

## Deficit Perspectives in a Classroom for Emotional Disabilities

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### Research Question

Our research began with the aim of understanding the role technology can play in a special education classroom. We observed and interviewed with an emphasis on two foci: instructional technology and student-centered technology.

As we sifted through our data, we changed our focus to an understanding of one teacher at a school for students with emotional disabilities and how she views special education and her role within it.

### Setting

The Esther B Clark School (EBC) is a school for students ages 8 to 16 who are not thriving in public schools due to emotional disabilities. The capacity of the school is 72 students, and each student's tuition and therapy is paid for by his or her school district. Students typically attend full-time for 24-36 months. EBC seeks to address students' "therapeutic, behavioral and academic issues," with the intention of giving each student behavior strategies to help successfully transition him or her back to a mainstream classroom (EBC, 2011).

Each classroom is staffed by a team of education and behavior professionals. The main classroom teacher is certified in special education. He or she is assisted by a Teaching Assistant, a Therapist who provides services for the students and families, and a Behavior Specialist. In addition, certain students may be assigned "One-on-Ones," who are staff members dedicated to one student.

EBC employs a certain vocabulary that the reader may find helpful in understanding the setting and the findings we present in this paper. Staff and students recognize the code word "roadtrip" as a signal to leave the room when a student is unable to control his or her behavior. The term "in crisis" refers to a student who is exhibiting violent or unmanageable behavior. In addition, "quiet room" refers to a dedicated room that locks from the outside and is generally free from stimulus. A student in crisis is placed into the room until he is calm enough to not harm others or himself.

## Methods

Our research team is comprised of three individuals from different disciplines: electrical and computer engineering, business and human-computer interaction, and non-profits. We were mutually interested in investigating the use of learning technology for children with disabilities, and decided to complete this research project for our qualitative research course together.

As a group we had to determine a problem space, find a site to observe for 1 hour, and conduct two 1-hour interviews with a single participant at the site. After conducting the observations and interviews, we performed analysis on the collected data to help synthesize propositions. Throughout the process, each team member also wrote two reflection papers related to our personal development as qualitative researchers. This mini-product, along with individual final reflection papers, is the culmination of our findings and understanding.

### **Choosing Esther B. Clark**

We chose to study EBC through a recommendation by our professor, Denise Pope. We found an email address for general inquiries on the school's website and emailed a request for a 1-hour observation and two 1-hour interviews with the same teacher. We followed up with a phone call to the school, and we were connected directly with a teacher, Ms. Kinderpraat<sup>1</sup>. We talked to her briefly about our interest in observing her classroom. She agreed to let us observe in her classroom for one hour on October 24, 2011 at 8:30am and conduct two follow-up interviews.

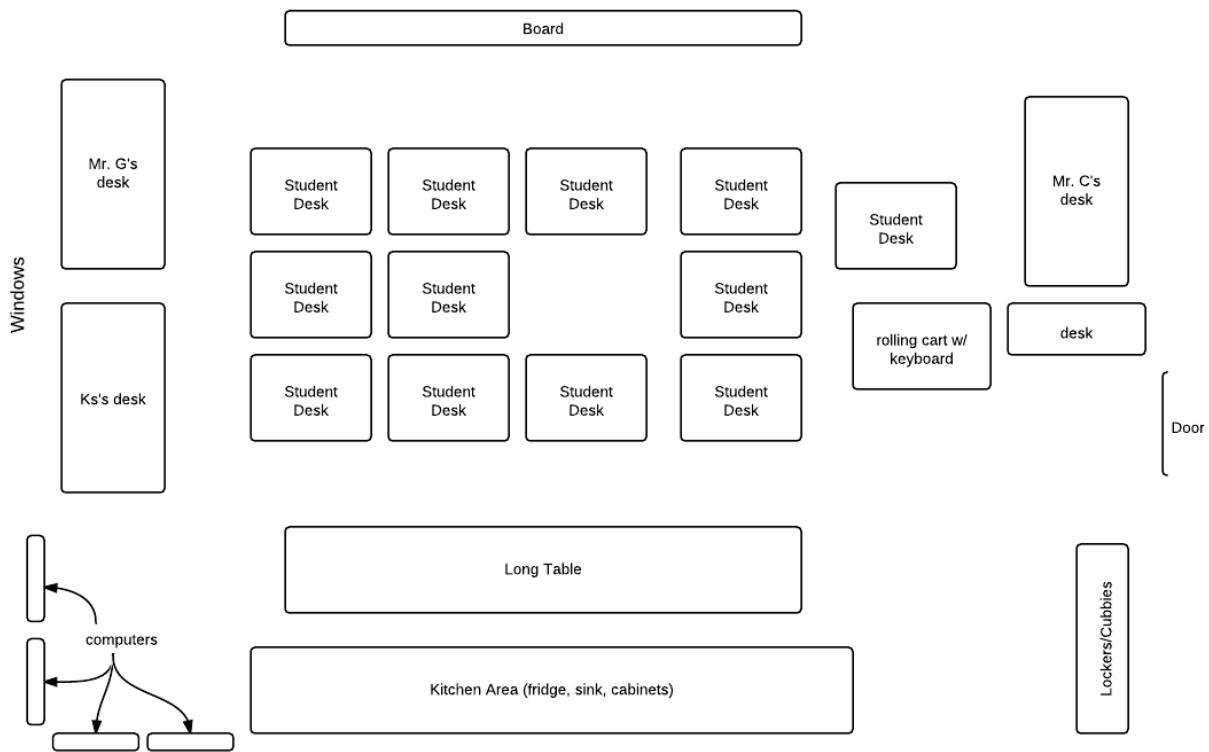
### **Observations**

We were unable to observe Ms. Kinderpraat's class. When we arrived at EBC before our scheduled appointment, the secretary told us that Ms. Kinderpraat was absent and made some phone calls to secure a new classroom for our visit. Another teacher at the school, Mr. Robinson, who teaches a combined 8th and 9th grade class, was willing to let us observe in his classroom. He came to the lobby to escort us to his classroom.

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<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed for the purpose of confidentiality.

When we entered his classroom, Mr. Robinson's class was outside for physical education class. We had time before class began to talk with Mr. Robinson and a specialist, Ms. Johnson, who works with one student in Mr. Robinson's classroom. We sat at a table in the back of Mr. Robinson's classroom, with a clear view of the students' desks and the board. When the students came in and were seated, Mr. Robinson introduced us to the class as graduate students and continued with the lesson. We observed the classroom without further interaction with the students or teachers until about 40 minutes after class began. At that point, an administrator asked us to step into the hall and explained that we must move into an observation room to minimize the disruption our presence might be causing. We spent the remainder of the hour-long observation with a more obscured view of the classroom. The observation room was small and dark, and separated from the classroom by a glass divider; we listened in on the classroom via a microphone and speaker system.



*Figure 1: Diagram of the classroom where the research team observed. We sat at the "Long Table" towards the back, until we were moved to an observation room, which was located behind the wall in the top-right corner.*

## **Interviews**

We held two, hour-long, semi-structured interviews with Ms. Kinderpraat. The first took place on the 2nd of November at 10:30am, and the second on the 6th of November at 12:30pm. During both interviews, we asked questions from a pre-written list as well as *in situ* follow up and probing questions to gather further details about the topic at hand.

One member of the research team, Katie, conducted the first, hour-long interview; we elected to have Katie conduct the interview because she was Ms. Kinderpraat's point of contact for scheduling our visits, and we thought this would make Ms. Kinderpraat most comfortable. Before the interview began, Ms. Kinderpraat enthusiastically gave us a tour of EBC and the adjoining school, Sand Hill, which is a school in the same building as EBC. Similar to EBC, Sand Hill addresses emotional disabilities, but is privately funded and for younger children. Ms. Kinderpraat introduced us to the teachers and students in several of the classrooms.

We conducted the first interview in a break room. We recorded audio of the interview with two different devices, an iPad and an Android phone, in case either device malfunctioned. Non-interviewing members of the research team took notes during the interview, highlighting dialogue accessories. During this interview, Katie asked Ms. Kinderpraat general questions about her teaching career and specific questions about her approach to creating lessons and using technology in her classroom.

Anna and Hain-Lee conducted the second hour-long interview in two, 30-minute sections. Anna began the interview and Hain-Lee conducted the last 30 minutes. During the interview, Anna and Hain-Lee focused their questions on the technology Ms. Kinderpraat and her students use in the classroom.

## **Data Analysis**

During the research process, we held team meetings and attended class together where we debriefed our first interview and observations, identified themes that emerged, and re-wrote interview questions for the second interview in light of those themes. Thus, we performed simultaneous data analysis and collection, letting the data shape our ideas and theory development, a process consistent with grounded theory (Charmaz, 1983). We also

discussed and acknowledged our personal subjectivities that may have influenced our earlier interpretation and impressions of the data, to keep them in check when doing further analysis.

In order to analyze the data we collected, we used Saturate, an online collaborative qualitative analysis tool. Each member of the research team transcribed approximately 28 minutes from our interviews. After we completed the transcriptions, we met as a group to brainstorm a list of initial codes. Each member of the team then individually applied codes to another team member's transcriptions and field notes. Additional codes were added as members felt appropriate. Brief memos were written if a connection or insight arose during the coding process.

After initial coding, we met as a group again to refine our code definitions and discuss their properties and conditions under which they operate (Charmaz p.111, 1983). We recoded pieces of data for consistency and clarity, sometimes merging or splitting codes in the process. Using the codes as a starting point, we then discussed what themes we saw emerging from the data and started brainstorming potential propositions. It was during this stage of the process that we uncovered larger overarching themes of behavior management and Ms. Kinderpraat's perspective on special education, despite beginning our research with a focus on just assistive technology. We drafted preliminary propositions and compiled data that could potentially be used as supporting evidence in our findings.

In class, three peers and the teaching team reviewed our rough draft of propositions, and provided us constructive feedback. As a group, we discussed the feedback and continued to refine our codes (see Chart 1) and develop our propositions. Furthermore, we actively referenced direct quotes from our interviews and observations to either support or refute the propositions. In this round of discussions, we also tied in the *deficit theory*, a concept that Bronwyn LaMay, our course assistant, introduced to us; and of which we only had a brief former understanding. Exposure to this formalized term helped us to restructure our propositions to tell a more coherent story of Ms. Kinderpraat and EBC, which we present as our findings.

Types of Students	Technology	Teacher's View of Students	Reflections on Self and System	Teaching Strategies	Behavior Issues and Management	Low Level (descriptive and keyword markers)
intelligence, complex (1), grade level, bucketing: • low • medium • high meds (1)	learner tech, teacher tech, personal tech, usability, reliance, tech limitations	irresponsible, rigid, sympathy, egocentric, “don’t want to learn,” student perceptiveness, ceiling	perception of self, view of teachers and SPED, training	positive reinforcement, content instruction, toolkit, relationship, fairness, participation/involvement, teaching strategy, routine, feedback (1), motivation, dependence	crisis, acting out, roadtrip, baseline, coping, self-soothing, students influencing students, student attitude, disrespect + manners, teamwork, power struggle	voice change, “kiddos” vs. “young man,” parents, observation-related: • setting • procedure • observers (us) • student-student interaction • student-teacher interaction • teaching team

*Chart 1: The codes we used to sort our data, organized into categories.*

## Subjectivity & Validity

Taking into consideration that this project was completed as part of a course assignment, we wish to make explicit the circumstances that may have impacted our study in regards to subjectivity and validity. Due to the time constraints of the quarter-long class, we were not able to do “prolonged and repetitive,” fieldwork for several months as suggested by Johnson (1997) and Spindler (1987). Also because of the tight timeline, we were not able to set up a member check or receive “participant feedback” on our findings for the purpose of “verification and insight” (Johnson, 1997).

Because Ms. Kinderpraat was absent on the day of our observation, we observed Mr. Robinson’s classroom, which is a different grade level than Ms. Kinderpraat’s class. When we formulated questions to ask Ms. Kinderpratt during our interviews, we could not refer back to our findings and observations from our field work. Instead, we structured our questions to be more general. We tried to phrase our questions carefully, with the intention of not measuring Ms. Kinderpraat against Mr. Robinson and his teaching methods. Additionally, since we interviewed Ms. Kinderpraat and not Mr. Robinson, we could not seamlessly triangulate the findings from our observation with information from the interview as suggested by Johnson (1997).

Another factor that could have impacted this research's validity is our presence in the classroom. EBC administrators asked us to leave the classroom after 40 minutes because, as a behavioral specialist at EBC later told us, the students may have grown nervous that we may have been there to evaluate their readiness to rejoin a mainstream classroom. We observed Mr. Robinson's class for 20 more minutes from a dedicated observation room. From that vantage, we witnessed two students engaged in a verbal altercation, which the crisis team and the teacher broke up. It is worth considering whether the altercation would have occurred if we had remained in the classroom.

Furthermore, we came into this study as students trying to understand how to be better qualitative researchers and thus, with our limited time and understanding of the research and learning theories that exist, we had to balance the goals of self-development and the study itself. Thus, we ask that the readers accept our findings in light of these circumstances.

## **Findings**

As previously mentioned, when we began our research we wanted to investigate how technology was used in classrooms for students with learning disabilities. As we conducted our observations and interviews, however, other clear themes emerged. While we could certainly see examples of technology being used to teach and heard about the ways technology was used, we found that the staff's primary concern was managing student behavior.

### **Walking on Eggshells: Crisis Management**

From our observations and interviews, EBC's emphasis on behavioral management emerged. It pervades both the classroom environment and Ms. Kinderpraat's words. We began to observe that EBC -- from the facility, to the classroom decor, to the teachers' teaching strategies -- is intentionally arranged to instill controlled student behavior, to minimize the chance of a crisis, and to contain the effects of a crisis when one occurs.

In Mr. Robinson's classroom, aside from homework assignments and attendance charts, the majority of the posters on the wall were related to behavior (see Appendix A, Photos). The classroom rules and expectations, along with a behavior scoring system, where students can score a 0, 1, 2, 3, or 3+, were prominently displayed at the front of the

classroom above the whiteboard. A “scoreboard” at the front of the room displayed each student’s current behavior score (see Appendix A, Figure 2 for a schematic of the classroom). Another poster explained that if a member of the teaching team “warned” or “reminded” a student during class, he or she would decrease that student’s behavior score (e.g. from a “3” to a “2”). At the back of the room, a sheet hanging on the wall displayed information about “Zero Tolerance Behaviors” as a “commitment to a safe and respectful community.” All of these may serve as a constant reminder to the students that EBC places a large importance on them learning to monitor their behavior.

The teaching staff leverages the behavior scoring system to help motivate students to meet expectations and thus, reduce probability of a crisis occurring. The day after a student punched her for preventing him from participating in a Halloween activity, Ms. Kinderpraat spoke with that student regarding the incident and referenced his behavior score. She recounted what she said to him:

*“I would love to just press restart on this. And it’s a new day. That was really yucky that you didn’t get to go but you’re at a 3 today and I’m really proud of you for that. Is there anything that we can do to kind of keep you on that track?”<sup>2</sup> (Interview 1)*

In this instance Ms. Kinderpraat referenced the student’s current score of a “3” to encourage him to continue behaving himself, while acknowledging that he may still have lingering feelings of disappointment and anger. Ms. Kinderpraat did not bring up the student’s violent behavior and instead focused on keeping him “on track” behaviorally.

In addition to student’s personal goals, EBC appears to use intentional methods to help students work towards monitoring their own behavior by implementing actionable “self soothing” or behavior management strategies. Mr. Snow is a dedicated classroom therapist and the mantra the students repeat to Mr. Snow appears to be one such strategy. During our observation, Mr. Snow asked each student to give their current behavior score and repeat his or

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<sup>2</sup> All direct quotations from interviews with Ms. Kinderpraat have been edited for clarity; we removed filler words, but took care to preserve the meaning of all quotes. See Appendix B and C for full, unedited quotes.

her personal goal, many of which seemed like behavior management strategies (see Appendix A). Students muttered their responses with disinterest, as if performing a routine recitation. Here are two examples:

*Student A: "...I will keep my comments about others to myself."*

*Student B: "I will stay strong and poised when I'm frustrated and talk to the staff."*

In addition, students in Mr. Robinson's class wrote coping strategies on a piece of paper taped to their desk. Ms. Kinderpraat talked about how her students fill "self-soothing kits" with items that make them calm. She asks her students to actively use those items to regulate his or her behavior.

*"We have self-soothing kits that are non-technology-related. It might be feathers or clay, tactile things, pictures they like, mints, And we say [to the students]: you can use those any time... when you're feeling really bad."*

The aforementioned self soothing kit is a part of EBC's collection of behavior management strategies, which the school's administrators intend to help students learn to manage their own behavior in a mainstream classroom context.

When the students are unable to monitor their own behavior, the staff has measures in place to contain them. Teachers wear walkie-talkies to summon the help of other staff members if needed. In less severe cases, staff will try to intervene directly. If the situation becomes unsafe for other students, a staff member will declare a "road trip" where other students must leave the classroom, to contain the child in crisis. A student in severe crisis is quarantined in a designated quiet room, as mentioned in the setting section. Ms. Kinderpraat talked about the natural trajectory of severe behavior and, in doing so, conveyed the importance of being judiciously cognizant of a student's state of being and intervening at the right time.

*“...[Here is what] a graph of what a key incident looks like. It goes up, (motions with hand) it goes up, it goes up, and then it goes down. If we try and interact with them like by delivering consequences or trying to resolve the situation at this point (indicates the escalating “up” curve) when it’s still part of the [upward] curve, that can often trigger another incident.”* (Interview 2)

In her statement she visualizes a student’s volatility as a graph; the higher the graph, the more volatile he is. Part of getting a student back to a “baseline” or calm level is in cautiously waiting until his “emotional graph” is low enough before interacting and reasoning with him. Being quick to “deliver consequences” to a student increases the risk of “triggering another incident.”

EBC’s emphasis on behavior management may arise from the desire to make school safe and prevent violent behavior. During our observation, we noticed Ms. Johnson and Mr. Snow were traversing the classroom to talk individually with specific students who looked like they might be in discomfort. For example, Mr. Snow sat down next to a student and talked with her in whispered tones during the lesson (see Appendix A for extended field notes). At another point during our observation, Ms. Johnson, the teacher who works with Winston one-on-one, knelt in front of Winston and then quietly escorted him out of the room. Mr. Snow at one point called another student to the side of the room, where they stood and talked. These are just a few examples of the one-to-one interactions that occurred between staff and students as Mr. Robinson taught his lesson. We anticipate that these interactions were in part orchestrated to prevent potential crises.

It is as if the staff at EBC are walking on egg shells. They act cautiously and intentionally to prevent students from “cracking.” Even some of the vocabulary used at EBC conveys a volatile or explosive situation. Terms like “crisis,” “crisis team,” “trigger,” and “incident,” in conjunction with the staff’s walkie-talkies for emergency situations and constant supervision, reinforce a tense atmosphere. That tension and caution seeps out under the facades of playful decorations concentrated around the teachers’ desks, in contrast to the rest of the classroom. Although the teaching staff we observed were outwardly calm and poised and the environment at EBC seemed to be more accommodating for students with emotional disturbances than mainstream classrooms would be, the vocabulary and constant vigilance reflect how unstable and volatile EBC can be from the staff’s perspective.

Teaching at EBC is undoubtedly challenging. With a crisis team and crisis measures in place, and personal experience getting punched, getting desks thrown at her -- entering the classroom may feel like walking onto a mine field for Ms. Kinderpraat. With this view of students almost as mines that can be set off without warning, it is conceivable that deficit theory comes into play in the teaching team's and Ms. Kinderpraat's perception of the students.

### **A Deficit Perspective**

According to Gergen (1997), the deficit theory is constructing the world and individuals in terms of problems. By doing so, there is the threat of suppressing positive possibilities. When the deficit theory is applied to education, lower achievement in schools is seen as a result of a problem with the student, such as cognitive and motivational deficiencies, rather than contextual factors, such as the school itself, organizational constructs, or instructional methods. Specifically for special education, instructional models of both the past and present have been noted as deficit driven (Poplin, 1998). In other words, whatever is found to be problematic with the student or whatever the student has not learned becomes the focal point of specialized instruction. Thus, the role of the teacher is to "remediate the learning disability" (Poplin, 1998).

Ms. Kinderpraat potentially demonstrates a deficit perspective as she discusses three topics: parents, students, and her view of special education.

#### ***Reactions to Parents***

Ms. Kinderpraat demonstrates a deficit perspective when she discussed her interactions with parents. She has had frank conversations with parents that their children will not be able to live independently or achieve at the levels of children in mainstream classrooms.

*".. there are a lot of parents who are not going to be satisfied, just because it's a really difficult situation that their child is in. If their child is not making the progress that they want, the tough answer that I've had to give a lot of parents is: Unfortunately we have worked so hard with your student, and there comes a time*

*when there is a ceiling. We'll continue to work really hard on basic functional skills. We'll work until we're blue in the face. But I don't think it's fair to your student to expect things of them that they're just not capable of." (Interview 1)*

*"A lot of my parents, because I'm an eighth grade teacher, are petrified about what is going to become of their students. Will their student be able to graduate from high school? Are they ever going to be self-sufficient and independent? The answer is no. For a lot of these kids are going to need help to live on their own So parents cry, parents scream. They'll beg and plead. They'll file lawsuits." (Interview 1)*

Ms. Kinderpraat painted parents as less realistic, hoping that intervention will heal their children. She puts forth the perspective that most of her students are limited.

### ***View of Students***

Ms. Kinderpraat talked about her students by categorizing them within fixed brackets. Most of the time, she talked about two brackets: "high" and "low." One example of when this distinction was especially evident was when Ms. Kinderpraat talked about the types of computer applications that she has tried to use in her classroom to support learning, and how and why they have failed to work for her students.

*"...a lot of these tools hit right.. in the middle, and I've got a really high and really low... tools like Ginger and Inspiration, they're not necessary for most of my higher-level kids. These are kids that... can write an essay. They're very fast typers... They can spell okay... And then the other group, they're so low that those tools can't be used independently... There's not a whole lot of middle ground... you would see a lot more of that in a mainstream sort of a school. We don't have too many that fall in the middle; they tend to be one or the other." (Interview 1)*

She also talked about her "low" students' abilities to complete work independently, and the challenges that they are up against.

*"These are the kids who really struggle, but they struggle with anything with multiple steps. They also have really poor fine motor control. These are the kids that are also in occupational therapy. A lot of the kids can't log on to the computer network independently, and all that involves is typing in your user name and your password and pressing [enter]. They can't do that independently. They need adult instruction."*

*"...we call them complex kids, because of the complexity. It's not just one issue. It's the whole confluence when you add up everything. Many of them have dual diagnoses. They might be on the autism spectrum but also emotionally disturbed... They might have hyperactivity in addition to bipolar and then attention issues, memory issues. All of that added together? It's just not helpful. I'm sad about that a little bit." (Interview 2)*

She talked about her students as children who want to make themselves feel good rather than learn.

*"Even something as simple as, take out a book and turn to page 39, is incredibly difficult for a lot of our kiddos, incredibly difficult. Just because, when it gets down to it, we are trying to educate a group of kids that does not want to be educated."*

She emphasized that, because of the challenges they face, her students do not wish to learn. She discussed the idea of a finite limit or “ceiling” on the amount each one can learn.

*"They have computer class, but issues with attentiveness, typing, looking at the sea of letters on the keyboard ... those are long-term issues. I would love to think that the more time you spend on it, the better they'd get on it. For some of my kiddos, they have a ceiling."*

Along with her idea of a “ceiling” on what her students can do, Ms. Kinderpraat sometimes believes she needs to move on to new topics, including those that will help her students live independently, even if not all of her students have mastered the previous topic.

*"I have a different set of priorities than a second grade teacher. A second grade teacher really can be more focused on helping them hand over hand. But my thought is now: ready or not, high school's coming. There are some things, unfortunately, that we need to say: if they don't have them, we need to keep going."*

She makes accommodations for her students according to what bracket or bucket they fall into. She also talks about using her class as a way to help students become independent in life, abandoning their ability to achieve the same, academically, as their peers in the classroom.

*"One of my time honored tricks. There's a low kiddo in algebra readiness, and so the first step will be to add 10 plus 10. So, I'll call on one of my lower students, "Okay, what is 10 plus 10?" And he'll do that part, and I'll move to another student." (Interview 2)*

*"...with the really low kids -- the borderline kids who are right around 70 IQ -- they have a heightened sense of not wanting to look like they're making a mistake. But those are all kids that I know backwards and forwards, and I'm only going to call them up on a problem that I know they can be successful on."*  
(Interview 2)

*"Our goal is always the application test. We want them to be able to fill out an application by hand, and hopefully be legible. But other than that we kind of move them towards typing." (Interview 2)*

We noticed one important negative case of Ms. Kinderpraat using the “high” and “low” brackets. During our first interview, Ms. Kinderpraat showed us a set of three worksheets for the same activity that varied in difficulty, used for students depending on their ability levels. Through this example, Ms. Kinderpraat demonstrated that she may designate more brackets for functional use in her classroom. She also revealed the complexity with which she categorizes her students after she talked about how she uses Lexia, an instructional computer application, in her classroom:

*"We have you know at least three groupings at least...with two outliers (Ms. Kinderpraat laughs). So you know with a small class, it gets, you know it's a really widespread of abilities." (Interview 2)*

Although it's not clear who Ms. Kinderpraat meant when she discussed "outliers," she may have been discussing her students who are on medication and lack dexterity and focus because of it.

*"I struggled with that in my first couple years. I knew how to add fractions with unlike denominators, right? How do you teach that to my young lady who is on a huge amount of psychiatric medications? She's not all here, her long term memory is virtually zero. Virtually zero. So how do you educate a student like that?" (Interview 1)*

Ms. Kinderpraat also talked about how her students were inflexible or "rigid." Their rigidity stood in the way of their learning because if something went wrong -- a desk was out of place, a teacher was absent -- students may act out.

*"My higher level kids, the reason they're at a school like this is because they have behavior deficits... If you look at them on their best day, you might be able to see, "Oh they could go to a normal school." It's just when you ask them to clean their desk, and they throw the desk at you, that you realize [that might not be the case]."*

Perhaps one of the most striking things about Ms. Kinderpraat in conversation is the way she changes her voice when she talks about her students. She uses a baby voice when she imitates the things she may say to a student:

*"You're a very big young man. I can't make you do anything," (Interview 1)*

*"Hey buddy, come on over. I got some new socks. Can I can I show you my new socks? What do you think of these? You – you like em?" (Interview 1)*

In conversation with the research team, she refers to her students as “kiddos,” but as in the above, when she plays acts scenarios in which she is interacting with her students, she refers to students by the more mature “young man” while still speaking in a small, babyish voice.

While it’s not clear how this small voice or use of vocabulary manifests itself when she’s directly speaking with her students, we anticipate that she does change her tone of voice when working with her students. This might tie into her belief that she is “nurturing” (Interview 1, not transcribed) and this voice is a way to be more approachable. However, using the voice also demonstrates that she may speak to eighth graders like some would speak to a child, not an adult. This may also demonstrate a belief that her students must be handled like children, not expected to act like or learn like adults.

### *View of Special Education*

Ms. Kinderpraat also views her ability to teach successfully as something innate. She believes that people are either meant to be a teacher in a school like EBC, working with children with emotional disorders, or they are not. In this view, she also demonstrated a deficit perspective of teachers in her profession.

*“With these kids, I think you’re born to be an ED [emotional disorder] teacher or you’re not. You just have it or you don’t. And you find that out very quickly.”* (Interview 1)

Ms. Kinderpraat believes that she is meant to be a teacher for students with emotional disorders. However, it’s unclear how she measures her own success in her classroom. In our first interview with her, she talked about how meeting state standards is not possible with some of her students.

*“The other thing about special ed that is just wild is, the students are in eighth grade and so it makes sense that they’d be on eighth grade standards. However, you’ll have students in eighth grade that can’t add double digit numbers. They don’t have phonemic awareness, and can barely, barely sound out words. And yet, the curriculum and laws say that you have to be teaching them eighth grade standards. We do what we can.”*

By indicating that there is only so much that a teacher can help her students learn, in light of the behavioral issues, Ms. Kinderpraat further displays a deficit perspective, even going so far as to say that meeting eighth grade standards may not be possible.

### **A Teacher in Conflict**

Although in many instances, Ms. Kinderpraat's responses indicated a deficit perspective, there are indicators throughout the conversation that highlight a contrasting, optimistic view. She may be battling deficit thinking in some cases. For example, she explained that some schools "warehouse" special education students. More specifically, she expresses frustration that there are not enough qualified special education teachers to address students' needs.

*"As someone who's been in the special education game in California for a while: It's endemic. It is the exception to get a child who is not warehoused... And I think it really goes back to [the fact that] there is a severe shortage of number of qualified special education teachers... on top of that the turnover is something like 50 percent. Think about getting quality education for these kids on top of those issues... It's literally about getting a warm body in [to teach]."* (Interview 2)

In contrast to the deficit perspective, Ms. Kinderpraat pointed out external issues that contribute to the students' personal and academic development including a shortage in teachers, high turnover, warehousing and poor quality in education. She herself tries to combat warehousing as a teacher, believing that her own development is key to helping the students learn.

*"My desire is not to just warehouse students, but to be really skilled in best practice. What would be the best practice for working with these students?"* (Interview 1)

*"You really do grow in your teaching to where, even when there are lots of distractions going on, you know exactly what you're doing. You know not just how to do something, but you know how to teach it."*

(Interview 1)

By expressing that she has an impact on her students, Ms. Kinderpraat contradicted the deficit perspective, which blames the student's deficiencies as the reason for their failure rather than external factors. She emphasized her ability to influence her students by explaining how crucial it is for her to build relationships with them.

*"Relationship, relationship, relationship. It's all about the relationship... I remember when I was young and first starting out, there was a teacher who had been teaching for years. She had her masters degree. She came in and I think she had a good lesson -- I assume because she had been teaching for a long time -- and the kids started throwing stuff at her. With these kids, it's all about making a connection. It's all about understanding where they're at." (Interview I)*

She further incorporated this concept of relationship building into her instructional methods such as scaffolding.

*"They will work with you. They'll hear you out. I'm a huge believer in I do, we do, you do. That's really how a lot gets done here. We try and make them feel comfortable, take away some of the anxiety that they might feel. I'll do the first part. I'll get the boat going." (Interview I)*

By expressing that the students have the capacity to learn through her external support and scaffolding, she subtly negated her earlier deficit perspectives. This optimistic thinking extends to her idea of technology for students. When prompted during the interview, Ms. Kinderpraat expressed positive possibilities with technology rather than thinking just in terms of the students' problems. For example, during both interviews she talked about how her students on the Asperger's spectrum face large behavior challenges such as rigidity. However, those on the high-end of the spectrum show evidence of high intelligence, and they function well with technology because of its predictability.

*"Technology can be an asset for my higher kids that are going out and doing some mainstreaming. That would be an area of strength for them. I'm always trying to look at [things] from a strengths-based perspective. That's part of the way it is, self esteem. If they are good at something then they can build on that. And we can say, "Well everybody's got some things that they're not so good at." I think technology and how adept they are at technology, that can be a real, shining point for them, that maybe makes up for a little bit some of the embarrassment about throwing desks."* (Interview 2)

In contrast to the deficit perspective, in this example Ms. Kinderpraat takes on a positive, “strengths-based perspective” by highlighting the strong skills that her students have rather than their issues. Ms. Kinderpraat talked about one student in particular who had a reading disability that was circumvented by using an assistive device called the Intel Reader.

*"We had an Intel Reader...I loved that it was independent. He didn't need us to do it. Because otherwise [the student could only comprehend content if it was read aloud]. He just couldn't read it. So what he did is he took a picture of the 8th grade history text or English text and then the device would read what was on the page and...it opened up the world to him. It was just amazing. He became so adept at placing the camera at the right angle and he could then participate..."* (Interview I)

Ms. Kinderpraat then talked about how technology is not only a way to play on the strengths of her students, it also provides them access. The following is a continuation of the quote above:

*"He had access. The big thing that we're always after with those low kids is: How do we get them access? We don't just want to put them in the corner and have them do worksheets... [With the Intel Reader] he felt so proud. He was able to then participate in oral discussions. He was able to be in projects with the rest of the kids."* (Interview I)

In this part of the discussion, Ms. Kinderpraat illustrated how changing the environment by using technology like the Intel Reader can further expand a student's learning capacity. The fundamental idea that the environment could influence the students' learning capability challenges the deficit perspective.

## **Conclusions**

While the time we spent observing and interviewing at EBC was limited, it gave us a small window into EBC and the experiences and mindsets of one teacher there, Ms. Kinderpraat. In her conversations with us, Ms. Kinderpraat battled between two mindsets: a deficit perspective and glimmers of an strengths-based way of thinking.

Our research demonstrates that, day to day, EBC's staff, structure, and vocabulary emphasize the importance of crisis management. Ms. Kinderpraat, as a teacher at EBC, sometimes brought a deficit lens as she spoke with us about her students and their parents, as well as special education and state academic standards. Although she showcases a deficit perspective throughout the interview, there are optimistic gleanings. She talks about changing the special education system, improving her teaching practice and development, and using technology as ways to improve student outcomes.

Our observations and interviews sparked some unanswered questions. Why and when does Ms. Kinderpraat use the baby voice with her students? How do the "high" and "low" levels for students that Ms. Kinderpraat mainly uses in conversation compare to the levels that Ms. Kinderpraat uses when she drafts activities like worksheets? Is it possible that cognitive dissonance is at play; that Ms. Kinderpraat's job is so difficult that to self-preserve and to believe she should continue her work, she asserts that she's an effective teacher but the students' "ceiling" is the problem? A logical first step would be to observe Ms. Kinderpraat's classroom. Also necessary is a review of the relevant literature.

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## Appendix A: Observation Field Notes, Edited

Esther B. Clark School

Mr. Robinson's Grade 9-10 Classroom

Observation Conducted October 25, 2011, 8:30am-9:30am

Interviewer: Katie McFeely (KM)

Observers: Anna Ly, Hain-Lee Hseuh

**Field notes written by Anny Ly**

**Notes:** Observer comments are *italicized*, side notes of observations that are not according to timeline will be [bracketed]. Key: “Quotes” ‘Paraphrased quotes’ \* movement \*

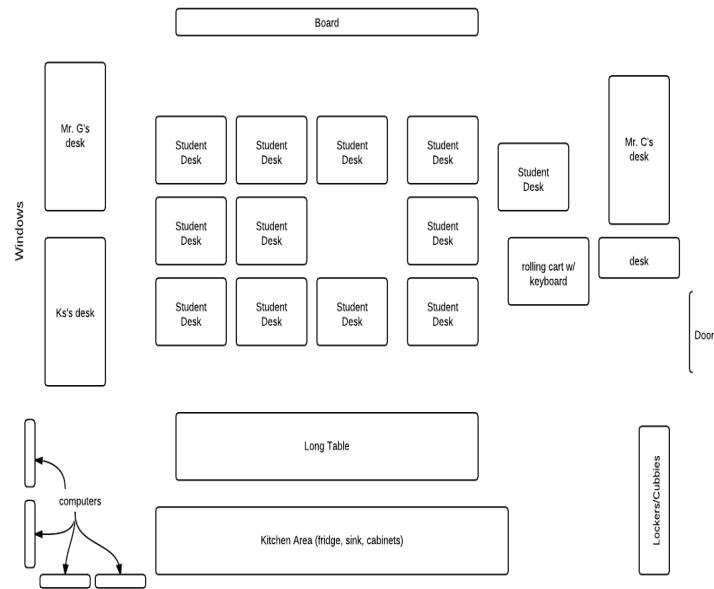


Figure 2: Sketch of setting

### Description of the setting

- It takes us a bit of a distance to get to the classroom. We had to make several turns through different hallways to get to the classroom. *It reminds me of a doctor's office where the lobby has some toys that kids can play with before they go and meet the doctor for their appointment. I wonder if this affects the students feelings towards the school. Maybe they feel that they are getting "healed" or that something is wrong with them.*
- A woman is sitting in a chair on the left-most computer on the left side wall of the classroom. She does not turn around when we come in with Mr. Robinson.
- All of the students' desks are facing the whiteboard up front. Each desk has a name written on a rectangular piece of paper. *Assumption is that these are the seating assignments for the students. Verified when students came into the class and sat down as their respective seats and did roll call.*
- There are three desks that are larger than the students desks. Two of them that is positioned in front of the left side windows has a name on them: **Mrs. Z** and Mr. Robinson.
- Next to Mr. Robinson's desk is a door to another space that has a similar size desk. *This looks like an office. Not sure to whom it belongs.*
- Above the whiteboard at the front of the classroom are 5 signs. One of them has **Classroom Rules & Basic Expectations** typed at the top and underlined. There are 13 numbered points underneath the title. Number 6 is **Be HONEST** and Number 8 is **Keep hands and feet to self (NO touching without permission)**. To the right of this sign are four more. At the top of each of the four signs is a number. The first one has 3+,

second has **2**, third has **1**, and the most right positioned sign has **0**. Under **3+**, it says in bold, italicized and underlined font **Meeting Basic Expectations**. Under **2**, it says in smaller font **Behaviors that impede/disrupt the learning process**. The sign with **1** and **0** also has title text describing behaviors. Under the header are bullets: **Not following directions the first time given** is under the sign that has a **2**. *This looks like the rating system that they get scored against three times a day. Looking at the **1** sign and the **0** sign, I notice some shocking behaviors including **Making Drug/gang references** and **Premeditated cruelty to animals**. I wonder if this is based on past experiences in the classroom.*

- Behind us (we are at a rectangular table in the back of the room) is a fridge, sink, and microwave. To the right of us next to the entrance is a set of lockers. *I'm unsure of why there is a sink, fridge, and microwave in the back. Not familiar with this setup with the past classrooms I've been in before. My initial assumption is that this is just for the teachers. Not sure why they have a large table in the back but it is convenient for us observers to sit at to see the whole classroom.*

#### **Pre-class – Observation Team spoke to Ms. Johnson and to Mr. Robinson**

- Mr. Robinson explains to us that the students get rated 0-3+ each day based on their performance and behavior. They get rated three times a day. ‘Some get pretty obsessed with the score and get upset with a score drop’ says Mr. Robinson. Ms. Johnson then says “those who have incentive (can’t hear) get crazy...if they don’t get what they want.” *Seems as if some of the students get really hung up on getting scored each day, three times a day.*
- “Get as much out of it as you can and give them space” – Ms. Johnson – *I believe she's talking about the students making the most out of the day*
- [ROADTRIP] “If you hear us say ‘Roadtrip, get out’” – Ms. Johnson. *She pauses here and looks at us inquiringly as if waiting to see if we get a confused reaction. I personally give a surprised look since I really had no idea what she was talking about.* ‘If someone is having problems, we try to get everyone else out to work individually with the one student’ ‘...isolated with the Crisis team. Code word is road trip’ – Ms. Johnson. *Reflecting back on this, I realized that this might also be a safety issue and to make sure the situation does not get even more heightened with all of the students are around.*
- Mr. Robinson tells us an assistant for a teacher got sick today and had to leave. *I think “oh no” because they seem to have multiple people with different roles so ‘all hands on deck’ team (Ms. Johnson, Mr. Robinson, etc) so if one person is gone, it might cause some issues for the day.*
- Mr. Robinson tells us he has been teaching for 10 years at Esther B. Clark. 15 years total of teaching. ‘I don’t have to spend a lot of my money for teacher supplies...I feel gratitude for being here.’ G talks about how appreciative he is of the school. *He seems like he really likes teaching here, thus explains why he is here 10 out of the 15 years he has been a teacher.*
- Mr. Robinson tells us that he is the lead for most of the subjects including math and English. They learn geography in a different classroom. “Stay late every night putting together stuff” – G as he describes what he has to do to prepare for each class day. *I'm impressed that he is able to gather all the materials for the subjects since this is a 9th and 10th grade class.*
- “I’m a one-on-one so I have a very special student” ’I also have a crisis team if we need to talk to a student’ –Ms. Johnson. *Here they mention more support that they have for the classroom. Seems like a big operation with crisis team, assistants and then finally the teacher.*
- Ms. Johnson then talks about her background before she came to the school. “I was a special ed teacher for years and then I came here” – Ms. Johnson [Observing her, she is taller than Mr. Robinson with short hair and a yellow shirt. *I notice she seems to have a dominant presence in the classroom from just talking to her. Her voice is friendly.* She smiles at us while talking.]
- Ms. Johnson and Mr. Robinson then talk about one-on-one time. “One kid...you’ll see him.” – Ms. Johnson. “There is another kid and he will probably need a one-on-one....they are easy to spot” – Mr. Robinson. *I'm assuming that one-on-one is a designated role, in which people like Ms. Johnson are given an additional role to work directly with a student and make sure they are on track and are doing well*

*emotionally. I take a little offense to the comment of “they are easy to spot” because I am unsure of what he meant by that statement, which may have meant physical appearance or just behaviorally.*

- “It’s hard to be with them one-on-one because all the students \*moves hands towards desks\* “ ‘I don’t have to take my work home at night. I like this much better’ – Ms. Johnson “My guy is very sporty and a lot of his reinforcement is sport stuff and so me and him are like this \*crosses fingers\*” “I get paid for playing basketball and I go home at night and think wow I got paid to play basketball” [She occasionally laughs in between her sentences. ] Ms. Johnson *seems very happy at this point about the work she is doing because most of it isn’t really work to her and more play.*
- “The crisis team has walkies. If anyone needs somebody for extra coverage....” – Mr. Robinson. *I am impressed here by the support everyone has for each other. I also notice that Mr. Robinson and Ms. Johnson seem comfortable with each other as they talk about the different things in the classroom and talk based on what the other has just said.*
- “Some have coping strategies (on their desk)” – Mr. Robinson. [I look at one of the desks and see that there is a little piece of paper on the upper right hand side with sentences such as **put head down**. I also notice that there are items (paper, notebook, pencils) inside the desk as it has an opened front.]
- “We look at what subjects they are more advanced in and place them...if they need more help in ‘math and ....’ *This seems like a lot of work having two different grades in the classroom AND having to gauge where each student is, while balancing multiple subjects.*
- Ms. Johnson look down through the left wall windows towards the playground “Someone looks like they are getting a talking to...” *From her disciplinary sounding tone, I’m assuming that some kids are giving another kid trouble.*
- “When they are immersed in this program...we try to model what they are going to have...take away some of the supports” – G. *I remember that this is a classroom where they transition them to the mainstream classrooms so they must be taking away the support to make sure they are ready for the mainstream classroom.*
- Ms. Johnson - Gets a walkie talkie message about a student. She says “okay” and then walks out of the room. Observation team then gets prepared for the kids to enter the classroom and the class to start.

### **8:30 AM – 9:30 AM Class – English Section**

#### 8:30AM - Students are coming into the classroom and getting into their seats

- Students start to walk into the classroom. “Where’s Mrs. Z?” – Unknown student. [Cannot see who said this message]. [I look at one of the desks on the left hand side and see that there is a desk that has a piece of paper with **Mrs. Z** written on it. The other desk next to this one has a piece of paper with Mr. Robinson written on it. No one is sitting at either of the desks right now.] Mr. Robinson responds to the student, “She’s not here. She’s sick.” “Ohhh,” says the student.
- On the right hand of the room, Mr. Snowro is talking to a student and says “Jks good job!” *This man has a loud, very positive sounding voice that stands out in the classroom.* [Looking at Mr. Snowro, I notice he is wearing a black checkered shirt. He is also taller and bigger than Mr. Robinson and most of the students.]
- Girl in pink sweater picks up some tissues and blows her nose. Student goes up to G and asks him a question about math work.
- Two students talk to each other – Mentions “Indian people” *Not sure what they are talking about here but they are laughing and so it may be an offensive joke?*
- In back row, Ch whispers to Jks, another student who is sitting in front of him.

#### Mr. Snowro addresses the students

- Mr. Snowro stands by a board on the right hand side of the classroom. Next to him, there is a large chart that is located next to the entrance that has the students name on it. Mr. Snowro says “Good job guys for coming in so well.”

- He then moves on to talk about kickball. *This must be the sport that Ms. Johnson and Mr. Robinson were watching them do from the classroom windows.* “For you to do work outside I’m totally cool about that but if you’re not going to play kickball...you’re not giving your best effort...what happens in the gym, we’re already sluggish and that affects your grade.” “We want you to be relaxed, ready to go and ready for PE.” *Not sure which grade he is talking about. May mean the 0-3+ rating they get each day or could be a grade for PE.*
- “Let’s get our check in out of the way” says Mr. Snowro. “An!” says Mr. Snowro. *He says this with a loud, clear voice. Seems like he is trying to grab the student’s attention.* Mr. Snowro starts going down the list of students on the chart and asks for each personal goal. After he says each student’s name, the student then responds with “check 3” and their personal goal.
- An responds with something (inaudible). *She is talking fairly quickly with some of the words just melding together as if she’s reading from somewhere. By speaking that quickly, it may mean she wants to get her turn out of the way as quickly as possible. Her head is down the whole time too and she is holding something in her hands – it looks like string or jewelry. She is preoccupied and doesn’t seem to care about what is going on in the classroom.* “Good personal goal” responds Mr. Snowro. *I’m astonished he even heard that. I couldn’t understand one word she said.*
- Cromdin stands at the behavior chart and checks in with each student by name. He asks each student to say their personal goal and the behavior score that their parents gave them over the weekend. (OC: It’s difficult to understand student responses. They speak their behavior goals as if they are memorized – speaking quickly with little inflection, most often muttered. Perhaps they’re ashamed to have to repeat this often.)

*Excerpt from Katie’s Field Notes*

- CC gets called on and says her goal: ”I will keep my comments about others to myself” (OC: I only caught the tail end of her goal, which is the portion in quotes.)
- E: ”I will stay strong and poised when I’m frustrated” and talk to the staff.
- JA: Answers quietly (OC: I can’t hear this.)
- JJ: ”Accept feedback ...” (OC: I only caught part of JJ’s response)
- Cromdin says, I need to hear your responses instead of hearing mumbling. JJ repeats himself and Cromdin says “excellent!”
- While Cromdin continues checking in with each student, Teacher crouches by CC’s desk and tells her about us as observers. (OC: I overheard her also say that she wishes the female teaching assistant was present earlier.)
- Cromdin: ”It seems like we have a lot of low energy this morning. AC, if you need help quiet hands” (OC: “quiet hands” must be code for raising your hand quietly if you need attention or help)

*Back to Anna’s Field Notes*

- Mr. Snowro continues to call out each student’s name: ”Jks! What’s your personal goal Jks?” Eventually he reaches Je who says ”I will accept feedback...” Mr. Snowro then asks them to ”be proud of your personal goal instead of mumbling it.” He also asks for some of the students to repeat their response. *At first, I thought it was just me who could not hear them.*
- Mr. Snowro then commends Mi, saying ”Mi I think you did really well with your personal goal last week. Let’s keep the ...mojo...going.”
- ”I will ignore side conversations and focus...” – Pe
- ”Check 3” says Ch. Mr. Snowro checks off his name on the chart. *Ch does not say a personal goal. I expect Mr. Snowro to question this but he does not say anything and moves on probably.*
- Mr. Snowro finishes checking the last student on the chart and says ‘Seems like we have a lot of low energy....let’s move on with our Monday....the floor is yours G.’ He then turns towards Mr. Robinson. [Right now, Ms. Johnson is moving around the classroom and looking around. She sometimes stops at a student and talks to them in an inaudible voices.]

### Mr. Robinson then starts addressing the students

- Mr. Robinson points at us and indicates that we are here observing. “What are they observing for?” – asks one student who also moves head towards us (observation team). Mr. Robinson explains that we are there to observe his teaching methods. *After this conversation, the students don't seem to look at us as much as when they entered the classroom. I thought this might be because they do not really care about us and don't see us as a threat.*
- Mr. Robinson then reviews what they have during the week for essays. “Let's start today with what we're doing with our essays. I believe tomorrow...(inaudible) I'm not mistaken. Let me look at the board so I'm correct on that. Tomorrow we have rough body paragraph number 3? And Wednesday we have the conclusion paragraph. (inaudible) and the Alchemist. We should prepare to write in rough draft form and the rest of the week is revisions. How to revise an essay and get our point across.”
- Mr. Robinson then transitions to talking about sentences. While he is talking, he passes out a sheet to each column of students and the first student in the column passes it back. “We have been identifying prepositions and prepositional phrases...make sure we have the correct component of our sentences...and correctly identify how to use direct objects.” *From what they are talking about, I get an understanding that they have been working on identifying subject, direct object, etc in sentences. I am not sure how long they have been working on this lesson.* While Mr. Robinson is talking about the sentences, Ms. Johnson sits next to Ch. She talks to him while he opens his bookbag.
- Mr. Robinson calls on a student to answer a question that is on a worksheet that each of the students has in front of them. “Jks, will you read the bold at the top that says what a direct object does?” Jks reads the sentence. G then says “He read it very well but...” Jks interrupts Mr. Robinson and says ‘...shut up.’ *Jks is annoyed that students didn't 'shut up' while he was talking and now he is forced to re-read.* Mr. Robinson then finishes his sentence “there are a few people talking” ‘so let's re-read it again.’ Jks re-reads the sentence.
- Pe raises his hand to answer a question.
- Mr. Robinson then starts talks about action verbs. Mr. Robinson then calls on Winston to read example A. Winston reads **The girl slugged the ball**.
- Mr. Robinson goes to a computer that is situated on a computer stand on the right hand side of the class next to a desk and writes on a document using a keyboard attached to the monitor. At the top of the program bar, it says **Activinspire – Studio page**. Mr. Robinson types **The girl slugged the** and it shows up on the front whiteboard via a projector that is hanging from the ceiling and is attached to the computer. [The computer is grey with orange elements] *The computer does not look like a brand name computer that I've seen before. At first I thought it was an iPad attached to a keyboard but doesn't look like it.*
- While Mr. Robinson is at the computer, Ct asks for a tissue and walks to the back and puts it into the trash after using it. *Ct seems to be sick and keeps walking slowly back and forth to the tissue box – not sure if she's paying attention. Has a bored look on her face.*
- Mr. Robinson underlines **girl** and double underlines **slugged** on the monitor using a stylus pen, which controls the pointer.
- Mr. Robinson then types the next line **They put peanut butter and jelly on their sandwiches** in a text box and starts moving the text box to position it onto the screen.
- “Pe maybe you can help me on this one” Mr. Robinson asks while he picks up the tablet and goes up to the monitor. [Tablet is wireless and can be removed from the keyboard to allow for movement in the classroom.] Pe answers. Mr. Robinson underlines **They**, double underlines **put**. *I'm a little disappointed right now of how he is using the tablet. He is using it mostly just to type sentences and underline them. Not very exciting to me compared to what else he could do with the tablet. Also, his typing leaves time for the students to get distracted and look away from the board.*

- “We’re going to do this the way we’ve been doing the other exercises,” Mr. Robinson says as the students takes out their papers. *So they must have been working on the worksheet Mr. Robinson passed out earlier to demonstrate what they have to do in their English packet.*
- [Some students have their head down towards the paper to fill it out.] Ct asks for a pencil. Ms. Johnson breathes out heavily (*as a sign of frustration?*) and then goes to get a pencil and gives it to Ct.
- Mr. Robinson puts the first sentence on the computer pad **1. Dad shines his shoes**. And underlines the subject, double underlines the verb **shines** and then puts D.O. over the **shoes**. ‘ Do this first one and we’ll look at it together.’ [Students, without talking are looking at their paper.]
- While the students are working on their papers, Ms. Johnson goes to Winston and talks to him and then walks out with Winston. *Seems to be isolating him because he is having trouble and so brings him to the hallway.* Mr. Snowro also goes outside. *He is probably walking outside to also talk to Winston.* [Winston is a very tall boy and bends his upper back into a hunched position. His hair falls across his face and shields his eyes. *He seems like a quiet person who keeps to himself. To me, he doesn’t seem to be causing any trouble but for some reason he is being brought outside of the class.*]
- Ch raises his hand and Mr. Robinson walks over to him to answer a question. Mr. Robinson says “They start with a preposition...in are large one,” while looking down at the sheet in front of Ch.
- Ev asks out loud “Is large one?” and then Ms. Johnson walks over to him while Mr. Robinson is still talking to Ch. Ms. Johnson *seems to respond and help students immediately when Mr. Robinson is occupied with another student.* Ms. Johnson then continues to walk around and stops at Pe’s desk. *She seems very attentive to everyone in the classroom despite her role as a one-on-one.*
- Ct is still getting up to get tissues and walk around to throw them away.
- Mr. Snowro walks back in and goes to talk to Au. Winston is still in hallway. Jo walks back into class. *Not sure where he went, possibly restroom.*
- Ev asks a question. Mr. Robinson walks over “if it’s separated by and, or, but then there is two...chocolate is describing the type of cupcake” *Seems to be explaining which one is subject.*
- Mr. Robinson then walks over to Jks and asks “How’s it going there Jks?” Jks says “I don’t have a pen...” Mr. Robinson responds “Oh! Let’s do something about that...” and then says ‘can’t wait 10-15 minutes to ask for that...’ *Seems to be scolding him for not having a pen as an excuse to not do the work.*
- Ms. Johnson’s walkie talkie goes off – “...being disruptive..”
- Ms. Johnson continues to walk around. Ch calls for Ms. Johnson again. Ms. Johnson walks over and talks to Ch and looks at his paper he is working on. *Ch calls for the teacher or assistants quite frequently. He either verifies his work or asks questions about it.* [Ch is wearing a green t-shirt. He has a smaller build than most of the students in the classroom. *He looks a lot younger than a 9th/10th grader to me but is much more energetic than his classmates.*]
- Pe calls for Ms. Johnson. She walks over to Pe.
- Ch calls for Mr. Robinson. Asks him a question about the sentence. Mr. Robinson says “Cupcakes would be the direct object.”
- Pe calls for G. “Let me check your paper to see if you’re on the right track” says Mr. Robinson. Mr. Robinson tells him that his work is correct. Mr. Robinson notes something that is not correct, but “other than that it’s great.” Ms. Johnson, while walking behind Pe, says “You’re just too darn smart” several times. *She is whispering this but it is still audible in the classroom – quietly praising him but still having his classmates hear.*
- “Once everyone has the first page. I want to go over it to make sure you have it done correctly and we’re on the right path” says Mr. Robinson.
- At 9:01, he switches to the worksheet using an overhead projector. The worksheet now shows up onto the board. Students get distracted by his hand that got projected and he says “it’s just a hand.”
- Mr. Snowro calls for Pe and Pe walks over...”You’re doing great Pe” and Pe nods and then sits back down. *Not sure why he was called up. Maybe to do a one of his three checks during the day?*

- Mr. Snowro goes up to Winston and then Winston gets up from his desk and walks into the office that is on the right hand side of the classroom up at the front. Mr. Snowro then walks into the office and closes the door. *I believe that Winston may be the student that Mr. Robinson and Ms. Johnson noted earlier before the class started as the student who had more behavioral issues than the other students. Winston also didn't seem like he was working on anything and was just sitting on his desk while the other students were doing their worksheets. Could he be having a bad day? At this point, I'm wondering what calls for a Road Trip because Winston did seem stand offish to the other students and to himself. Also, I'm a little overwhelmed with all the moving around, walkie talkies going off and Mr. Snowro walking in and out of the classroom. I'm a little shocked the students are still getting their work done with all this happening.*
- At 9:02, Mr. Robinson says “Everyone turn to page 32 of the packet. We’re going to run through these to make sure we’re on the right page.” He asks Ev to “help me with the second sentence.” Ev answers the question and Mr. Robinson says “Perfect!”
- At this point, some students are laughing and a student says “It’s not funny.” Ev turns around and says “That’s what she said.” *I think they are talking about a sentence that is up on the projector.*
- Mr. Robinson asks Ct to answer question 4 and asks her if she did it. She responds “Yes I did!” *She seems a bit annoyed that Mr. Robinson didn't think she did it since her voice went up a little in volume.*
- “What is large doing in this sentence” asks Mr. Robinson. Au answers “Adjective.”
- Mr. Robinson has Je talk about the fifth sentence.
- Mr. Snowro walks out of office and calls for Pe again and stands by Mrs Z’s desk to talk to him. *I have a feeling that Pe may be the problem of why Winston is upset. Because Mr. Snowro keeps going back to Pe after having talked to Winston both in the hallway and the office.*
- A teacher with brown short hair and black-rimmed glasses just walked in and talks to Meagan before sitting down. She gets back up and talks to Mr. Snowro.
- Mr. Robinson is still talking about the sheet that is up on the board.
- Ch raises his hand when Mr. Robinson asks someone to answer number 7. G calls on Ch to answer. He identifies each part of the sentence. Mr. Robinson says “Good job spotting the prepositional phrase.”
- Mr. Robinson moves onto number 8. Au raises his hand. Mr. Robinson sees Au’s hand raised and says “I would LOVE for you to do number 8.” Au identifies each part of the sentence.
- Ch asks “When we get to 14, can I do 14?” [The class is at number 9 right now.] *Ch seems very enthusiastic to show what he knows and raises his hand consistently as well as calls for help. He is a vocal student, who participates quite frequently.*
- Ev answers number 9. Mr. Robinson asks Ev about “on the ceiling” and Ev correctly answers that it is a prepositional phrase.
- Ct gets up again.
- Pe answers number 11.
- [Around 9:10 AM, the woman with the black-rimmed glasses whose name is Ni, removed us from the classroom stating that some of the students were starting to be nervous around us. She apologizes for not knowing that we were going to be there, stating that Am did not tell her we were going to be there today and there was a bit of confusion. She also talks about the students probably hear us typing and having us behind them is probably distracting. She tells us that there is an observer room that has one-sided glass and we are allowed to sit in there. A woman named Jodie is also with her. Jodie is a behavioral specialist. They tell us that we should come to them after we are done. They both walk us over to the observation room, which is fairly dark and tell us that the lights cannot be turned on or else the students will see us in there. They show us how to adjust the volume of the speakers so we would be able to hear what is going on in the class. We apologize for any disturbance we may have caused and sit down in the room. We’re now looking into the classroom. We cannot see the board nor what is going on near the office on one side of the classroom. However, we can see the students still.] *Right when Ni asked us to come to the hallway, I was extremely nervous thinking that we were not supposed to be there at all and something went wrong and they wanted us to leave and possibly not allow us to keep our notes. We were also getting removed at*

*9:10AM so I was worried we were missing crucial observation details and notes. We would have just been there for 40 minutes instead of the needed 60 minutes. However, after she tells us that we can stay and there is an observation room, I am much more calmer and actually relieved because while I was typing in the classroom, I was actually thinking that some of the students might be bothered by what I was doing.*

- Mr. Robinson is still working on the exercises. “What receives the action...”
- 9:18AM. None of the students are speaking and neither are the teachers or assistants. The students are now working on a sheet.
- Au raises his hand and Mr. Robinson walks over and looks at his paper.
- Mr. Robinson then walks over to Ch, who has his hand raised. Ch asks about one of the questions. Ch asks Mr. Robinson ‘Is **does** a verb?’ Mr. Robinson responds “Does is a helping verb... What does he not want.”
- Mr. Snowro picks up and looks at Pe’s paper and pats Pe on the shoulder. *Pats as a signal of good work.*
- They then review a sentence that has the word **Chinese restaurant**. Ch says out loud “there was a kid that ate 8lbs of Chinese food at once.”
- Mr. Snowro walks over to Ct and sits down in empty desk next to her and talks to her. *This could be about her getting up to get tissues throughout the whole lesson.*
- Mr. Robinson says “We’re getting to about the end of class. What I want you guys to do, if you have not finished page 33, finish that.” “For homework tonight you are going to do page 34, which has compound objects, which usually have 2 direct objects.” Mr. Robinson then explains compound direct objects: “It’s the same ...as prepositional phrases...there will be compound direct objects...marbles and yoyo. The second one you have letter and envelope.”
- Mr. Robinson says “If you want to work on it while we get math started up. We’re going to start math in 5 minutes....SSR (*not sure*) you will have time.” A student asks for water and Mr. Robinson says “You may get some water.”

#### **End of English Lesson – Transition to Math Lesson**

- 9:25AM – Most of the students are getting up from their seats. Three students stand by kitchen to talk about a TV show [the office]. Two students open cabinets for food.
- Three students are still sitting down with their heads facing papers in front of them and writing on them. *Seems to be doing homework ahead of time.*
- Winston is holding an ice pack. He asks Mr. Robinson where to put it and Mr. Robinson says “Maybe the freezer?”
- Mr. Robinson goes back to his computer pad and moves his mouse around. *Since we can’t see the board, I’m assuming he is setting up for the math section.*
- A student who was not there during the verbal lesson walks into the classroom and sits next to Ct and turns to Mr. Robinson and asks him about what they worked on.
- We gather our belongings and are about to leave.
- At 9:35AM, Ev starts talking in a loud voice to Jks with Mr. Snowro standing next to him and starts saying ‘no one likes you.’ He also curses several times. *Ev is shouting at this point and Jks seems to be ignoring him.* Mr. Robinson *looks like he is sighing and seems to be positioning himself between Jks who is sitting down casually as if to try to put a blockage in between the two.* Mr. Snowro takes Ev outside. Jks is still sitting in his desk facing away from the door with one leg over the other. Several of the students laugh. *Jks doesn’t seem to be paying attention to the lesson.*
- 9:38 – “Alright! Basically the number...” – G says as he starts the lesson.

#### **JM’s Office – Observation Team sits in JM’s Office at around 9:45AM**

- We talk to JM after leaving the class. She mentions that they have about 4 one-on-ones in the classroom.
- J tells us that students may have thought we’re observing to see if they are fit to go back into mainstream classrooms. We may have increased stress with our presence. *I’m a little concerned here now because I*

*think we may have changed some behaviors as well. Wondering if the outburst would have happened if we were there.*

- We mention to her that the class seems under control even though 1 staff member was missing and that Ce was very quick to move from student to student even though she's a one-to-one. J says 'I'm glad – that's what she is supposed to be doing.' J then tells us that the student didn't want to be a one-on-one because he didn't think he need it.
- J walks us back to the entrance of the building and tells us that the Esther B Clark School is more behavioral disabilities as oppose to Sand Hill, which has more students that have ADHD or are slightly behind. Esther B Clark also has a therapeutic section.

## Photos

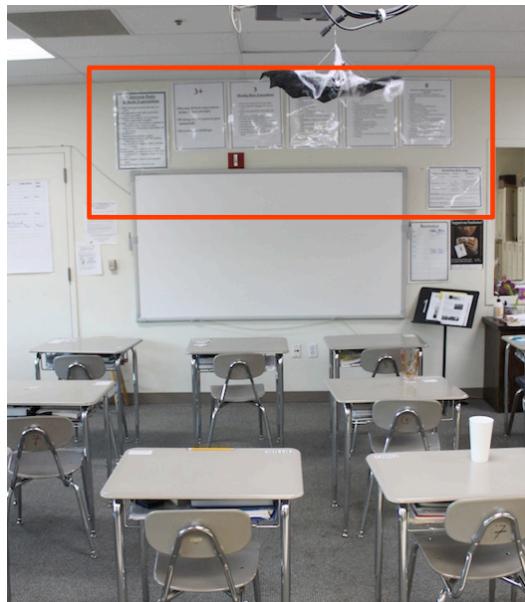


Figure 3: View from the back of the classroom; red rectangle surrounds the behavior expectations rubric.

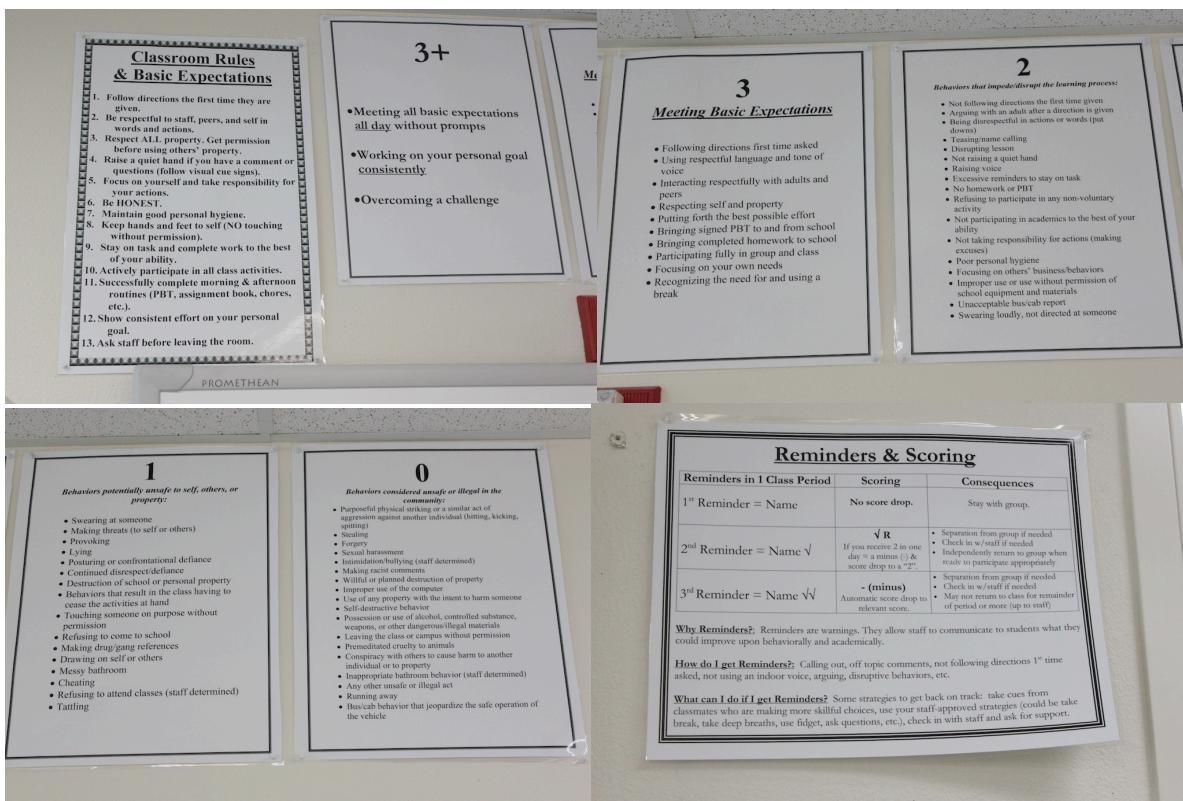


Figure 4: Close up of the posters on the wall

## **Appendix B: First Interview Transcription**

Esther B. Clark School

Interview Conducted November 2, 2011, 10:30am-11:30am

Interviewee: Ms. Kinderpraat (AD)

Interviewer: Katie McFeely (KM)

Observers: Anna Ly, Hain-Lee Hsueh

### **Select Quotes from Minutes 00:00-15:00**

Transcribed by Hain-Lee Hsueh

Ms. Kinderpraat: "You know I really think that in this line of work especially, you just love it or you don't love it." 2:10

Ms. Kinderpraat: "I always looked at myself a little bit as, almost like a public defender, that uh no matter what they were accused of, some of them were accused of really heinous heinous things, but they're a human being and deserved a really quality education, and so my desire was not just to warehouse students, but to be really skilled in best practice; what would be the best practice for working with these students." 5:12

Ms. Kinderpraat: "I thought the kids really benefited from the continuous relationship. I thought you know, you could have the best lesson in the world, you can have the best knowledge, but if they don't like you and they don't buy in, it's all for naught, they're not gonna benefit from that, and so the relationship is always paramount, almost first and foremost." 7:33

Ms. Kinderpraat: "Kids come in and I think the greatest emphasis that i have for them is on routine, um, it's all repetition, um, it's all schedule, they have visuals of um exactly what the expectation is. We don't - i think one of the biggest differences between us and um a school that maybe doesn't have some of the knowledge bases, we don't just have expectations, we teach the expectations we teach exactly what does the behavior look like, we role play, we go over, we call them expected student behaviors and unexpected student behaviors, um. We're very calm, there's no yelling, it's just, you know one of my go to lines I say throughout the day is, 'You're a very big young man I can't make you do anything, you know, you can say I'm not going to do this writing assignment,' and that's your choice. there's going to be some consequences for that choice and this is what they would be, but I can't make you do anything you don't wanna do.' So um you know that process of teaching them what the expectation is, how hey can meet i, what are some of the skills they can use, and then hopefully them being able to have some independence around that routine. " 11:00-12:15

Ms. Kinderpraat: "Executive function in the sense of being able to manage themselves. They, a lot of them struggle with remembering basics such as their lunch, um, even just a step further they struggle with things like eating correctly, um you know they'll, you know most kids uh, in junior high, they have smudges on their face, they'll wipe them off, but a lot of our kiddos they're not concerned with that, they're fine to kind of eat and have a mess left on their face, um, picking up things after themselves, um, that's a real skill deficit, being able to, even something as simple as taking out a book and turn to page 39, incredibly difficult for a lot of our kiddos, incredibly difficult, just because, you know when it gets down to it, we are trying to educate a group of kids that does not want to be educated." 12:26

Ms. Kinderpraat: "A lot of our kids have such difficulty with two things - unpreferred tasks, so anything that requires effort or work, for whatever reason they're dealing with a lot of internal stress and strife, and any demands, it's like their number one goal and very understandably so, is almost like self-soothing, to try and um compensate for whatever emotional difficulties that they're having, which are very severe for some of them, and so when they're in the business of trying to make themselves feel better, and doing a writing assignment is not going to make them feel

better, and so, yet they have to learn those standards, they have to uh you know, educate them to the point where they can master those standards. how does that process work when they don't want to do that." 13:38

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### **Minutes 15:07-30:38**

Transcribed by Katie McFeely

Ms. Kinderpraat: So when we think about all of those things, you know. Something as simple as taking out a book and opening it up, I mean, it's really – it's pretty difficult for them. They don't want to do it. [Katie: Sure.] They would prefer to sleep or (hits table) do whatever preferred activity they're in. So. How do we entice them to do that? (hits table) Um.

### **KATIE: And and how do you?**

Ms. Kinderpraat: That's a great question. [Katie, Anna, and Hain-Lee laugh]. Relationship (hits table), relationship (hits table), relationship (hits table). It's all about the relationship. Um if you went in um – you know actually I I remember um uh when I was young first starting out (hits table twice) there was um a teacher who had been teaching for years, she had her masters degree (hits table) and um. She came in and um I think she had a good lesson (hits table). I don't really remember. I assume because you know she had been teaching for a long time um and she came in and the kids started throwing stuff at her (hits table). Um, you know, uh. The officers had to get involved (laughs) it was kind of a big (hits table) mess. You know what I mean? And so I think that with these kids it's all about making a connection. It's all about understanding where they're at. And it's all about having a repertoire of um accommodations and modifications and strategies that you can offer for them. Um. And if you are excited about what you do – cause they can tell if you like them or not. They can all tell. They can tell within a minute. (hits table) You know? They're very good judges of character. And, um, if they can tell that you're excited about what you're doing and you're excited about them, they totally (hits table) pick up on that. It's not a magic bullet. It's not that they will all of a sudden go to producing you know essays. But they will at least they'll work with you. They'll hear you out and then you can go um -- I'm a huge believer in I do (hits table), we do (hits table), you do (hits table). That's really how a lot gets done here. We try and um you know make them feel comfortable, take away some of the anxiety that they might feel. And then, um, you know I'll do the first part (hits table). I'll get the boat going. I say, "I'm I'm a professional at getting people started." I tell that to the kids. You know what I mean? Cause they're very anxious about getting started sometimes. So I'll get em started and then they'll join in and I'll slowly back away. (Laughs.) That's what I – I try and do (hits table twice). That's that's successful. [KM: Yeah.] Not always. But it's it's pretty successful.

### **KATIE: And you've talked a lot about the importance of relationship building [Mm hm]. Can you say a little about what that looks like? [MS D: Yeah!] Apart from, yeah.**

Yeah. Um. (Bits table twice) Let me actually give you an example. So I got punched um on Halloween that's a Monday. Um and so (laughs) um, you know, the young man was very upset. And um. He was upset with me. He was – because he didn't get to join in with some of the Halloween (hits table twice) celebrations. Again, it's anything that deviates from the routine um. Kids on the spectrum, in particular, they are world famous for their rigidity (hits table) and their inflexibility. Um they're also very egocentric (hits table), it's about their needs. Um. And so he was really upset (hits table) that he didn't get to go to this barbecue. And so my task for these next few days has been all about the relationship (hits table) building (hits table) and the relationship repairing. So um I um he was held out of class because if you're um engaging in assaultive behavior you're kind of pulled (hits table) away from the students and from the class for a little bit. So, um, I remember I went by and I um I said um (hits table twice, changes her inflection to what I will refer to as a small voice, imitating how someone may talk with a child), "You know, buddy, can I get you a glass of water, do you need anything?" (switches back to original speaking

voice) Um and so that's not like a treat or anything, but it's cold water. Um. And that's a way for me to kind of let him know (small voice): I'm working for you (hits table). Um. What can I do? (switches back to original speaking voice)

I remember when I came in today I said, (small voice, leans forward) "Hey buddy, come on over. I got some new socks. Can I show you my new socks? What do you think of these? You – you like em?" (switches back to original speaking voice, leans back) You know? And he might say, "No I don't really like those." And I would have said, "Okay." (hits table) He happened to say, "Yeah. I like them. They're pretty cool." (Hits table twice.) You know what I mean? [KM: Yeah.] But it's just things like that um I definitely have to make the first move and looking to make things positive. Um. It can't be anything that's like bribery um food any- you know those aren't effective tools and that's not what I'm out to do. It's really #

**KM: What makes you say that those things aren't effective?**

Ms. Kinderpraat: Well because I think that they are—it's – the focus (hits table) becomes on that tangible item and not on the relationship. And I really want it to be clear [KM: Yeah] that it's not – I don't want them to come away from that experience thinking Ms. Kinderpraat equals candy (hits table), or wasn't that candy delicious (hits table). I want them to come away with thinking um, (small voice) "Hey, Ms D was asking about me. She didn't have to but she came in, offered me some (hits table) cold water" (regular speaking voice) um and you know I think that um this young man and I are on our way back to being um you know? And a lot of times what they will do is when they see um an adult making kind of making moves toward (hits table) them it's pretty typical for some of them to then like overshoot a request or a demand like to test almost (hits table) to see. Because they can see, (small voice) "Huh. Ms. Kinderpraat's kind of trying to you know (hits table) build a relationship here." (regular speaking voice) And so then they'll you know say, "Well (hits table twice) I'm not going to forgive you for taking the barbecue away unless you apologize." And this is, mind you, the young man that's punched me (laughs). Or, "I'm not going to um like be friends with you unless you uh don't give me any homework" or something like that. And so it's firm ah but gentle boundaries. (Small voice) "Well, you know that's not going to happen. You have homework and that's the way it is. But I'd love to help you with it. Can we do some of it together? What part of it is really making you feel upset?" (Original voice, hits table) Or, um, you know I'm I'm excited to – if he's talking (hits table three times quickly) to me about the I'm not going to forgive you unless you apologize for taking the barbecue away. (Small voice) "I would love to just press restart on this. And it's a new day (hits table). That was really yucky that you didn't get to go but um you're at a 3 today and I'm really proud of you for that. Is there anything that we can do (hits table) to kind of keep you on that track?" (Original voice) So keep it positive but pivot almost I would say. [KM: Uh huh.]

**KATIE: And in this circumstance with this young man, how does he respond to that you said like a firm but gentle boundary. How has he been responding?**

Ms. Kinderpraat: Um! I think that really you know really unequivocally all children respond well to that. [KM: Yeah, yeah. (Agreeing.)] Um. But you have to have the relationship and I'm even aware of that, you know, that I, I have really good relationships with children but if it's a new student I can't try and leverage a relationship that we don't have. I have to make the strides toward him or her first. And you'll notice I usually say "him" a lot because we're overwhelmingly male [KM: Oh really?] and I've worked with. Ooooverwhelmingly. Um the ED population – I forget what the numbers are but I want to say 3 to 1 um but that's that's approximate (hits table), but that's pretty typical and then I worked with you know the young men in juvenile hall for all those years so if I say "him" (hits table three times quickly) that's why. Wuh we've got a couple girls in here, we've got a couple.

**KATIE: Well I want to go back and actually – we've been talking about other adults within your classroom. Can you say a little bit about like who those other adults are [Ms D: Yeah] and their [Ms. Kinderpraat: Yeah] roles in your classroom?**

Ms. Kinderpraat: Yeah. Absolutely. So I think the person that I interact with the most with is the Behavior Specialist. Um. Now, it's almost kind of like a um (lowers voice) – gosh, how do I want to put this? I am reading

um, I've been reading Sam Harris the Moral Landscape. Have you guys read that? He talks about um (voice raised back to original level) the way to be healthy. There's like many different ways to be healthy, but it's all arriving at the same goal. You know, for some people that might be exercising. Some people that might be like eating right. So there's different answers to that question but they're all arriving at the same goal. I look at the teammates and the teamwork here as like that. Different classrooms have different styles. And it works for those classrooms. The goal is always to get the children functioning in as um you know as healthy and safe manner as possible. And so there's lots of different ways of um focusing on your personal strengths to make that happen. I think my strength is that I'm very nurturing. Um. And so I bring that role out. A lot of people they're very um maybe like very fun and active, and so they focus on that role. Um. The way that I think works in my team, and I've had lots of different Behavior Specialists work for me but um the the way that I think works is for us to do things together um because a lot of the kids want to make things into a power struggle. They want to issue ultimatums. Um. They want to – they do a lot of projecting about issues that they're having with mom and dad. Um, for a lot of these young men they they cannot help but look at me and see mom. And it's really fascinating the way they will even – they'll say, "You were yelling at me." And I will literally like never yelled in my life, you know what I mean? I'm pretty easy going and so, you know, we'll have to say: (small voice) "Well no, you know. We weren't yelling. You know. But I realize that some people yell." (original voice) Um. But so the way that we try and shortcut that is with um if there's two of us there, that way it can't get into a "You're mean" "You're awful" [KM: Mm.]. There's two of us. You know what I mean? And so we can kind of pivot off of the other one. And, I don't know why, um I mean I guess that that's that's just what it is, that it's just harder to be in a power struggle with two people simultaneously. Um. That we we tend to do discussions with both of us. And that way we can add to each other, we can back each other up and a lot of these situations are very tense. Um. If we've just come off an assault or um you know there's a child who's in real distress, um, you know. (2) I'm okay with it now because I've been doing it for a while, but I think that when you're first doing it it's not natural for you to be around a child who is screaming primal screams and punching, and you know we – the walls are littered with um you know paint where they've had to redo the, cause they've you know had to punch and kick holes in the wall. It's not natural to be around that. And so to have another adult there with you that can, if you're like, you know, freezing up, then they can add in. Um, but that's the way that I like to interact with my Behavior Specialist is for us to do things together. Um. It's an interesting model because when you're in out in a public school a special education teacher is the Behavior Specialist. (Laughing) There is no secondary – you're, um you know, as part of your um credential curriculum you're trained in um behavior as well as in all the academics. Um so it's nice, I think, to have some and – I think you need it for these kids. Um I think especially because EBC places such a high priority on academics, that when there is a child in crisis they want the Behavior Specialist to go outside with the child and have the rest of the class be able to continue on, and to hopefully not have um you know these big gaping holes where they have to stop.

We'll often evacuate the classroom. So a lot of times the child will be in crisis, and they're not very um amenable to following directions (laughs) with everything you know. "Billy, come outside with me." They're gonna say (1), pardon me but you know that we say this all the time but "fuck you! I'm not gonna go anywhere!" You know what I mean? And so we um again we don't just spring this on them but we practice evacuating. We say what that looks like. We do it in a calm time um and so ah that way when there is a crisis everyone just lines up. They grab whatever book they have and then we'll come in here. And that way the crisis staff can go in and deal with that student and we'll continue class in here. So you know it is kind of a hardship going to school with others students with emotional disturbance. Because maybe you were used to being the one who sucked all the attention out. But then here like [laughs] there's other people that are doing that. How in the world could you hold class? Well that's one of the ways we try and do it. We really wanna keep up the academics, keep up the lessons. Even when there are these severe issues. So that's one way that we do it um is to bring the student out. And the other way would be to, "Okay, you stay put" and then we'll bring the class out.

**KATIE: I mean, can you say a little bit more about how you are able to focus on academics as a teacher?**  
**Yeah.**

Ms. Kinderpraat: Mmhmm. Um. You know, I think –this is hard – I think in my experience some ways that you're born to be a teacher or you're not. (2) And with these kids in particular – I'll I'll I'll walk that back a second. With these kids I think you're born to be an ED teacher or you're not. You just have it or you don't. And you find that out very quickly. Could you be very interested in education and this isn't a great fit for you? Absolutely and so maybe a different population, a different grade um, a different job title within education absolutely. But I think that all of the teachers here do this because they have a skill in their personality that they're able to multi-task. They're able to tune out screaming um a— do you know also things like being really familiar with the curriculum um because it's – I could see how would be overwhelming for someone their first year. But when you become intimately familiar with the standards for your grade. And not just familiar with them, but you practice teaching them year after year. It's almost that they become internalized, and so you don't have to consult as closely things like your lesson plans. The lesson plan you created them and you have them there, but you've practiced doing them many times. You've worked on those standards with different types of learners. You've been able to see by trial and error, okay this works great. Oh when this happened, this is a strategy that I used. And so, um, you really do grow in your teaching to where, even when there are lots of distractions going on you know exactly what you're doing. You know, not just how to do something but you know how to teach it. I think that was something that I struggled with in my first um couple years. I knew how to add fractions with unlike denominators, right? How do you teach that to my young lady who is on a huge amount of uh psychiatric medications? She's not all here, her long term memory is virtually zero. Virtually zero. Um. So how do you educate a student like that? Well we have procedural lists that we do...

[30:38]

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#### **Select Quotes from Minutes 34:02-37:57**

Transcribed by Katie McFeely

[34:02] Ms. Kinderpraat: A lot of my parents, because I'm an 8th grade teacher, they're petrified about what is going to become of their students. Will their student be able to graduate from high school? Are they ever going to be self-sufficient and independent? The answer is no. For a lot of these kids, um, they're going to need help to live on their own... so, parents cry, parents scream, um, they'll beg and plead. It's just a very – um, they'll file lawsuits.

Ms. Kinderpraat: "On the flip side of that is that there is a lot of parents who are not going to be satisfied, just because it's a really difficult situation that their child is in, maybe if their child is not making the progress that they want, the tough answer that I've had to give a lot of parents is, um: Unfortunately we have worked sooo hard with your student, and there comes a time when there is a ceiling. We'll continue to work really hard on basic functional skills. We'll work until we're blue in the face. But I don't think it's fair to your student to expect things of them that they're just not capable of." (36:30)

#### **KM: "Can you think of a specific case when you have had to have that conversation with a parent? Like how did the parent res-"**

Ms. Kinderpraat: I had a student with traumatic brain injury. And the other thing about special ed that is just wild is, the students in 8th grade -- and so it makes sense that they'd be on 8th grade standards. However, you'll have students in 8th grade that can't add double digit numbers. They don't have phonemic awareness, and can barely, barely sound out words, you know? And yet, really the curriculum and laws say that you have to be teaching them 8th grade standards. We do what we can. You know, we we trellis up and we do groupings, and we um you know one of my time honored tricks that I'll do is that there's a low kiddo in algebra readiness and so the first step will be to add 10 plus 10. So, I'll call on one of my lower students, "Okay, what is 10 plus 10?" And he'll do that part, and I'll move to another student. [37:57]

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**Minutes 45:00 – 60:00**

Transcribed by Anny Ly

*Note: Ms. Kinderpraat is AD*

**KM:** Well, I want to switch gears here a little bit and you, you mentioned how your classroom is divided right now (AD: mmhmm) between art and the use of computers (AD: yes) and we're, we're interested in hearing a little bit about uhmmm the technology just in general that you use in your...that is used in your classrooms (AD: for sure), whether you use it or your students (AD: for sure)

Ms. Kinderpraat: So uhmm, (pause 1) really interesting, he's not with me now, but uhm he was with me maybe three years ago. Uhmm he was a kiddo that had been away at residential (*AD hits table with hand softly*) so we're like the last stop before they're taken away from their home environment uhm because they can't be safe there and they're taken to residential and obviously, when you're in that kind of environment I mean they...I'm sure they try and do academics but they really miss out on a lot and this was a kiddo that had some kind of limited functioning to begin with anyway. He could not read. Could not uhm. Could not. He didn't have letter sound correspondents uhmm just reeeally struggled uhm and so that was our task. How to make him be in 8th grade. Uhmm you know would we, do we take him out and just have someone like a teaching aid, one-to-one give him a curriculum in phonics?

What does that look like? So, we had two things that we did with him. We had uhm it was an Intel Reader. I don't know (*AD smiles*) if you guys are familiar with that. They actually brought it in here first (*AD points at table*) and they had us run a trial with him and they came in and (KM: and they are who?)...uh Intel (KM: is Intel?) like the team (KM: Oh wow yeah) that was working on it and they like interviewed us and interviewed the student periodically. It was pretty cool uhm. So what they did. And he. The thing I loved about it was that it was independent. He didn't need us to do it because uhm what this took the place of is uhm either the student or a teacher could read out loud and if he could hear it, he could get the gist of it. He just couldn't read it. So what he did is he took a picture of like the 8th grade history text or English text and then uhmm uh the device would read what was on the page and it uh I mean it opened up the world to him. It was just amazing. He became so adept at you know placing the camera at the right angle and he could then participate. He had access. The big thing right that we're always after with those low kids is how do we get them access. We don't just want to put them in the corner and have them do worksheets uhm to not..best practice. It's not giving him the best that we can do and so uhm he felt so proud. He was able to then participate in oral uhm discussions. He was able to be in projects with the rest of the kids. Of course his written output was not uhm 8th grade but he could do things like work on a poster project with a small group of classmates uhm uh one that was maybe had a little bit more ability in the written output areas so he could do the pictures. Uhm so that was one really cool piece of technology. The other thing that we are concerned about because we don't just want access for those kids because that's really that, it tackles one piece of trying to get the best possible education for them but it still doesn't remediate the deficiencies and if no one else in the class has that depth of level of uhm phonics difficulties and reading difficulties. I mean, there are a couple options you could look as a school at taking out some students of some similar ability like so maybe taking a 3rd grader out and putting in with an 8th grader. That's not going to go over too well I don't think with the 8th grader. Uhm, within a class, I think there is a lot more uhm understanding for that. But you know being put with a-a 2nd or 3rd grader whose level that truly reflects, that's not going to work and so, uhm we have a program called Lexia that I just LOVE. And I know it's not necessarily the name or the specific program (KM: mmhmm) but what it does. And so, Lexia was a uhm phonics and a phonemic awareness (*AD hits table softly with one hand*) kind of uhm practice tool – what he could do. And so it had different areas of phonics that he could work on and practice and uhm he uh I pulled him and he worked on that for two days a week at 20 minutes and then an additional 20 minutes session, he worked with me.

**KM:** Sorry where is the program? Is that on the computer?

Ms. Kinderpraat: It's on the computer (KM: Okay) mmhmm yea and uh he had on headphones and it was self-directed uh and so it felt like games to him but it was really focusing on some of the like I said the letter sound correspondents uhm some of the phonics issues. The direct instruction in those areas that he really needed. That, that's great that he is reading the 8th grade textbook but he's not getting any additional help in how to improve his reading. So that program combined with... cause I can't pull him for you know three times a week right cause that means I'm pulled away from the rest of the class but I can just see him once a week for 20 minutes and that combined with uh uh computer program was wonderful and the reason why I like the computer program again because it was independent.(KM: mmhmm) Some of these kids have such issues with uhm learned helplessness about how they are used to because they struggle there's always going to be an adult that's going to handhold them through it and so the fact that he was able to, you know it was on his schedule...He knew that it was Lexia time. He could go over, he would log in, he would be the director. Uhm I mean to me, that was almost as important as the content that we were working on so that's a model that I think is really successful for special ed in general for students that are at varying levels. There's some really great uhm math and language arts programs that give targeted direct instruction that's kind of on an independent basis because there's so many multiple levels of direct instruction that you might need that's really hard to do group lessons that gonna give them that focused practice (KM: yeaa) uhm and a lot of those programs have a built in assessment tool uhm that uh it's not a just you can't just let them go on it. They need some guidance and I count at least one session a week with me uhm to kind of guide that uhm but we're always in the business of we've so many things to do that uhm you know the fact that it was direct instruction followed by an assessment was really immensely helpful and it gave uh a printout in the end where I can look and see where did he struggle uhm where was he successful and then I can target even further with no doubt and target my instruction (KM: mmm) uhm for that session that I had with him.

**KM:** So you mentioned, I mean, there are a lot of different things that you can do in your classroom. (AD: mmhmm). How do you make these decisions about whether Lexia is right or how, what technology to use for what (inaud)..

Ms. Kinderpraat: Do you know, I feel like my first five years was really like an information gathering uhmm period for me. That my it was my goal to attend as many trainings as possible cause those are always offered you know through the county office or through district and uhm just exposure to as many different types of curriculum and technology as possible. To be trained on as many. And then the next step is to bring those into your classroom and then I, I quickly found what worked. I mean, I loved (*AD emphasizes voice*) Lexia for its independence building, uhm the kids liked it and it was uhm backed by research as far as uhm uh you know upping those targeted skill levels. Uhm, it fit in really nicely so I can do maybe take, if we were looking at these (*AD shuffles three papers in front of her*), take these kiddos (*AD picks up the one of the sheets that has more writing on it than the other two*) and do a higher lesson, do a more targeted lesson for them and then, this group (*AD points at another paper*) is doing kind of an independent lesson because it's always, we can do targeted independent instruction but I can only be in one place at one time so I do have the teacher's aide who can help but I mean we, we have you know at least (*AD emphasizes voice*) three groupings at least, which is I would say a three groups within two outliers (*AD laughs*) so you know with a small class, it gets, you know it's a really widespread of abilities.

**KM:** Interesting. Yea. So can you say more uhm it sounds like you have been very thoughtful about the tools that you've integrate in your classroom. On a day to day basis, what does the technologies in your classroom look like?

Ms. Kinderpraat: Well, I would actually like to speak to you about a difficulty that we have and I think I mentioned this to you before. A lot of times what is so difficult is a lot of the deficiencies that these technology tools are meant to remediate uhm (pause 2), the kiddos that they're targeted to are not capable of using them. And it's not that that they're not well designed tools. I've looked at many of these and they are well designed. I can see how for these groups (*AD puts hand on one of the papers*), they're great! (KM: mmhmm) Do these groups necessarily need those

additional technology tools? Not really. It's helpful for them to be able to practice using them and to see uhm you know a different way of doing this, but can...do they need a program that is going to set up an outline for them online? No, they're pretty adept with being able to do like a spider diagram. They can do that. These (*AD points to another paper*) are the kids who really struggle but they struggle with anything with multiple steps (KM: mmhmm) and they also have really poor fine motor control. These are the kids that are also in occupational therapy. Uhm, a lot of the kids can't log on to the computer network independently. And all that involves is typing in your user name and your password and pressing. Like, they can't do that independently. They need adult instruction (KM: mmhmm) as you know (*AD laughs softly*), like if the caps lock's off or uhm you know, trouble with the password uhm you know because even letters, they..they uh uh have tremendous problem with switching letters you know, so if the password is like...

**KM:** Is that a typical barrier you see like switching letters or what uh...

Ms. Kinderpraat: I don't know if I would say that's (KM: why is that a challenge (*KM says softly*)...?) typical (KM: Okay), but it is very common. Uhm so like if the password was AmyD, they would write A-D-Y-M enter. No. (KM: mmhmm) A-M-D-Y enter. Right and it's just, it it takes a really long time uhm and we can get in there and kind of (*AD laughs*) you know help (KM: mmhmm) when they're getting frustrated but uhm that (KM: mmhmm)I think is my concern with some of the technology that's out there is that the kids that it could do the most for, they're not able to...it almost adds another layer of knowledge on that they don't have because it's easier for me to walk a kid like this (*AD points at lower level paper*) through a paper and pencil outline because when you add in a technology, it's very nice that some parts are done for them, but they have to type, they have to pres s enter, they have to attend (KM: mmhmm) to the mouse, they have to be able to see this is where I click. There's actually a lot on the screens (KM: yeaa). The screens can be very busy. (*AD flips over a piece of paper*) and I can make a piece of paper blank. That's actually uh uh a strategy that I use a lot like I'll...a page is very busy, so I'll write like 1, 2, 3 in large print or I'll type it very large. And so, some of those barriers to technology, I have not come up with a way to do it. I mean, the two options are I'm there to walk the student through, which it, it does nothing for them in fostering their independence and I think I have a different set of priorities almost than a second grade teacher. A second grade teacher really can be more focused I think on helping them hand over hand. Uhm, but my thought is now ready or not, high school's coming and there's some things unfortunately that we need to say if they don't have them, we need to keep going. (KM: mmhmm) There's things like riding the bus, packing a lunch, uhm you know, how to punch in on a time card. Like they can't do those things and so, if we know that a kid has been working on fractions for literally like seven years, it's a tough decision and that's one of those crying IEP meetings that we have about we've been (*AD laughs*) working on this for seven years (KM: mmhmm). They've not made progress uhm and there have been uh a variety of strategies tried. Uhm, do we want to keep doing that or do we want to give them the best chance at an independent adulthood?

**KM:** Right right. So if you could be. You noted the challenges with technology (AD: mmhmm) for that one set of students. If you could be handed a package that would just be the perfect thing. What would that technology look like? Does that...do you (AD: Yea) understand that question? (AD: Totally)

Ms. Kinderpraat:I think that it would be uhm I think the thing that's hard is when people try and put too much into it. Like, because I realize that technology is expensive and they want it to serve the biggest variety of uses and needs like in one program, uhm, kind of like a classroom. Like, they don't want you to have to buy I think like 10 software, pieces (*AD laughs*) of software. They want to have just one program that can then be made up or down. But a clear blank screen (KM: mmhmm) with uhm you know an exaggerated large print uhm that has an auditory component that would say (pause 1) 'click on this now.' Uhm, something that the kids could...I mean, that...that...that fuses independence with the skill. Uhm, realizing that the qua-(inaud) the prototypical (*AD laughs softly*) (*AD knocks on table with fist*) example is a kid does one step and then looks around, and what's next, what do I do next

so how to make that more fluid I think probably the...the paired with auditory directions: 'Great job! Now do this...' Uhm, (pause 2) that I think would be along the lines of what I would love.

## **Appendix C: Second Interview Transcription**

Esther B. Clark School

Interview Conducted November 2, 2011, 10:30am-11:30am

Interviewee: Ms. Kinderpraat

Interviewer: Anna Ly (AL or A), Hain-Lee Hsueh (HL or H)

Observer: Katie McFeely (KM or K)

### **Minutes 25:23 - 41:31**

Transcribed by Hain-Lee Hsueh

*Some conventions:*

(?) - unclear what word was spoken

(*voice change*) - tone of voice went up; the voice Ms. Kinderpraat uses with her students or "kiddos"

Ms. Kinderpraat:...Um, but what's really interesting is, um, you know, I showed you the quiet room so when they become uh violent or aggressive um that that's where we're having them go and it's really, I mean it's heartbreaking to watch them in there, very primal, um, you know sometimes they have to be restrained from uh, injuring themselves, um, definitely injuring anyone that's coming in after them, um, pounding. So, we noticed that it was very difficult to make a connection with them once they're in that state. They're in the quiet room so we know that um, you know they're not gonna hurt anyone which is good, but um you know well it's virtually impossible to get them to have a conversation or have any sort of rational thought when they are in there, and so... knowing that they're very kind of screaming oriented type of a population I mean, it uh again it uh might go back to the fact that um.... uh... uh many of them are on the spectrum and that's a very individual predictable sort of interaction um, that they just love it it could be the generation they are as well, um. we noticed that a completely silent environment was not soothing for them. um. that they are almost, they're so used to electronics that some sort of um interactive sort of video um was the most soothing for them so ,and also just the basic visual and auditory for them as well really uh you know we're always going to present as visual to them but our soothing was coming just from our words, and that was not getting through, it's like a brick wall, we could sit there and talk till we were blue in the face, but they were not able to engage with us and so um a couple of our crisis counselors came up with uh um the idea to have a screen and have a um a uhh... uh speaker put in there. And so what they've done now is on the screen they can um uh kind of (?) "pre-cake" some positive soothing messages that are um both video and then paired with sound so it could be their moms saying you know (*voice change*) "hang in there! you can do it!" It could be a preferred pet or like a cartoon that they like; it's not that they're watching TV but it would almost just be you know maybe 60 seconds of it. It could be a video of themselves when more calm saying, (*voice change*) "You know you always feel better when you do this." Also um music that um preferable to them uh like a music video and um that's actually been pretty successful just because um uh maybe it is the generation that they are but uh uh you know also they're very complex kind of auditory vs. visual vs. a silent environment about what is most soothing to them um. and so that's been kind of a different way that we've done. um. The quiet rooms. It's the first year we're (?) "doing it this way").

**K:** We're at the uh the thirty minute.. Hain-Lee do you wanna jump in with your...?

**H: um well just going off of that I was wondering how do you define success..in that scenario?**

Ms. Kinderpraat: In the quiet room scenario?

**H:** Yeah.

Ms. Kinderpraat:: umm...success is being able to get the child back to we call it baseline. so um uh you know being able to have a, a calm conversation, safe, not injurious, if we try and we have uh um kind of like uh uh graph of what

uh uh key incident looks like and it kind of it goes up! (*motions with hand*) it goes up, it goes up, and then it goes down, and if we try and interact with them like deliver consequences or um trying to resolve the situation like the particulars at like this point (*indicated by hand*) when it's still part of the curve that can often trigger another incident. So success is kind of getting them back to baseline and then being able to process with them um, you know were there any coping strategies that you could've used, um, is there anything that is really exciting to you that you wanna talk about in a more calm way, um, being able to um get them calm, get them safe and then hopefully reengaged with the class. That's always the goal, is um reengagement.

**H: okay, um, so continuing on this vein of screen time and technology can you describe a little bit of what technology your students have used primarily in the past week?**

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Yeah, um so again it's it's pretty stratified, um and, the kiddos that are um, and I generalize a little bit but primarily the profile is asperger's so um you know on the autism spectrum but um they uhhh um their intelligence is quite high , but um they struggle um with uh rigidity, social skills, reading people, um and usually why a child with asperger's is placed here is because that rigidity is violent or aggressive. um, they're super adept with computers and so um they almost prefer to type um it's very natural to them um. Again, pretty typical of the profile is that they have difficulty with the handwriting, um if you looked at a sample it would look like a, like a first grader, um, very visibly um you know large formed letters, most of them have been in occupational therapy for years um, around 8th grade we try and make that switch normally to (*voice change*) "Hey we've been workin' on it for many many years um (*end voice change*), you're going to be using technology for um, you know, much of what you're doing beyond 8th grade," and so, our goal is always the application test. We want them to be able to fill out an application by hand, hopefully and be legible but other than that we kind of move them towards typing. um. And then that's what they would work on in occupational therapy, just making sure that their typing is okay. But most of them cause they get so much practice on um like screens for pleasure uh and for reward that they're pretty good at that, so...they're typing things um and that uhhh it could be like a quick write response in literature, it could be um a history um like short answer questions, they would be typing those um and then uh, we're doing some powerpoint projects as well, um, they're doing powerpoint on um we were doing uh, narrative writing and some autobiographical writing as well and so they're doing powerpoints on a topic of interest to them and then it kind of um, we got into the how to, um, region and so they were doing a how to and um it's really interesting to see the topics that's some of them chose they're really cute, one of them chose farmville um like what is farmville and he talked about his interests in that um so. Those are the the powerpoints and just typing the typing of um you know day to day assignments so it's like, we have a variety of tools that are meant to facilitate technology as um kind of an extra help for students who are struggling with writing.

What I've found though um, and we talked about this a little bit last time, is that a lot of these tools they almost hit right between in the middle, and I've got a really high and really low, so those um types of tools like Ginger and Inspiration, they're not necessary for most of my higher level kids, um, these are kids that um you know they can write an essay, um, they're very fast typers, they um, you know they can spell okay, um, the those kinds of tools aren't really helpful and then the other group they're so low, um, that those tools they they can't be used independently, they have to have an adult there next to them saying, (*voice change*) "Click on this one," you know they might even try a few times and they're unable to click on something, um, you know then we'll have to say, (*voice change*) "Watch me do it" and then you know what I mean, they can't independently use a tool like that, so I've found that my kiddos tend to be either very very um you know technology and the use of technology is integrated into their daily lives, or not at all. There's not a whole lot of middle ground, or I think the middle ground is probably I would, you would see a lot more of that in a mainstream sort of a school, um. We don't have too many that fall in the middle; they tend to be one or the other.

**H: Is the..going back to computer usage and like powerpoint and typing, is that mainly done in class or outside of class?**

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Um, that's a good question, we mostly do it in class, although a lot of homework does rely on the computer, um. you again I think it just paints a really interesting picture like, um for some of the higher level kids, there might be um doing some research online, we talk about um you know what're some different sources you can use, how you do it, gathering that information, um, you know uh basically, uh electronic versions of some of the note cards that you would make back when I was growing up (laughter) um and, then, um, you know, so, mo-multimodal they're using a variety of different sources that bringing those all together um, it, you now, what I will

say is, this is normally on a topic of interest. If it's not a topic of interest, but then it's a won't, and not a can't. You know what I mean? But that's what we struggle with, it's not a lot can we get them to use technology it's about can we have them use technology um to make sure that they're meeting standards and following directions. but then the other group um, what I have to do normally is um, I'll take three problems from um like our math book, and I rewrite them on a blank sheet of white paper really blown up and I put them in the plastic sleeves that their behavior sheet is in cause they can usually only um....it..you know back to executive function, and they can't um organize multiple things all of the assignments have to be on like a uh clear backed like uncluttered paper they have to be, um, written and numbered in large print, um, we have to usually do the first one together to make sure they can do that and all of that is put into their um, you know, sleeve - plastic sleeve that they give their parents, and so; I have just found that, that's the easiest way that very low low tech way, um, when I'm dealing with some of those issues of executive functioning, it seems to be the only way. um. I won't say the only way; I'll say the most successful way. um, and I think that there are some tools that would be really really great for them if they were just a little bit higher; if they just had a little bit more skill as far as being independent, um. But they're not quite there. (**H:** Okay.) Ms. Kinderpraat:: It's almost like there's a uh, a bottom as far as what functioning level you have to be on to utilize some of those technology tools. (**K:** mmhmm.)

Ms. Kinderpraat: um, and they're, they're not quite there. I would love it if there was something (*laughter*), like if I knew that they could go home, turn on the computer, enter a password, click on a mouse, you know, those sorts of things independently, I think that they would be the group that could be most helped. um. But yet even just you know logging on I think I mentioned (**H:** mmhmm), left to their own devices, um, I do- I don't think that some of them could log in cause the letters, you know, confusing letters..

**H: So do you think that...um..technology...like there's students that can use the technology, um, or, sorry; just to back up a little bit. um. If you were to summarize what kind of students technology benefits the most, how would, like, how would you describe those students?**

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Students that I feel could benefit the most from (**H:** right) technology? See, it's really interesting because...I think it would be the lower group, because those are skills that um, for instance, uh, Inspiration and Kidspiration was a really cool writing assistant programs, that um, they have a really visual feel to them, you can um, take uh, a spidered outline, web, you know where you write something in the middle and it points off. um, and then, all you have to do is click a button and it turns it into a written outline, I mean, there's some really cool tools out there like that, that could really help those bottom kids if they were able to use it more independently. um, or if they were able to, I mean uh, they had more manual dexterity if they're able to use a keyboard and type (**H:** mhmm) um because like I said even looking at a - I ima- I try to imagine what that must look like to them, a keyboard with all the letters swimming in front of them, and then having to not only use my alphabet skills but also having to use my fine motor skills, gosh that's intimidating, and a screen um I understand it's a pretty tough skill for them.

And then my, my higher kids do I feel like they need technology in order to master those basic skills? I don't; I think that's more a um, kind of uhh..extending the reach of their imagination and their presentation, um, you know it's giving them a range of outputs as opposed to just pencil and paper. um, you know it's giving them a range of sources and exposure to information, um, some of them are really um, they appreciate like uh, uh, a video model as opposed to one that's maybe like 3d, as opposed to just looking at it in a book. Those are all things that I think help, but it's more an extension and like a, a setting free of their own capabilities, rather than using technology to remedy a skill deficit.

Which I'm, I'm fine to admit that I, I think I'm a little biased sometimes about. I'm really concerned about my low kiddos; that's really what I'm concerned about with my..my higher level kids the reason they're at a school like this is because they have behavior deficits, they really could, I mean if you look at them on their best day, you you might be able to see, you know, "Oh they could, they could go to a normal school," and it's just you know when you ask them to clean their desk, and they throw the desk at you, that, then, you know, you realize sooo..okay. But as far as, that's a behavior issue, and as far as skills, a lot of them are not only competent they're actually very excellent at technology because they interact with it I think, much more frequently than does even a typically developing peer, because like I said, screens you don't have to um, figure them out, you don't have to read between the lines, it's all very explicit, it's very expected and predictable, um I think that's why a lot of them like video games cause they

know exactly um, what's going with it, and people are unpredictable, so they, they would much prefer uh, utilize technology than to have a group discussion. (41:31)

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Minutes 41:40-49:40**

Transcribed by Hain-Lee Hsueh

**H:** Have you ever used technology or seen technology being used to address these emotional or behavioral problems vs. like, facilitating learning...itself?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Let me tell you a little bit about our um, so we have a- our social skills curriculum. um. I would say that the social skills curriculum is almost focusing more on (1) working on those deficits like um the conversation of, like, reading faces, um, uh (2) you know those sorts of activities that are non-preferred for them. So in some ways I almost (1) don't like the use of technology for those sorts of activities because I know they're comfortable with the technology (H: mmhmm) we need to practice having the kind of social interactions. Um. You know the only thing that I can think of is I think that technology can be an asset for them for my higher kids that are going out and doing some means (?) training that would be an area of strength for them, and um, you know I'm always like trying to be, look at from a strengths-based perspective, um, that's part of the way it is self esteem, that if they are good at something then they can build on that and we can say, "Well everybody's got some things that they're not so good at." I think technology and how adept they are at technology, that can be a real, um, shining point for them, that you know maybe makes up for a little bit some of the embarrassment about (?) throwing desks.

**H** (43:10): mmhmm..Okay well have you ever witnessed or experienced a negative impact of technology on your students?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Umm, they can become dependent overly reliant on it. Um. But again that's a, kind of a, sticky point because it's almost the rigidity is the issue rather than the technology itself. Um. You know I want my kids to be able to easily go back and forth, I, I absolutely want them to be adept at using technology, but I also want them to be able to function without it, to be able to fill out a job application by hand (K:mmhmm) and sometimes if they're sooo accustomed to utilizing technology it can become difficult for them to be flexible around that (K: mmhmm), um, you know, screen time is good as a motivator, but I always tell them it's a soothing strategy; it's not a coping strategy. Um, which is a huge, huge issue (laughter), you know because they'll say, you know they'll throw a desk and then they'll say, "Well, I wanna use my ipod, (laughter), you know cause it makes me feel better," and we, we say, "Well I totally understand that, you know, watching, playing a video game would make you feel better right now, but if, you get to throw a desk and then you get to make yourself feel better with your video game, well that's not setting you up for success, so we want you to be able to earn your video game with demonstrating good behavior and um, doing your academics, and when you're having those times when you're really angry or upset or coming out of the quiet room, there's some soothing strategies but they can't be technology-related for the most part. They can't be the video games, listening to music, like watching a movie, so I think that that's, somewhat of an issue (H:mmhmm), and it's a hard one because that is a very soothing activity for them (H:right), it's extremely soothing. Maybe because of the predictable nature of it, um. We have, um, self-soothing kits that are um, non-technology-related, like it might be feathers or clay, um kind of tactile things, um, pictures they like, mints, um. And we say you can use those anytime, like screens, those are a reward but the other things you can use even when you're feeling really bad, so I think a lot of time I hear, "I wanna use, I wanna use my DS," all the time.

**H:** Okay, so you've talked a lot about how students use technology, um could you say a little bit about how you use or do not use in your technology in your own instruction?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Yeah! Um..you know something that I really like is um, the promethean board, um, and I was a newbie at that (laughter) before I came in here, so it's kind of like a modified smart board (H:OK), um, from what I understand, and um, uh, I can kind of craft powerpoint-esque types of presentations on the board, and um it, it gives the kids kind of a, a nice visual that is large enough and it just seems to grab their attention more than a similar visual from the book (K:mmhm) and often times I'll have the kids come up and they can use the pen to like draw um, for history we did states, like grab this state to, was it a northern colony or a middle colony or a southern colony, and they got to you know click on the um, the state and drag it to where it was, um. I think those are very (?) interesting a lot of times um also when I'm doing like a text uh, kind of powerpoint type of a presentation I can

embed uh a video in there uh, which, it uh uh you know I try to hit all my bases as far as getting attention, um and some of them are uh you know the sound part is helpful for them but then using multimedia whenever I can, um, to try and give a more complete view of the topics, so we always do the book as well because I , I think it's important, like I said for them to be able to be flexible and to go in and out with these things, to not expect multimedia wherever they go (K: mmhmm), but that just might be part of me and my mission, like, as a teacher here because I, very concerned, obviously my first priority is to get the academic content across, but then from a behavrioal point of view I want to always be working on issues of flexibility and, um, you know being able to tolerate uh non-preferred activities, so, uh, the one part of me wants to get really rich multimedia content whenever and variety of format (K:mmhmm) but then I also want them to be able to read the book, and to be okay doing that, and I'm not sure if that's a concern that most, uh, regular ed teachers have. (K:mmhmm)

**H:** And has the use of the uh promethean board, do you see that engages all of your students or most students or are there...

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Yeah, I would actually say it engages all of them even my lower ones, um they get excited about it, it's different, I think that um, for you know and again I'm operating from the special ed perspective, um I'm not sure what goes on in regular ed, but um, most of these guys have been warehoused for lack of a better term, um, because they're um, aggressive, um, they've been stuck in a classroom, um, usually way (emphasis on "way") off in the corner of the, the school. And um, maybe they get some worksheets, maybe they don't, maybe they ....(laughter, indiscernible words), you know what I mean, and so I think they, it gets their attention, they like it, even my lower kids can um, buy into and access a real visual, rich visual content like that, um and the fact that it is participatory, it's interactive, um, that they really, they alllll wanna come up to the board, they allll wanna be the one who's drawing or matching up there, um so I think that's really really great for getting and holding attention.

**H:** Could you give us an example of a participatory activity that you've used with the board?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Umm..they,,we do a lot of matching, um, we'll also do um, like, um, a modified quiz type of a thing, ... (49:40)

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#### Minutes 49:40-58:00

Transcribed by Katie McFeely

Ms. Kinderpraat::: So they'll come up and there'll be um a problem, a space for math we do this, a space um for them to write their answer underneath, like to do the work. And then they click on the button that gives their answer. So I mean really, when you look at it, it's a not a whole lot different than what Teacher would be doing on the board, but it lets them get involved in the process. Um, and then they're able to almost lead the class a little bit, so they do their work up on the board and then they click on the button of the answer and then it'll say you know either (changes voice to cheer): Yay! You did great! (voice back) and then it sings a song and someone dances across the board. Or, it will say: Oops! Try again. Um so they really like that. We did the matching the states recently. You're dragging them into the um the different categories. Um we did um some other math activity where we like traced uh a route and they had to trace uh the correct route. Um we did some uh some uh, we're talking about flora and fauna and so they're, eh um, they go to come up and label the flora and fauna.

Hain-Lee: So that you have primarily a few students at the board at a time?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Um, you know what. I don't think it's good to have any of our students in a clump (laughs) ever. Um so um normally um it's one – one to two, I will say.

Hain-Lee: Okay. And, just curious, if they're doing a math problem, and they enter their answer and it turns out to be not correct, (Ms. Kinderpraat: mmmhm) how is the response of the students in that case?

Ms. Kinderpraat: Do you know what? It's really interesting cause I mean it's hard to even image having an um full scale tantrum in front of your peers in eighth grade. You know, it's really – it's a different paradigm with these kids (laughing). So I mean, that's one of the good things about EBC. Everybody is different. [A male student is yelling in the hallway] Everybody is struggling with things. And so they get to learn preeeety quickly that, you know, there's a not a whole lot of reason to be embarrassed here because everybody is exhibiting some problem behavior. It almost is – we lose that benefit 100% of them having that fear or embarrassment. It can almost be harmful sometimes because they're so quick to engage in problem behavior, because they know that everyone understands, when we really want them to say: "Hey. It's not cool to you know tantrum when you're in eighth grade." But it – um – you know it really is mostly a benefit. The only um exception to that I would say is with the really low kids, the borderline kids who are right around 70 IQ. Um they really have a really heightened sense of, I don't want to look like I'm making a mistake. But those are all kids that I know backwards and forwards, and I'm only going to call them up on a problem that I know they can be successful on. [Yelling outside the door is very loud at this point.] I might also give some heavy prompting um while it's going on. So I won't um you know make them um uh a catastrophic mistake where they'd be way off.

Hain-Lee: So is – um – last time you also mentioned the Intel Reader and how it was very effective um. Is there any instance of technology that you felt was not as effective?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: You know, I think that the thing that comes to my mind is, like I said, some of those programs that are aimed at remediating um skill deficits that are not usable, not practical, for my lower functioning kids. It's like they're right on with the skills that they're seeking to teach. And they have great methodology. For any number of kids it would be extremely helpful. And for – you know we call them complex kids, because of the complexity it's not just one issue it's the whole confluence when you add up everything um. Their original diagnosis – many of them have dual diagnoses – so they might be um uh on the autism spectrum but also um uh as emotionally disturbed, severely emotionally disturbed um. They might have hyperactivity in addition to um bipolar and then um attention issues, memory issues, like all of that added together it's just not helpful. So, um, I'm sad about that a little bit. I wish that, um, I wish that I could find something better sometimes than just a procedural list. (Changes voice.) Hi Avery! First do this. (Changes voice.) You know what I mean? Um. But I think also that that subset of kiddos who is intimidated by technology, um. They know that they don't know it, that they're not good at it, that they have troubles with clicks and typing. And so, um, that is very intimidating. They don't want to try new things and fail. They'd rather self soothe. It's not soothing to try new things and be, um, kind of acquainted with new things. And so, um, that's that's a stumbling block, for sure.

Hain-Lee: Do you know, for the lower kids, do you know of technology that they are comfortable with, either at home or.

Ms. Kinderpraat:: They're comfortable with um watching videos. They like that. Um. Not even always that though (laughs). It's interesting, you know. A lot of you would be surprised [Loud yelling in the background.] at how many times you know we say: We're going to watch a movie! Like on the last day before Christmas or whatever. And they don't want to that. They'd rather pace or um uh flap. I've got a windmill. He likes to windmill his arms. You know what I mean? And you have to have a measure of being able to sit still to use technology um. I – I think there's some better luck with some of those kids with a portable, a more portable technology um. And this is – actually – this school is, in particular, I know they've had a lot of success with low and severe kids with things like um uh the iPad or a portable talker um. You know those have been life changing for um a lower population than we have um. But the- we're like the in between. They're – they're moderate. I mean they're absolutely moderate. They're not uh um below 70 IQ but they're also – they don't have the dexterity and they don't have um the focus to, like I said, sometimes even to watch a movie. So but I think the more portable it is and the more the technology does, the less they have to interact with it or – not interact with it but they less they have to do. The less they have to

click. The less they have to read. The less they have to type. Um all of those would be good. Like I'm even thinking of the um some of the the screens that I've seen. I think I mentioned this last time. They're so busy. There's so much up there. There's maybe like you know ten buttons that you have to look at. And. Um. That's hard for them you know. Which one do I press? You know um. What's the order that I have to press them in? Um you know. Or the icons aren't um appropriately chosen. Like I'll I've heard a lot of: Why is that go? Or, you know what I mean? Because visuals are great but you - sometimes they don't clearly or accurately represent – like to the child, I mean to us, obviously, they would. But it doesn't make sense why you would press that one, at that time. So that's why I said I always go back to procedural lists. You know? First press this one.

Hain Lee: So we – just to make sure we have a correct understanding: A lot of computer programs, they kind of target in the middle, between your higher kids and your lower kids. [Ms. Kinderpraat: Umhm.] But then you also mentioned like things like iPad and portable speakers are targeted for an even lower [Ms. Kinderpraat: Yes!] spectrum. So there's nothing that's [Ms. Kinderpraat: Yeah.] where you're at, where you're kids are at. (58:00)

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#### **Minutes 58:00-1:06:00**

Transcribed by Anna Ly

HL: So just to make sure we have a correct understanding. So the a lot of computer programs kind of target in the middle between your higher kids and your lower kids? (mmhmm) But then you also mentioned like things like iPad and portable speakers are targeted for even lower (Yes) spectrum? So there's nothing (Yea) that's where you're (Yea) at... where your kids are at? (Ms D: Yea)

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Well I mean it's interesting . I think I could like really modify modify modify and assist assist assist to get some of those technologies to work for my lower kids. But by then, it's like well gosh if I'm really after just teaching the skill. So you have to look at it like am I trying to acquaint with technology or am I trying to teach the skill (mmhmm).To me, there's much more simpler, effective, accurate ways to teach the skill that are low tech. Now if the issue is to get them comfortable with technology that is just to me seemed like a long long road that lots of people try. And I mean they have computer class but issues with attentiveness, typing, looking at the sea of letters on the keyboard and being able to have the dexterity to say this one at this time. I mean those are just long long term issues that I would love to think that the more time you spend on it, the the better they'd get on it and for some of my kiddos they have a ceiling. And uhm, I like to focus on the victories, the success and if they're able to get a concept in a low tech way uhm I take that victory a lot of times. Uhm and I want them to be (K: mmhmm) as comfortable in technology as possible without forcing them to multi-task to the point that the sandcastle (laughs) all falls down and then they're saying well now I'm not I don't have the skill and I don't know how to use the technology and I'm feeling overwhelmed. Uhm you know I like to take a victory where I can get it.

HL: So for things like the iPad that are targeted more for like severe autism spectrum. Why, why is that not suitable for the kids here?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: Uhm do you know for the most part a lot of what I've seen for those it's, it's in two categories. One is for more non verbal kids and we don't have anybody who is non-verbal here, so the assistive technology component that that offers is not needed and not appropriate for here. The other thing that it does is I know it uses like a lot of icons uhm you know pointing, clicking, touching icons and again that's not a skill that they need or they've got that. They can you know touch what a cow is, they can do all those sorts of things. It's almost like a really persistent learning disability rather than just the issues of autism spectrum. So imagine (K: mmm) a kiddo with a really severe learning disability, but then all of the autism spectrum issues added in on top of that. So if

you're dealing with (voice inflection) just a learning disability or just being on the autism spectrum (end of voice inflection), I think that there are more targeted, effective tools for sure. But when they're combined, it's that's when it gets tricky. (HL: mmm)

KM: I think we have time for maybe one more like summative question...what do you think?

HL: Okay uhm well I guess is there anything that we didn't ask you but you think is important for us to uh to know?

Ms. Kinderpraat:: I think I've talked about most of it. Uhmm. You know I think with our kiddos, it just really does all go back to the behavioral um and a lot of what we're trying to do here is just to get them to engage on a basic level (student yelling in hallway) and so in terms of curriculum and tools, that's really our struggle. Uhm is that we can have the most effective technology and the most effective tools and if they don't want to use it, they're not going to do it. And not only use it but use it in the right way. Uhm, if they don't want to learn something, they're not going to. And so uhm, can technology be a help there? (Pause 2) It can, uhm on the other hand I think some of these issues are so fundamentally kind of internal and behavioral that you know I think whether we're using technology, whether we're not using technology is somewhat beside the point. With each case being individual, some kids are going to respond to it more but I guess even with the best technology, my number one concern is motivation, following directions, all of those sorts of things. (Team: Mmhmm) Can technology be a help in that? Absolutely. Does it fix it? No. (Team: mmhmm, yea) I wish it did. (Laughter).

HL: Do you guys have any other questions? (No).

[irrelevant conversation]

Ms. Kinderpraat: You know, you know the kids are just so they're so brave. (soft voice) and I can't even imagine what it would be like to wake up and deal with what they deal with on a daily basis and so even when they are you know being explosive. It's just. Uhm. I don't. It's not them for lack of a better word. You know what I mean? I think that that they are reacting from a place of fear or you know not knowing what's going on with them. So they're just lovely. I love em.

KM: Do they feel like because you're in their corner, like what a difference that must make..you know? To have someone who's like actually I kind of get where your behavior's coming from and just, just seems critical right?

Ms. Kinderpraat: Do you know we hear pretty repeatedly, moms and dads, and they say they've never like had a home before, they've never fit in at school like school's always been you know really tough and I think that they, they like that we're going to challenge them (student yelling in hallway), we're not going to (inaud), we're going to actually try to dig in (KM: yea) and help em, but we're also not going to be I think they are like sometimes in the the general education environment. We're going to recognize that they've got uh (KM: mmhmm) you know some things they're better at and we'll really focus on those. Uhm and the things that are tougher, we'll do our best to keep trying everyday but uhm you know they're doing some things right and we'll celebrate those.

KM: Yea. That competent warehouse thing is just like creepy to me. Just that word (laughter)

Ms. Kinderpraat: Well do you know what. I mean it's a horrible point to end on but as someone who's kinda been in the special education game in California for a while. It's endemic. I, I mean it is the exception to get a child who is not warehoused (Team: mmhmm) vs. the kids who are warehoused (Team: mmhmm). And I think it really goes back to there, there are, there's a severe shortage of number of qualified special education teachers. There's simply not enough and then even on top of that the turnover is something like 50% (KM: Is it really? Oh wow yea). Yea. So, I mean to think about getting quality education for these kids on top of those issues. I mean it's just not even the

ballpark for most administrators in those schools. I, I mean it's literally it's about getting a warm body in. Uhm. Just (KM: Someone there to babysit?) Yea (KM: Yea wow). So there's a lot of that going on (Team: Wow really).