for this project (see Appendix D). These students were all tenth grade students in three general English Language Arts class periods. The students came from a broad background academically, as there were students all over the performance spectrum. Demographically, most students were white and many came from modest to well-to-do backgrounds.

Based on the data collected by the researcher, a number of things were apparent. First off, a gradient of self-identifications as writers exist in any given classroom. A majority (56%) of the students in the sample felt that they were "capable" writers in the classroom, regressing to 40.3% of respondents identifying with "simple" and 34.4% saying they were "confident" writers. Conversely, 35.8% of the students felt they were "unsure" about themselves as writers, and approximately 20% of students felt that they were "skilled." If only a fifth of a sample group identify as skilled writers, that means that there is a large number of students who feel that they are unskilled writers. With such relatively low numbers of students that identify positively with writing, it is reasonable to conclude that, solely based on student views of themselves, writing

accommodations would be welcome and necessary to mainstream into the general education setting.

As for the accommodations themselves, the overwhelming majority of respondents (97%) felt that they made progress during the Extra Help Sessions for a variety of reasons. Based on the nature of the student responses, two dominant factors come to light, namely the infrequency of distractions and the consistent access to the instructor. These factors are two things that are hard to control in a general education classroom, especially if the instructor has thirty or more students that they have to maintain, let alone provide individualized instruction or clarification to a student for any particular period of time. Based on the Teacher Reflection Journal, the instructor concurs with student responses. The instructor felt that these extra help sessions were beneficial to these students, but they were not the silver bullet. Student apathy, distractions, or any other litany of inhibitors of student engagement and success can still deter learning. Despite this, the researcher concludes that this accommodation, within the scope of the sample and parameters of the research, definitively enhances student success in writing a research paper. It is important to note that this is not synonymous with a student having extended time, as the two main components of student feedback were factors unique to a structured work period outside of class with the instructor. The researcher analysis of three student samples of the Outline and Quote Guide found that high level students still produced higher qualities of work than their lower-performing counterparts. Notably, however, was that students that typically fell in the "lower-performing" category were producing a quality of work more akin to students in the middle. This is in congruence with the goal of any accommodation: to not give students any particular advantage over one group, and to provide ways for students to demonstrate mastery and excellence on par with their grade level peers.

Going forward, a number of recommendations can be made based on the conclusions of the data findings.

- Instructors should be proactive in scheduling extra help sessions for all students, not just students with written accommodation plans.

- Instructors and school officials should seek to reduce class sizes to minimize external distractions and maximize access to instructors by students in the class session

- Instructors should provide broad outlines and quote guides when engaging in large, long term writing processes like a research paper.

- Instructors should be made aware that while perception may not create reality, even grade level students can have deficit mindsets that inhibit their writing and overall academic ability.

- Instructors should take time to journal weekly to reflect on pedagogical practices and to weigh possible changes in coming units.

Overall, this action research project will not be the solution to any set of problems that an instructor may encounter in their classroom. This action research project provides possible ways that a teacher can enhance their pedagogical practices in accommodating all learners with research paper writing. This, when coupled with a dedicated and disciplined teacher, can help students of all abilities achieve success in the classroom.

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Appendix A

Prior to the beginning of the research paper unit, students filled out this survey. It directed "Click on the adjective that best describes you as a writer. You do NOT have to mark only one adjective." The adjective options were:

- Capable

- Skilled

- Helpless

- Awkward

- Wordy

- Confident

- Unsure

- Simple

- Complex

- Academic

- Creative

- Vague

- Messy

- Descriptive

Appendix B

This survey was administered to students every time that they participated in an extra help session outside of traditional class time

Question	Response Options
What part of the writing process did you work on today?	- Brainstorming Activity - Notecard Activity - Outline and Quote Guide - Rough Draft - Rough Draft Checklist - Final Draft
Do you feel that you made progress?	- Yes - No
What about the small group sessions were helpful? If you marked "No" in the previous question, disregard this question	*(open ended student response)*
What about the small group sessions were not helpful as compared to regular class work time? If you marked "yes" in Question 2, disregard this question	*(open ended student response)*
What will you work on going forward as you work on your own?	*(open ended student response)*

Appendix C

Research Paper Quote Guide/Outline

Before Outlining:

Identify **four** parts of your argument you will be breaking your argument into

Argument	Example
One	
Two	
Three	
Four	

Then, identify the opposing argument you would like to rebut

Opposing Argument

     I.   Introduction

        A.   Topic Sentence-How are you going to introduce your paper and your topic? Think of a quote or provocative statement to begin. **Do not** use a rhetorical question.

        Type your intro sentence in this box.

B.   Provide a 5-6 sentence brief summary of your topic **without** providing too much information that you will use in your detail paragraphs

<div style="border:1px solid black; height:100px;"></div>

C.   Thesis statement: Your thesis should have an active verb (not is, was, were, etc.) and include your supports (the three aspects of your supporting argument

<div style="border:1px solid black; height:100px;"></div>

II.   Detail Paragraph

A.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

1. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

<div style="border:1px solid black; height:60px;"></div>

B.   Three Quotes (minimum)

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph

      C.   Conclusion sentence

          1. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

    III.   Detail Paragraph

      D.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

          2. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

      E.   Three Quotes

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph

      F.   Conclusion sentence

2. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

Detail Paragraph

     D.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

        2. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

     E.   Three Quotes

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph

     F.   Conclusion sentence

        2. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

IV.   Detail Paragraph

    G.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

        3. This should look like your thesis, but broken up into three smaller parts

    H.   Three Quotes

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph

    I.   Conclusion sentence

        3. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

V.   Rebuttal Paragraph-Identifying and rebutting an opposing argument

    J.   Topic Sentence/Mini-thesis

    4. This should state why the opposing argument is wrong, and should include the supports laid out in your quotes

    K.   Three Quotes

Introduction (Introduce the content that the quote will be covering)	Citation (Cite the text directly with author's last name and year)	Explanation (How does this quote relate to your mini-thesis/topic of the paragraph

    L.   Conclusion sentence

    4. This sentence restates your original mini-thesis/topic sentence

    VI.   Conclusion paragraph

    1.   Restate thesis

    2.   Provide 3-4 sentence re-summarizing what you wrote in paragraphs 2-5

3.   End with a thought provoking statement or call to action

Appendix D

Teacher Reflection Journal

Teacher will fill this out at the end of each week in regards to the progress, struggles, and observations that teacher was witnessed in students

Week	
Stage in the Writing Process	
Comments, Observations, Successes, Failures	