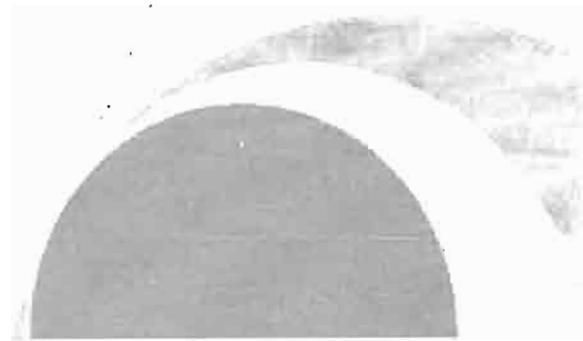
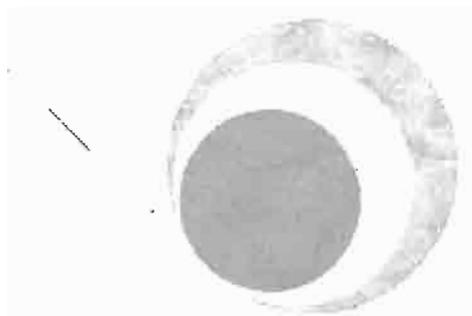
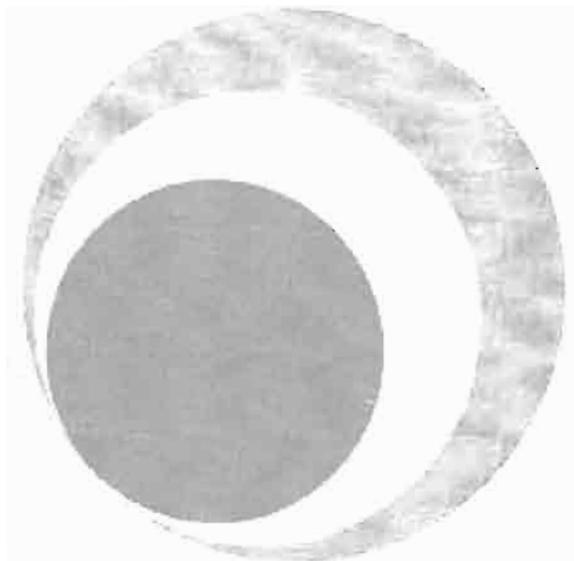


CATEGORY	7 or 8 points	5 or 6 points	3 or 4 points	1 or 2 points
Descriptive Language	Language is consistently used with careful precision and evident respect for each student's uniqueness. 7	Language is mostly used with careful precision and evident respect for each student's uniqueness.	Language is sometimes used with careful precision and evident respect for each student's uniqueness.	Language is almost never used with careful precision and evident respect for each student's uniqueness.
Description of Context	Description of the context richly frames the discussion and supports the analysis and interpretation of data. 7	Description of the context helps to frame the discussion and to provide some support for the analysis and interpretation of data.	Description of the context is somewhat disconnected from the discussion and provides limited support for the analysis and interpretation of data.	Description of the context adds little to the discussion and fails to support the analysis and interpretation of data.
Amount of Information	All topics are addressed and all questions answered with enough sentences about each.	All topics are addressed and most questions answered with enough sentences about each. 5	All topics are addressed, and most questions answered with some sentences about each.	One or more topics were not addressed. 1, 2, 3, 4
Quality of Information	Discussion clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Discussion clearly relates to the main topic. It provides some supporting details and/or examples. 6	Discussion relates to the main topic, but not enough details and/or examples are given.	Discussion has little or nothing to do with the main topic or no supporting details or examples are given.
Concept(s) from Readings	Any Concept from the course reading is fully explained and the application of the concept to the case study is clear.	Any Concept from the course reading is fully explained and the application of the concept to the case study is somewhat clear. 6	Any Concept from the course reading is somewhat explained but the application of the concept to the case study is somewhat unclear.	Any Concept from the course reading is not well explained and the application of the concept to the case study is unclear.
Reflection	Reflection offers important insights into the process and results of conducting the case studies. 7	Reflection offers some insights into the process and results of conducting the case studies.	Reflection offers limited insight into the process and results of conducting the case studies.	Reflection offers no insights into the process or results of conducting the case studies.
Organization	Discussion is very well-organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings. 7	Discussion is organized with well-constructed paragraphs.	Discussion is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed.	The discussion appears to be disorganized.
Mechanics	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	A few grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.

**How Can I  
Learn About  
and Support  
Students Who  
Are Struggling?**



## Context

The school that I teach in is located in the northeastern part of Rhode Island. I teach in a private Catholic school in Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Even though the school is part of the Diocese of Providence, my school is run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart of New England. There are four brothers that live in the school. They no longer teach, however, their presence in the school allows for students to see their spiritual commitment to the school and to the Brothers of the Sacred Heart community. We have approximately 75 faculty, staff and administration. My school is co-educational and serves grades seven through twelve. Our administration consists of a president, principal, two assistant principals, and director of guidance. Our school serves approximately 950 students.

The campus is located within a residential area in the city of Woonsocket. The building has five floors. Most of the classes are located on the second, third and fourth floors. Most of the seventh and eighth grade classes are located on the fourth floor. If they need to travel outside of this area, then it would be for elective classes such as foreign language, art, music, etc. Students in the other grades will have most of their classes on the second and third floor. The basement only has a few classes. There is an elevator that teachers and students who have a medical condition to use. The building includes a library, guidance department, gymnasium, a computer lab, alumni office, academic support center, technology room, copy room, dance room, business office, an area for youth ministry, and the school's chapel. The school's hockey rink is located in a separate building next to the school. Most students hang out at the ice rink

after school, especially since their buses pick them up from that location. There are some school districts in Rhode Island that do provide out of town busing. The students also have two minutes to get to each class. The student's lockers are not located in the hallways. The lockers are located in an open room. The lockers are separated into three sections: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. This makes for less congestion in the hallways. There are several staircases throughout the school in order to get to class. Also, not all my students have to buy their books. Students <sup>from</sup> in Rhode Island are provided text books by the town or city in which they live in. Student <sup>from</sup> in Massachusetts do have to buy their books.

My classroom is located on the first floor near the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade locker room. I teach Spanish I Honors and Spanish II. It is located next to the alumni office. The room is difficult to find, because there are no other classes around and it is around a corner. If students are on the third or fourth floor, it will take them more than the two minutes to reach my classroom. I share this room with another teacher. Therefore, I have some space to decorate within the classroom. The classroom expectations are posted on the bulletin board. There are five expectations that are easily remembered by its acronym <sup>What are they?</sup> SALSÁ. I have student work posted on the back wall of my classroom. There are posters that immerse students in the language and culture. My desks are arranged in rows. When students need to work in groups or pairs, they move their chairs. I try to create a warm, comfortable, and inviting environment that allows my students to feel safe, ready to learn and able to succeed in class.

In order to attend my school, every student has to take and pass an entrance exam which is given in December. Students wishing to attend must take the exam the year

before they wish to attend. The student must then score in the 50% percentile and above in order to be accepted to the school. The school does not base their acceptance of the student based solely on this one exam. The school also looks at a student's background school history that spans back to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders and to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade for the 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Since students do have to pay tuition to attend, the parents ~~do have to be~~ financial set in order for their child to attend the school. The school does provide some financial aide to students. The school would rather give out many small scholarships to several students, rather than one or two big scholarships to a hand couple of students. Even though my students have to pay tuition, this does not mean that all my students are privileged. There are parents who have to work longer hours or get part-time jobs in order to pay the tuition. There are cases each year in which students are not able to return, since the parents can no longer financial afford to send their child to the school.

My school is located in an urban setting in the middle of a residential neighborhood on top of a steep hill. However, the students who attend the school come from suburban locations in northern Rhode Island and southern and central Massachusetts. A small percentage of students come from different parts of both states. The student population from Rhode Island is 62% and the population from Massachusetts is 38%. The students from Rhode Island mainly come from the Blackstone Valley region. The main cities and towns that my students are from include Cumberland, Lincoln, Smithfield, North Smithfield, and a few from Woonsocket. The students from Massachusetts come from the cities and towns of Wrentham, Uxbridge, Blackstone, Millville, Bellingham, and several others. Unfortunately, our school is not very diverse.

My school is 96% white, less than 1% African American, less than 2% Asian, and less than 1% Native American. The majority of our students come from a two parent home.

The school that I teach at is a catholic school. Even though most students who attend my school are catholic, it is not a requirement. There are students from many religions in the school. Even when we have mass during the school day, those students are included in the mass. When it comes time to receive communion those students are not allowed to receive it, however, they are welcome to go up and receive a blessing. When a non-Catholic goes up to receive communion, they are asked to put their arms across their chest like an X and they will receive a special blessing. All students are required to take religion classes even if they are not catholic. It is a school requirement that all students take this class every year.

The students who attend my school go there for several reasons. There are some students, like the two students that I observed during the semester, that go to the school because they wanted to go there. There are other students who go to the school because their entire family has gone to the school and they want to continue the tradition. Some of those who are there to continue the tradition are there because they want to be there, while others were told by their parents that they had to go. Lastly, there are those students who had no choice but to attend, because their parents forced them to go. There are parents who send their child to this school, because they do not want their child to go to the public school in their town or city. They feel that their child would get a better education in the catholic school. There are also parents who are very religious and want their students to attend the school, because they will have the religious atmosphere to their everyday lives. For some students, it is very important to them to go to daily prayer and

be able to go to campus ministry during the day. The key part of the school's mission statement is that "We challenge our students through a rigorous academic program and through religious and co-curricular experiences to become people of faith who use their talents and intellects to serve others". Overall, the students are taught to treat one another with respect, strive for academic excellence, <sup>being</sup> involved in social activities whether it is sports, music, art, or be part of a school club, and be a morally upstanding member of the school and outside community.

Since I had never attended or taught at a Catholic school before, I did not quite understand what the school meant <sup>or it</sup> that the school is like a family. I found out what it meant that the school <sup>is</sup> was like a family <sup>//</sup> during professional development day for teachers the day before school started, the first day of school, and the first week of school. During the first day back for teachers, I saw the teachers treat one another as if they were family members that had not seen each other for a very long time. Everyone was concerned on how everyone was doing and catching up on each other's <sup>+</sup> lives during the summer break. Also, they all welcomed me into their family right away. Everyone greeted me and told me that if I needed anything not to hesitate to ask. During the faculty mass on that day, the entire faculty blessed and prayed for the new members of their family (all new faculty members). On the first day of school, the teachers and the administration continually asked me throughout the day how I was doing and asked if I needed anything. This really helped to calm those first day butterflies. They also <sup>will</sup> may sure those students attending the school for the first time had a great first day as well, by making them feel comfortable and safe. When the faculty models this behavior, the entire student body does as well. Each new student to the school is assigned a student mentor to help <sup>them</sup> get adjusted to

the school. It is stressed that everyone is included in the family and treated like family. Since the entire school is treated like a family, it is important to build relationships with my students inside and outside of school. In order to ensure that each student is known in the school, students are assigned to a Teacher Counselor. My TC is located in the library on the second floor. The students meet with their TC at the beginning and the end of the day. I get to know my students, which there are 10 in total, inside and outside of school. I know how they are doing academically and also know what is going outside of school. The teacher counselors are encouraged to plan events with their respective TC's in order to build a sense of community and family like environment. My first outing with them will be a few days before the break for Christmas vacation to a restaurant.

Since this is my first year teaching at the school, I was not sure what two students I was going to observe. I choose two students who reached out to me within the first week of school. My students take my class as an elective. It is mandatory, however, that each student takes at least two years of a foreign language. A third year of a foreign language is highly recommended. One of my students is in my Spanish class and TC, while the other student is only in my Spanish class. Nevertheless, this student comes to visit me everyday in my TC. At first I was afraid to ask them, because school had just started and I was not sure how they would react. I was in for quite a shock. Keeping with the school's tradition of being part of a family, my two students were thrilled to be chosen. They automatically named themselves as my lab rats and even made a "rat face" which they would display to me every morning. Since I didn't know my students very well academically, I was not sure yet what I was looking for at the beginning of the semester.

Since this is my first year at the school, I did not know any of the students. I picked Esperanza and Juan because they opened up to me during the first week of school. They were warm and inviting to me when I started school. They really took on the school motto of treating everyone like family. They invited me in with open arms and helped me get through the first few weeks of school with their kind words and encouragement.

Juan is in my Spanish II class. On the first day, he gave me an overview of the school environment. On the second day of school, he was generous enough to tell me how to do my seating chart. He informed me of students who could not handle sitting next to each other. He also told me about some of the school events that take place during the school year. In addition, he informed me that if I needed any help that he would be more than glad to assist. He now comes to see me every morning before TC to see how I am doing and to talk to his friend Esperanza.

Esperanza is the second student that I choose. At the time, I did not know Juan and Esperanza were good friends. They would come into TC early and talk to me. They would tell me how things were going inside and outside of school. Esperanza is in my TC and in my Spanish II class as well. Esperanza and Juan are in different classes. Esperanza was also very welcoming when I started. When there were school events that involved TC cooperation, she informed me what needed to be done, how, and when. She is very helpful in keeping our TC <sup>TC-4F</sup> united.  
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Throughout this semester, I have analyzed work both from Esperanza and Juan. I have spoken to them on several occasions. I also overhear what they are saying in class to other students. During this time, I gave them questionnaire to fill out. In addition, I have

observed how they are in class. I see how well they are able to understand concepts, their social interaction with others, how well they work independently, and how well they work in groups and pairs. Since I have one of them in TC, I am able to observe how she acts outside of the classroom. I am also able to see how Juan acts outside of class, since he is always visiting me in TC. Recently, he even came after TC to give me a rotting pumpkin as a joke. Since we can have a joking type of relationship, I know he meant that as a joke and not as a mean action. By analyzing the students academically and outside of the classroom, I was able to come up with the following question: How can I learn about and support students who are struggling?

## **Literature Review**

In order for me to learn about and support my students who were struggling, I tried to find articles that explained why my students were having a hard time succeeding in my class. I took the work that I analyzed, the student questionnaires, and the observations I made in class about them and found articles that would help me decipher what I could do more to help them.

When learning a new language, there are concepts that are learned that will be the foundation for more difficult concepts later on in the year. Therefore, students need to learn which methods, or “tools”, that will enable them to understand the material being taught, digest it, and then how to take newly learned material and apply it to previous knowledge. They must use these tools to help them process new material with concepts

already learned. In the chapter, "Internationalization of High Psychological Functions" in the book *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* by <sup>int</sup> Michael Cole, the concept of tools is explained:

Learning for support on the term's figurative meaning, some psychologists have used the word 'tool' when referring to the indirect function of an object as the means for accomplishing some activity. Expressions such as 'the tongue is the tool of thought' or 'aides of memoire' are usually bereft of any definite content and hardly mean more than they really are: simple metaphors and more colorful ways of expressing the fact that certain objects or operations play an auxiliary role in psychological activity. (53)

In my Spanish class, I use different types of tools in order to teach my students. I know that some of my students are visual, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, logical, spatial, and mathematical. Therefore, I need to use different methods in order to teach my students. I am constantly doing listening activities, using visuals in class, using music, bringing in <sup>or "realia"?</sup> regalia, and making students <sup>s</sup> move around depending on the vocabulary in the chapter. The article continues to mention the importance of these tools when they explain the importance of visuals. They argue that for visual learners, "the invention and uses of signs as auxiliary means of solving a given psychological problem (to remember, compare something, report, choose, and so on) is analogous to the invention and use of tools in one psychological respect" (52). Even by the students having some of these tools, I found that they can apply these tools to basic concepts, but have a more difficult time when applying to more advanced concepts that requires them to apply what they learned to new material. Knowing that my students are struggling with taking simple concepts in Spanish, like adjective and verb agreement in sentences given to them, that they will have a difficult time transferring that knowledge when doing writing on their own.

When I realized my students were having difficulty in applying basic Spanish language concepts when they were asked to write on a topic, I saw that I had surpassed their zone of proximal development. In the chapter, "Standards for Pedagogy: Research, Theory and Practice" in the book *Learning for Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Sociocultural Perspectives on the Future of Education* by Gordon Wells and Guy Claxton, they mention Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development. The condition is described as "...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (181). At this point in time, I personally realized that even though the student was able to memorize and apply concepts like adjective and verb agreement or matching the right form of the verb ending based on the subject, they had trouble carrying that over into their writing assignments. I then <sup>say</sup> that the proximal zone "is different from the 'developmental level' at which the individual, unassisted performance is possible" (181). I know saw that I needed to add additional "assisting through the [Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)]" and offer more help "at points in the [zone] at which performance requires assistance" (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988) (181-182). The light bulb clicked and I realized that I needed to add a type of writer's workshop in order to meet their zone of proximal development by using feedback and teaching them what to do with it.

In the chapter "Education for the Learning Age: A Sociocultural Approach to Learning to Learn" in the book *Learning for Life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Sociocultural Perspectives on the Future of Education* by Gordon Wells and Guy Claxton, I realized that not only did by students need to know how to use feedback in a type of writer's workshop setting, but that they also my students needed to learn the concept of 'learning

to learn' because as a student "...as we learn, we are also changing as learners" (21). The manner that I analyzed what the author said was that as a learner, one must learn how to learn by using the tools that work best for one as a learner. I know that not all my students learn the same way, which was reinforced in this article. I know that each student has a bag of tools that helps them decipher the new material. However, I soon realized in class that their bag of tools didn't have as many tools in it as I thought. When I analyzed the following section from the Claxton article, "the overall concern, in each case, is to demonstrate how key aspects of learners' epistemic mentalities and identities are shaped by epistemic milieu in which they find themselves" (28). In the case of my students, it was that the feedback that I gave them about their own work was not helping, because they don't know how to apply the feedback I had given them. When they would receive their writing assignment back, there were three common mistakes that I categorize as: spelling, grammar and vocabulary. When they saw this, the students didn't know what to do. They didn't understand that they needed to go back into their textbooks and notes to figure out how to fix it. *great writing!*

In order to figure out this problem, I asked the students that I was observing to come after school to work on their writing assignment one-on-one. I soon saw that even the extra help they were getting was not working, because they had descended into the concept of "learned helplessness" explored in the article "Smart People or Smart Contexts? Cognition, Ability, and Talent Development in an Age of Situated Approaches to Knowing and Learning" by Sasha A. Barab and Jonathan A. Plucker. I know that the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class as a whole is very difficult based on conversations I have had with other teachers. I know that this class dislikes studying and want everything as easy as possible.

They do not have the motivation to learn and therefore do not put any effort into their school work. They have the notion that '...I succeeded or failed because of my effort' which placed "a greater sense of responsibility on the person-in-situation and leads to [lack of] achievement motivation" in the case of my students (168). These students have descended into "...learned helplessness" since "they believe that they are not talented and will not succeed, regardless of their level of effort" (168). I know that they have this mentality so engraved into their brains that I realized I need to help them see that this is not the case. The article showed me that what I am doing will help my students, because I am consistently telling them that they are able to do the work. I emphasize that if they put in the time and effort into their school work they will succeed. The article also shows that "the creation and maintenance of stable internal attribution for success and failure produces further complications when the label of 'good student' or 'bad student' is attached to the learner" (168). Now, I knew that my mission had to be making sure that my students realize that with some time and effort that yes they can succeed. I saw that I must turn into my students' "cheerleader" by constantly needing to cheer them on when they do well and lighten the blow when they do badly. They need to understand that when you do not do well on a quiz that you must come after school for extra help. make sure you understand the concept well, and that one bad grade does not spell eternal academic disaster (which they seem to think so). In the article, "Interaction between learning and development," *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes* by Michael Cole, it demonstrates how important it is for that student to know a concept well before moving onto the next topic. He explains that "...if someone learns to do any single thing well, he will also be able to do other entirely unrelated things well as a

result of some secret connection” (82). I knew that if I could reach my students and make them understand that they cannot just learn concepts and then forget about them because they would need to apply them to higher concepts, then I could get them to succeed. This would also help them to realize that with time and effort that it would also enable them to reach this goal and do well in class.

## Analysis of Students

### Esperanza

I have only known Esperanza for three months. Esperanza is in my teacher counselor period and in my Spanish II class. She is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and has chosen to go to this school on her own free will. She has chosen to come to this school, because it has “a family type of atmosphere” when I spoke to her. In her response on the questionnaire, she said that “it seemed like a fun school”. She lives with her mother in a small town in Rhode Island. She is very outgoing and social outside of class. She also has a seasonal job at an ice cream place in her town. Her dad does not live wither. She is involved in different school activities including delivery of Christmas baskets that goes out to needy families in the city, after-school art class, and is the TC representative.

However, in class she is not very talkative and is shy when it comes to participating. When she does participate, she whispers her answers as if she is afraid to talk in front of the class. I believe the reason is because she is afraid to get the wrong answer in front of the class. In other words, her lack of academic success lies in the lack

of confidence that she has in herself in order to do well. I have come to this conclusion based on her academic past, conversation with her and interactions with her in class.

This particular student does need special accommodations and goes to the academic support center during her free period. "The Academic Support Center offers individualized help for students with learning disabilities, reading deficits or study and organizational weaknesses. Reading and study skills are often taught through subject areas" (School website). I work very closely with her advisor in academic support in order for her to succeed in school. At this point in time, she has to stay after school once a week to work with her academic support advisor after school. This is done so that she keeps up with her school work and does well in classes. The advisor and I basically have to work in partnership in order to help her succeed.

This past 1<sup>st</sup> quarter was the first time that she has not been on academic probation. She, as was her advisor, her mom and myself, proud of this accomplishment. The advisor shared with me that her report card is still posted on the refrigerator at home and it is December. The school policy for academic probation is that if a student has a GPA of less than 1.7 or has a C- in 2 or more classes. The student is then put on academic probation and must go to a silent resource during their free period. Their TC advisor will also have to do weekly progress report checks on the student. She was very proud of the fact she was not on academic probation, but in the past few weeks her friend has told me otherwise. This friend being the other student I observed. I had noticed that her attitude in class had changed lately. Her friend informed me that she refuses to do any work and according to him based on what she told him "doesn't care if she goes back on academic probation". Red flags went off and I went to speak to her academic advisor, mom and

guidance counselor. At this point, mom has a "hands-off" approach when dealing with her daughters' academics. She has been there for her in the past, however, she has seen that she needs to let her daughter learn what happens if you do not possess academic responsibility. Mom is letting go and Esperanza will have to learn by her own experience what happens if <sup>she</sup> you stop<sup>s</sup> doing <sup>her</sup> your work, fail<sup>s</sup> a class or classes, and deal with the consequences of her own actions.

This particular student has not done very well academically in my class. In class, she can understand and do simple concepts very well. but when it comes to transferring those skills to higher learning concepts it becomes much harder. She does well on tests and quizzes when she has to fill in the blank with the correct verb form. However, the difficulty comes to transferring those skills when having to complete writing assignments. She rarely participates in class; however, she does take notes and do in-class assignments. She is also falling behind in several of her classes and I have had to contact home on several occasions. She has not been handing in homework assignments or projects on time. or doing them at all. In order for her to do them. I need to tell her every day in order to get the assignment or make her stay after school to do it. There are some assignments that she will only do if forced to stay after school.

In connecting Esperanza to the articles, I discovered several things about her as a learner and about how to teach students who struggle. They struggle because they lack the necessary tools to succeed, confidence to do well, and the motivation and effort to do the work. I must also add that this task is a constant struggle, a type of trial and error when trying new things to help them succeed, and the determination to never give up.

I know that Esperanza lacks the tools <sup>g</sup>in-order to apply basic concepts to higher cognitive level activities. I see this when she easily does fill in the blanks, but cannot take those concepts and apply them to her writing. When she does understand something, she does not use any tools to help figure out the problem. Her solution is to leave the mistake as is and not bother to try to even fix it. This includes when she does get one-on-one help with me. I know that I have gone over her zone of proximal development, because she does not know how to carry over her tools to different assignments.

When I give her feedback, she does not know what to do with it. At this point she gives up. She has the concept of "learned helplessness" engraved in her brain. Since she does not know what to do with the feedback I give her on her rough drafts, she does not know how to fix her mistakes when writing her final draft. I find that I have not reached her zone of proximal development, because she lacks the confidence in herself to do well academically. During our latest TC meeting, I spoke to her about how she can do well. With Esperanza, I need to first her build up her own self-confidence, before I can help her understand and apply the feedback I gave her. If she has a mental block that she cannot do well, then I will have trouble reaching her. I must break down that wall first, before I can help her to succeed.

I am starting to slowly see her break down her mental block when it comes to succeeding academically, because of a recent conversation. She came into TC one morning and said "You know señorita it helps reading the homework, because I did well on my quiz". In this case, the teacher assigns a reading in the book and gives a quiz in class the next day to make sure that the student did his or her homework. I told her, "Good, then you need to keep doing that because I know you can do well and all you

have to do is your homework". Through her own experience, she sees that she can do well if she puts in the effort.

### Juan

Like Esperanza, I have only known Juan for three months. He is in the 10<sup>th</sup> and is in my Spanish II class. He is easy to get along with and I can joke around with him. He also chose to come to this school. His reason for coming here was that he liked the family type atmosphere and did not like going to public school. In his questionnaire, he stated that "it was a great school" to come to. He lives in a town in Massachusetts. He lives with his mother and his mother's boyfriend. Also, he is involved in different clubs at school like SADD, Best Buddies, and Art National Honor Society. He has won student of the month and received the Expect Respect award. According to his questionnaire, his homework routine is stated as the following: "I spend little time studying".

This student is a B average student. By talking with other staff, I was able to find out that he procrastinates on his work, the work builds up, and then he panics because he feels overwhelmed with all the work he has to do. This also leads to a rush in getting the assignment done as quickly as possible just to hand it in. He does well in class, although he claims all the time that he does not study. He tells me he doesn't study, because "I don't feel like it". He does okay, but could do much better if he put in the effort. By seeing how he easily picks up concepts, he could easily be "acing" the class if he put in more effort.

Juan has no trouble applying basic concepts when he has to fill in the blank. He has trouble when it comes to writing. During his writing assignment for an imaginary

person, he first completed a graphic organizer about his person and what he would include. He was then supposed to take the graphic organizer to help him write his paper about the person he created. However, he did not do this. Instead, Juan wrote about himself. He later told me he didn't pay attention in class and didn't understand what to do. This made me wonder because he did the graphic organizer correctly, but not his rough draft. At this time he had the tools to do the assignment. The assignment was a task that helped them surpass their zone of proximal development by a little. On their rough draft they were given feedback. His feedback was to take what he wrote and change it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. When the assignment was due, he did not hand it in. He had developed a form of self-helplessness in which he didn't know what to do, he waited for the last minute to do it, and then realized that he didn't know what to do with the feedback that was given to him. This resulted in him handing in the work late. Since he handed in late, he told me he rushed to get it done and it was not his best work.

Juan is very much like Esperanza in the studying department. They both have told me, through informal conversations we have had, that studying is non-existent. They don't feel like studying, so they don't. They don't want to put in the effort to study, because they don't "feel like it" or "it's too much work" according to them. I tell them that if they don't study, they won't understand these concepts well enough to apply them later on. I constantly remind them and the class that language is like math, it builds on previous concepts and you can't just forget or skip stuff you don't understand.

To explore Juan's concept of not studying, I will describe a situation that happened at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter when students were preparing for their last test of the quarter. My policy in class is that if you miss two or more assignments, you will be

assigned detention. During that detention, we will work on material that is being taught in class or a concept that the student is having trouble with. On this day, I had students reviewing indirect and direct object pronouns. I found Juan hanging out in the library and forced him to join in our study group. Reluctantly, he joined us. Before we started he told me that he knew the material really well and would easily get a good grade on it. As we started reviewing, he realized he didn't know it as well as he had thought. We did several practice problems until he got the concepts. The next morning I saw him before class and asked him if he went home and studied. He told me, "Oh I studied with you. I'm all set". I told him that he should have gone home and reviewed the material one more time. Even though he got a 90 on the test, he felt that he had done better. I told him that he should have reviewed his materials at home and he would have done better.

I believe that Juan is not reaching his zone of proximal development, because he is not putting enough effort into his work. He either does not study at home or does not hand in work on time. He thinks that the time he spends in class learning the material is enough for him to understand the concepts being taught. Since he has this type of routine, the grades on his quizzes, tests, and projects are a hit or miss. He either does very well or very poorly. He lacks consistency in his work due to lack of motivation to study and lack of effort to want to do well. He is content, by what he tells me, in being a B average student.

## Conclusion

Over the past semester, I have learned that it is very difficult for my learners (my students) to develop new habits of the mind. I know that I need to first develop the mind before I can identify the tools needed for my learner. In other words, I need to teach my students to develop good studying habits and how to study before they can identify the type of learner that they are. Once I teach the different tools needed to study for a quiz or test, I know they can choose the best tools based on their learning styles and abilities.

I know that if I do not help them change their habits, that it won't matter if I sit with them and coach them through a new topic or assignment. They won't be able to apply basic rules to high cognitive level assignments if in their mind they have built up a wall that they cannot do something. They need to get rid of that notion of self-helplessness and see that with a combination of effort and motivation they can succeed in my class and in other classes. These tools that I try to teach them will not only serve them in my Spanish class, but in other classes as well.

In order to create new habits, I have applied J. Wilhelm concept of learning-centered teaching. In his article "Strategic Reading", he focuses on four teaching processes that work off one another. Those teaching processes are: I do and you watch, I do you help, you do I help, and finally you do I watch (11). I know that I have been using these processes in my classroom; however, I didn't realize the effectiveness of it until after reading the article. I can now take this process and continuously apply it in my classroom, because I discovered that it is an effective process since I am not the only one doing this. The way I see this process is that you teach the new material and at every few

steps transfer the responsibility of learning the material slowly onto the student. By going slowly I mean that I do not want to surpass their zone of proximal development, which at that point they are completely lost and don't know what to do next. I see that I need to slowly pull away based on how the students are processing the new material.

I have also learned that my students lack study skills. The day before the test, I made my students bring in notecards. I taught them how to set the cards up based on how I thought it would help them best study. Students were given the option to set up cards in a different way if that helped them better. Almost all the students followed the format I had set up for them. They were going to have a test on the regular and irregular preterite ~~test~~. I knew this was a difficult concept. I also knew that my students didn't like to study and I had a feeling they would not make notecards on their own. I know they wouldn't make them on their own, because I asked them. I also asked them, before doing this activity, if it would help them study. They told me yes and later found out that they did use the cards and it did help them do better.

As the year progresses, I want to continue using these new concepts that I learned in order to help my struggling students. I will continue to give my students tips on how to remember material. I will continue to give them different ideas on how to study, like using notecards, graphic organizers, and self-examination examples. I will focus more on using J. Wilhelm's learning-centered teaching process as well. <sup>with</sup> ~~With~~ all these different types of methods, I know I can begin to help students who struggle to succeed. My main struggle will be to keep them motivated and make them see that when you apply effort it can take you a long way.

Good insight  
- 100%  
- 100%  
- 100%

100%  
100%  
100%