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The Lived Experiences of Elementary Students with Disabilities Self-Advocating Through Speaking and Writing

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THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
SELF-ADVOCATING THROUGH SPEAKING AND WRITING

by

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ABSTRACT

Writing and self-advocacy skills are important for all students, including individuals with disabilities. Within the K-12 setting, those skills are taught, but emphasis changes as students progress through the grade levels. At the elementary level, writing is more prominent; whereas, in high school, self-advocacy becomes a focus. In this study, the researcher used a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and preferences of elementary students with disabilities and their use of self-advocacy strategies in the inclusive setting, both in writing and speaking. The phenomenon was explored over an eleven-week period in a second grade, inclusive classroom. The conceptual framework for the study was the theoretical framework of self-advocacy by Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005). The child development of Piaget (1964) and disability theory of Tashakkaori and Teddlie (2003) served as secondary frameworks. The data collected are reflective of the self-advocacy experiences and preferences of two students with disabilities, their parents and classroom teacher. The themes of knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication skills, and leadership skills are discussed in detail. Implications for practice within the elementary classroom and recommendations for future research for students with disabilities in the inclusive environment are provided.

Keywords: students with disabilities, elementary school, self-advocacy, writing, speaking

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom who has always advocated for me. Through her

encouragement and support, I have developed the courage to self-advocate for my dreams

and passions. My dad, who encouraged me to find and follow dreams even when I did

not have a clear picture of the possibilities. Jim, who encouraged me to pursue a Ph.D.

and helped me navigate its trials and triumphs. My husband, Ben, who taught me to

celebrate the little victories along the road, to the larger ones, even when I didn't see the

possibilities. I owe this accomplishment to my family who has always believed in me,

supported me, and encouraged me to "dream big."

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADA   Americans with Disabilities Act

ASD   Autism Spectrum Disorders

CCSS   Common Core State Standards

CCRS   College and Career Ready Standards

EAHCA   The Education of All Handicapped Children Act

EBD   Emotional Behavior Disorders

ESEA   Elementary and Secondary Education Act

ESSA   Every Student Succeeds Act

IDEA   Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IDEIA   Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

IEP   Individualized Education Program

LD   Learning Disabilities

LAFS   Language Arts Florida Standards

NAEP   National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCLB   No Child Left Behind

POW+TREE   Plan, Organize, Write, Topic sentence, Reasons, Ending, Examine

RtI   Response to Intervention

SRSD   Self-Regulated Strategy Development

UDL   Universal Design for Learning

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Currently, across the United States, students are found to have deficits in writing instruction and self-advocacy instruction, especially students with disabilities. Writing instruction is present in classrooms today, but direct instruction of the skill decreases as students move through grade levels (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Graham & Harris, 2013; Peterson-Karlan, 2011). Self-advocacy skills do not become an educational or mandated focus for students with disabilities until they reach high school (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). As a result, students with disabilities lack preparation on how to effectively communicate preferences and desires for independent success through written communication (College Board, 2004).

Writing and self-advocacy are critical skills for individuals with disabilities. Writing instruction is taught in schools; however, as students progress through the grade levels, writing skills are expected to be maintained while expanding proficiency (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Graham & Harris, 2013; Peterson-Karlan, 2011). In an investigation across K-12 schools Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, and Olinghouse (2014) found writing instruction and practice is "neglected" (p. 445). Instruction in self-advocacy skills is approached in the same way. Educators acknowledge that students with disabilities need to learn self-advocacy skills at a young age, but limited evidence exists of its instruction in classrooms (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Teaching self-advocacy does not become a prominent goal until students enter high school (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). The main advocates for students with disabilities through all elementary grades are often the

students' parents (McCarthy, 2007). Parents advocating for their children is natural; however, beyond high school, no other voice beyond the student is often heard, because the student becomes responsible for taking action to acquire what he or she needs to succeed (Burdette, Greer, & Woods, 2013; Calkins, Jackson, & Beckmann, 2011; McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Due to parents being the primary advocates for their children, and the children themselves not being provided time to practice self-advocacy skills, many students lack the skills needed to advocate for their needs as they move into more complex middle and high school environments (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007).

<center>Theoretical Frameworks</center>

This need and desire to succeed is at the core of humans (Tribe, 1982a). The need and desire to strengthen self-advocacy skills of elementary students with disabilities is the foundation of this research study. Written self-advocacy is the primary focus with verbal self-advocacy being a secondary focus. Three theoretical frameworks are used to frame this study: (a) conceptual framework of self-advocacy for students with disabilities developed by Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005), (b) Piaget's child development theory, and (c) disability theory. The primary theoretical framework is the conceptual framework of self-advocacy, which has four components: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication, and (d) leadership. The definitions of each component are: (a) Knowledge of self is, "…knowledge of one's own interests, preferences, strengths, needs, learning styles, and attributes of one's disability" (Test et al., 2005, p. 50); (b) Knowledge of rights, "…knowing one's rights as a citizen, as an

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individual with a disability, and as a student receiving services under federal law" (Test et al., 2005, p. 50); (c) Effective communication skills, "…negotiation, persuasion, and compromise… body language and listening skills… to include effective and appropriate communication of feelings, needs, and desires…." (Test et al., 2005, p. 50); (d) Leadership is "learning the roles and dynamics of a group and the skill to function in a group" (Test et al., 2005, p. 50). Using these four categories, the researcher documented the number of times that the participants exhibited each component of the conceptual framework of self-advocacy and then provided detailed descriptions of how participants displayed that particular component (i.e., writing, speaking).

Two additional components of the theoretical framework, (a) child development theory and (b) disability theory, were used to further understand the phenomenon of self-advocating. Piaget (1964) contends children are able to articulate their wants and needs within the elementary years (i.e., 7-8 years old). This developmental theory provided the foundation as to why second grade is the intended focus within the elementary grades. The current view of disability theory is that disability is a human difference instead of a defect (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Including disability theory into the discussion contributed to a stronger understanding of the disability, as it is understood to be a part of the individual, but not a defining attribute. Combing these three lenses aided the direction of this phenomenological study. See Figure 1 for a pictorial description of the theoretical frameworks used in this study.
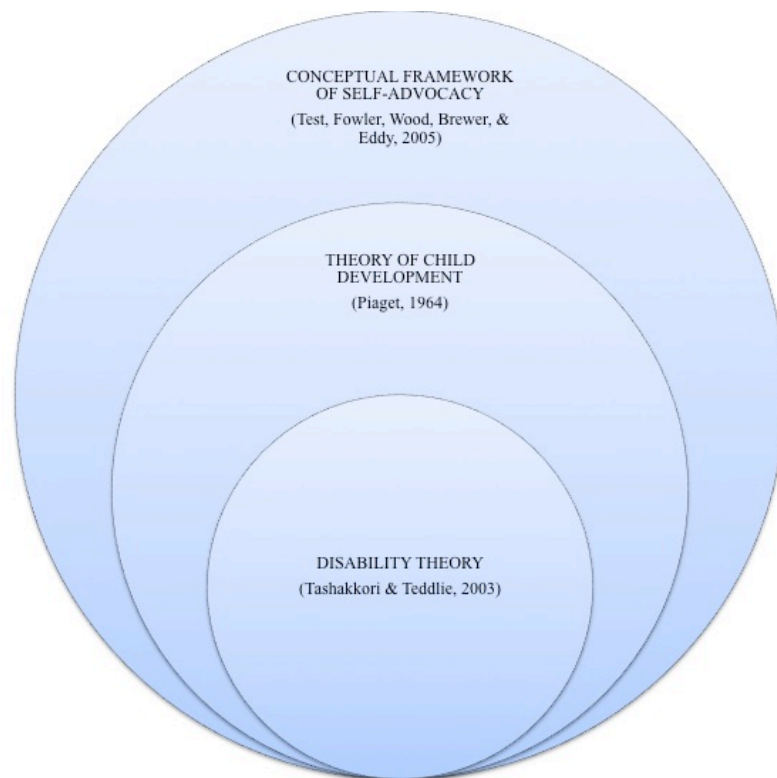
Figure 1: Theoretical Frameworks

Units of Analysis

All children can learn to self-advocate (Graves & Larkin, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Forms of self-advocacy can be divided into written and spoken forms with the spoken form being the most common (Schreiner, 2007; Test, et al., 2005), while written self-advocacy is also important but not as closely studied (Asaro-Saddler & Bak, 2012; Cuenca-Sanchez, Mastropieri, Scruggs, & Kidd, 2012). The two units of analyses used in this study were the verbal self-advocacy behaviors of how students with disabilities "speak up" for their wants and needs (Schreiner, 2007, p. 300) and the written self-advocacy of students with disabilities through the use of the POW+TREE writing strategy (Mastropieri et al., 2009). Throughout observations, the researcher documented

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the number of times that the participants exhibited each component of the conceptual framework of self-advocacy and then provided a detailed description of how participants showed a specific component as described by Test et al., 2005. Throughout interviews with students, teachers, and parents, the researcher identified evidence of, or lack of, the four components of self-advocacy and supporting examples to study the underlying phenomenon of the student's advocacy. Through document analyses the researcher recorded the number of times the participants exhibited each component of the conceptual framework of self-advocacy in written form and then provided descriptions of how participants demonstrated the component. Through the use of these units of analyses, the researcher explored the self-advocacy skills of students with disabilities within the elementary classroom. The study occurred over 11 weeks with three-week increments of a first set of observations and interviews, collection of writing samples for document analyses, and a second set of observations and interviews.

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>

The researcher in this study explored the experiences and preferences of students with disabilities, and their use of self-advocacy tools, both in writing and speaking within the classroom setting. The exploration occurred over 11 weeks with data being framed in the four areas of self-advocacy described by Test et al., (2005).

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the researcher in this study were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities in a second grade, inclusive classroom prior to being presented with self-advocacy instruction in speaking and writing?

2. How do students with disabilities self-advocate socially, verbally, and/or in writing in a second grade, inclusive classroom when presented with self-advocacy and writing instructional strategies?

3. What are students with disabilities and others (family members, teachers) involved in the students' lives perceptions of self-advocacy skills?

Significance of the Study

Reports, studies, and educational personnel have indicated the need for an increase in self-advocacy (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007) and writing skills (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012) for all individuals; however, this study focused on elementary students with disabilities. Particular to writing achievement, a national survey, conducted by Cutler and Graham in 2008, found that writing instruction is simply "absent" in most schools today (p. 907). The Nation's Report Card for writing (2011) shows only about a quarter (24%) of students are writing at a proficient level, with over half of student writing at only a basic level (52%). Researchers have shown a main contributing factor to the lack in writing instruction is due to insufficient professional development, time, and confidence in delivering the needed instruction (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Graham & Harris, 2009; Tracy, Scales, & Luke, 2014). Teachers want to

become better at delivering writing instruction, but they lack professional development (Graham & Harris, 2009). With the primary focus being math and reading instruction, little time is left to focus on writing unless it is incorporated into other subject areas (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, & MacArthur, 2003). Tracy, Scales, and Luke (2014), surveyed teachers on their perceptions of how well they were taught to write, and how well they were able to deliver writing instruction. Results showed if teachers did not feel they were taught writing well, they viewed themselves as not able to deliver quality writing instruction (Tracy et al., 2014). These factors support the need for stronger writing instruction across grade levels.

The same inadequacies within writing instruction are apparent within self-advocacy instruction. Teachers in the elementary school setting acknowledge the increased need for self-advocacy instruction, but neglect to decrease the deficiency in a manner that carries through the grade levels (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). The reason for the lack of self-advocacy writing instruction at the elementary levels comes from the lack of knowledge of how to deliver the instruction (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). The majority of self-advocacy skills are taught in high school (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). Most students do not begin to develop self-advocacy skills until they reach high school, resulting in limited time to practice such skills before it is solely their responsibility to advocate for their wants and needs (McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Only two studies exploring written self-advocacy were found in an extensive literature search (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013; Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). Both studies evaluated middle school participants with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013; Cuenca-Sanchez et al.,

2012).   Thus, research investigations have been pursued; however, not within the elementary grades for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities need to learn in the elementary years how to self-advocate, both verbally and in writing, so they can communicate the supports needed to reach goals at the more diverse secondary settings (Burdette et al., 2013; McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Students with disabilities, starting in the elementary grades, need to learn self-advocacy skills because it is their voice that is heeded in college and not their parents' (McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). Supporting students with disabilities to understand and produce written, self-advocacy products can potentially increase the independent success of these individuals.

Although research in writing instruction and self-advocacy instruction is evident within its own entities, the continuation of instruction in these two, critical areas is lacking. Writing instruction is more evident at the elementary levels (Bogard & McMackin, 2012), while self-advocacy instruction is more of a focus at the high school level (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). This phenomenological study is an effort to better understand how to merge these two skill sets at the elementary level to provide students with disabilities a stronger foundation of written self-advocacy.

Organization of the Study

The questions for exploration were approached through the use of a phenomenological design. The phenomenon explored was the lived experiences, defined as verbal and written self-advocacy behavior, of elementary students with disabilities

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before and after their teacher provided them with self-advocacy strategies. A second grade class of students was the primary setting for the research study, but the focus on the participants in the setting were the students with disabilities, the parents of the students with disabilities, and the classroom teacher. The researcher took on the role of observer to better understand the self-advocacy actions within the identified phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). One unique component of this study was that the researcher has provided the classroom teacher with tools to teach POW+TREE and videos from WonderGrove (educational videos teaching problem solving skills) that embedded ways to teach writing and problem solving skills into the classroom. The researcher observed what occurred when each of these components were used in the classroom, as a standard part of the daily curriculum. The overall phenomenon of advocacy was evaluated prior to the introduction of POW+TREE and WonderGrove, during the lessons on these two tools, three weeks after the conclusion of instruction through the use of observations, and also analyzed documents of writing samples. Document analysis of each paragraph that students produced was used to identify the social skill presented for students to learn to self-advocate. A writing sample was required by each student, following the presentation of each WonderGrove clip. All writing samples were collected by the researcher on the same day they were produced. The process of data analyses occurred off-site of the research location. Preparation for data analysis occurred throughout the study.

Operational Definitions

The following are operational definitions of terms and concepts presented within the manuscript and used to guide the researcher in this study.

Students with disabilities: Any individual who has an IEP that identifies him or her as being part of at least one of the 13 categories of disabilities listed in IDEA (NICHCY, 2009).

Verbal self-advocacy: Showing the ability to "speak up for what we want and need" (Schreiner, 2007, p. 300).

Self-advocacy: Recognizing preferences and strengths and then being able to express those skills to obtain strategies for success (Schreiner, 2007).

Conventional written composition: When an individual is able to read and write what others produce (Sulzby, 1992).

Written self-advocacy: "…basic components of a persuasive essay… to help them obtain what they want and need…"(Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013, p. 14).

WonderGrove: Cartoons that present social skills children require and animate them in a way that can be easily understood and applied to real-life situations (WonderGrove, 2015).

POW+TREE: Mnemonic used to help students develop explanations for opinion-based topics (Mason et al., 2011).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them" (Lady Bird Johnson, 1934). What children believe, including those with disabilities, often can be expressed through speaking and writing. A crucial skill for students is to show positive belief in self, which is captured in self-advocacy.   In particular, students with disabilities need to be taught, and learn to use independently, strategies to self-advocate for their needs, through both writing and speaking, to reach any goal they desire.

In this chapter, the concepts of self-advocacy, expressed through writing, are explored, and specifically, the emergence of this skill at the elementary level for students with disabilities in both historical and current contexts. The literature presented in this review by the researcher is divided into three main sections. The first section highlights how society has treated individuals with disabilities throughout history. In the next section, the researcher discusses the importance of self-advocacy skills. The chapter concludes with the researcher combining writing and self-advocacy while explaining the importance of blending these skills together for the success of individuals with disabilities.

Historical Perspective of Individuals with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities have been in a constant quality of life battle from the 1800's through today (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Gibb, Rausch, Cuadrado, & Chung, 2008). Society holds expectations for all individuals. The consequence of meeting or not meeting expectations affects individuals and groups of individuals. During the early

history of individuals with disabilities, the right to life was bleak (Mostert, 2002). At the

same time, becoming educated as an individual with a disability also was wavering

(Reed, 1992; Smith, 2004).

Right to Life

In the 19th and 20th centuries, individuals with disabilities were given limited

opportunities because they were either institutionalized or put to death (Mostert, 2002).

Specifically, in Germany, individuals with physical, emotional, and intellectual

disabilities were institutionalized with fatal outcomes, because they were seen as not

capable of offering any meaningful contributions to society (Mostert, 2002). During this

time, individuals with disabilities were not seen as people but labels based on their

defects (Dybwad & Bersani, 1996). Due to the view society held with regard to this

population, such individuals were left in deplorable conditions to die or were put to death

without thought of the potential they might offer as human beings (Mostert, 2002). The

perception of society regarding individuals with disabilities was a cost-benefit model.

Caring for individuals with disabilities was costly and Burleigh (1991) expressed,

> Their life is absolutely pointless, but they do not regard it as being
>
> unbearable. They are a terrible, heavy burden upon their relatives and
>
> society as a whole. Their death would not create even the smallest gap
>
> except perhaps in the feelings of their mothers or loyal nurses. (p. 17)

This "ask of value" for people with disabilities, to even be allowed to live and have a contribution to society and the population in general, permeates history.

Right to an Education

During the 1800's, the movement from a basic societal approach of trying to find value in all humans, to beginning discussions about educating the population in society, began to emerge. The access to, and the extent of schooling for people was limited in general, but individuals with disabilities were especially limited (Fernald, 1903). Wilbur (1877) stated individuals with disabilities would not be granted access to an education if an "…absence or imperfection of normal mental faculties, without reference to the physical defect of default, or the pathological condition underlying or associated with them" was detected upon evaluation (p. 29). Only individuals with disabilities who met the predetermined level of cognitive functioning were allowed to be educated.

The Acceptable Individual

The first standards for educating individuals with disabilities were not based on desired learning outcomes, but rather desired characteristics of the individual (Smith, 2004). In 1893, a child not of the same mental capacity as peers was ruled to be expelled from school because he could not think like his peers (Smith, 2004; *Watson v. City of Cambridge*, 1893). In 1919, the Supreme Court of Wisconsin ruled a child was to be expelled from school, because the severity of his cerebral palsy was thought to be a distraction to classmates; although academically and physically, he was able to attend

school (*Beattie v. State Board of Education*, 1919; Smith, 2004). Some individuals with disabilities were viewed as "sick"… and "as sick people they are not expected to be productive, to contribute to society, nor be independent or self-sufficient" (Whitehead & Hughey, 2004, p. 8). Such beliefs about individuals with disabilities continued well into the 1900's.

Early Education for Individuals with Disabilities

Access to an education for individuals with disabilities evolved over time and was initially related to the families' status in society (Dickerson, 2012). The education of Helen Keller is an example of this status providing access when her parents had to provide a private tutor for her to gain an education (Reed, 1992). Later, the idea of public education for individuals with disabilities emerged. Separate schools for specific disability populations were founded. The school for individuals with intellectual disabilities was opened in Germany in 1867 (Fernald, 1903). A few years later, in 1900, the first school for individuals with physical disabilities was opened in Chicago (Connor, 1967). This method of schooling for individuals with disabilities was a further step into improving education; however, segregation remained because each disability type had its own school. In the late 1900s, Dr. Warner opened a school that allowed children with intellectual and physical disabilities to gain an education together for academic and social benefits (Fernald, 1903). Although children with intellectual and physical disabilities were educated together, society still remained strong about keeping individuals with disabilities separated from those without disabilities (Fernald, 1903).

<u>Early Priorities for Educating Individuals with Disabilities</u>

Access to an appropriate education has been an ongoing battle for individuals with disabilities (Agran & Alper, 2000). As acceptance of individuals with disabilities receiving an education increased, disagreement remained about how and where they were to receive an education (Blanton, Pugach, & Florian, 2011). Segregation of learning was the norm until advocacy for a change was voiced. In 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education focused on whether or not Caucasian students and students of color should be educated together (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Smith, 2004). During this same case, the education of individuals with disabilities also was considered (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Smith, 2004). The final decision was that students with disabilities were still seen as a minority and were to be allowed entry into public schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Smith, 2004). This court decision initiated the inclusion of students with disabilities into educational settings with students without disabilities (*Brown v. Board of Education*, 1954; Smith, 2004). The learning outcomes, however, were based on what the child with disabilities was thought to need to learn through consensus rather than set standards for learning (Brownell, et al., 2004). As a result, students with disabilities were not given the same opportunities to reach the goals as their peers because of their disability. Hence, segregation and isolation continued (French, 1975; Wehmeyer, 2015).

<u>Progression of Educational Standards for Individuals with Disabilities</u>

The value and context of educating individuals with disabilities progressed over the course of history through legislation, with more and more emphasis on the value of

the individual and the ability to have equal access and opportunities (Smith, 2004). The three major components of the legislation that provided education on a continuum to students with disabilities were (a) access, (b) quality, and (c) focus, respectively. The three specific laws were (a) the Elementary and Secondary Education Acts (ESEA) of 1965, (b) The Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, and (c) the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The purpose of access was to get individuals with disabilities into the school. Quality was considered for society to assess how individuals were receiving instruction. The concept of focus was to assess what instruction would be provided during the K-12 educational career, which included what students would learn in the classroom.

Access

The writers of ESEA (1965) created a law in the United States to allow all individuals to attend any school, but the interpretation of this law for students with disabilities was not as clear. The ESEA legislation was to expand what was already in place from Brown vs. Board of Education. Despite the intent to educate all students, including those with disabilities, it was not until the EAHCA (1975) was created that children with disabilities were a true part of the educational system receiving a free, appropriate, public education, no matter the severity or type of disability (Ballard, Ramirez, & Weintraub, 1982). The right to learning was accepted for all disability populations; however, the physical access to educational spaces was limited. The right to access space in all settings, including education settings, came about with the passage of ADA. The ADA (1990) made physical access (e.g., into buildings and classrooms)

possible by providing civil rights protections in the areas of employment, public services, transportation, public accommodations, and telecommunications (U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008). The ADA was developed to allow all individuals to have accessible amenities and services, so they could function with maximum independence (U.S Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2008). Through developed legislation, individuals with disabilities were, and still are today, able to gain access mentally and physically to an education.

The next phase of development for people with disabilities is a revolution, still occurring today, of equal access to curriculum (Brownell, et al., 2004). In the schools of today, many factors influence what all students are taught within the United States. Powered by legislative actions and a push for more assessments and higher standards, math and reading often are the primary focus of instruction for all students. The language of NCLB in 2004 specifically stated that teaching should be, "…based on challenging State standards in reading and mathematics…" (U.S Department of Education, 2007b). The Common Core State Standards followed the same path and prepared students for college and career; however, literacy was broken down into the components of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2015). Today, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 maintains an emphasis on teaching math and reading using state-selected, academic standards that advance learning. The change between NCLB and ESSA is that teachers do not have to hold the same level of credential quality (Klein, 2015). Accountability is built of setting "meaningful goals for

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the progress of all students" to provide them with tools for higher education and employment (U.S. Department of Education, 2015, p. 9).

Preparing students with disabilities across all content areas is critical as more students are included into the general education setting and expected to master the same standards as their nondisabled peers. According to the Condition of Education report from 2014, 6.4 million children and youth with disabilities were enrolled in schools of which 80% of the school day was spent within regular classrooms (Kena et al., 2014). The time spent in regular classrooms remains constant at 80% in the 2015 Condition of Education report (Kena et al., 2015). Westling and Fox (2004) expressed that students with disabilities should receive education that is "individually designed to meet their needs, but should not serve to isolate or segregate them from other people" (p. 31). Yet, with rigorous standards in the general education setting, students need to understand their unique, learning needs as they access the least restrictive environment (Zickel & Arnold, 2001).

Quality

Once access has been granted to an education, the quality of instruction becomes important for growth and continued learning. Quality was first viewed as vocational, based upon the goal for individuals to have the capability to contribute to society with a specific skill set, based on the strengths and limitations that were a result of disability (Fernald, 1903; Hamilton, 1908). Almost a century later, all children were required to be exposed to the same curriculum (105th Congress of the United States, 1997). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 mandated teachers in all classrooms

implement research-based teaching practices as well as follow and implement

Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for individuals with disabilities (U.S

Department of Education, 2007a). Four years later, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was

passed and state educational departments began to enforce that all teachers had to hold at

least a bachelor's degree, full licensure, prove competency in subject areas they taught,

and use evidence-based reading instruction across subjects, in an effort to increase

academic achievement for all students, including those with disabilities (*No Child Left

Behind Act*, 2001; Schrag, 2003). Following NCLB, the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 increased accountability and data

collection to support student learning. The ESSA maintains the same level of

accountability as NCLB, but the results are evaluated by sub-groups (i.e. student with

disabilities) instead of as a whole class or school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The second step to gaining an education was, and still is today, that learners are provided

quality instruction in order to glean as much from their learning as possible.

Focus

After the foundations of access and quality were established, the instructional

focus for individuals with disabilities began to take shape. The educational stepping

stone was for individuals with disabilities to become prepared for a vocation, allowing

them to potentially become a contributing member in society (Hamilton, 1908). A

decade later, the focus of specific curriculum was addressed for all students, including

those with disabilities. The first law that had a curriculum component was the IDEA.

The particular mandates in IDEA stated that IEPs had to be implemented and all teaching

had to be research-based (105th Congress of the United States, 1997). This same mandate

has been further explained in ESSA to include higher academic standards for all students,

as well as funding and grants to support the skill development of teachers in delivering

those standards (Executive Office of the President, 2015). The outcome being that access

and quality moved students with disabilities forward into the schools and classrooms, but

the emphasis today is for students with disabilities' learning to be aligned with the same

content as their same-age peers. For this goal to be accomplished, a need for stronger

skills in both oral and written self-advocacy skills may be the key to move beyond focus

to equal learning outcomes (Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012).

Writing and Self-advocacy Development

With students with disabilities being provided access, quality, and a focused

curriculum, most likely in the general education setting, students now need targeted

instruction in reading in the content areas, writing across the curriculum, and advocating

for their needs (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). The work of Piaget (1964) supports that

children at a young age can speak about their wants and needs. Maslow also supports

that individuals, including children, will find a way to advocate for even their basic

needs(Tribe, 1982a). One of these advocacy skills required for all students today is the

ability to write persuasively. Before one can write persuasively, one needs to be able to

speak persuasively in a way that wants and needs can be met. Building upon the work of

Piaget and Maslow, the need to combine these skills of writing and speaking parallel the

next level of focus on self-advocacy for students with disabilities.

Learning to write, especially persuasively, can be a form of self-advocacy aligned with both the CCSS and college and career ready standards (CCRS). Self-advocacy is commonly identified as a verbal skill, defined as "speak up for what we want and need" (Schreiner, 2007, p. 300). Within the field of self-advocacy research, many different ways are presented to define (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). The variance in definitions pertains to the context and the target population within each context. For the presented literature review, self-advocacy is defined as recognizing preferences and strengths and then being able to express those assets to obtain strategies for success (Schreiner, 2007).

<div align="center">Concept of Self-advocacy for Individuals with Disabilities</div>

Individuals with disabilities learning to self-advocate is important. The desire to self-advocate has a long history. The skills to self-advocate were first required to be developed independently (Bourne, 1911). Yet, individuals with disabilities wanting to develop such skills often were discouraged from advocating for their own needs. One student described it as, "While everyone encouraged me on one hand, they also said I was a dreamer and should not believe in miracles, and, later that I should not try to do the impossible…this was one of the subtle modes in which people, through their concern, begin to define my capabilities as they saw them. They ignored the necessity for me to have the freedom to fail" (French, 1975, p. 237). It was not until much later that individuals with disabilities were encouraged and coached through the developmental process of acquiring self-advocacy skills. One of the first formalized groups to focus on helping individuals with disabilities develop self-advocacy skills was called People First,

in Oregon, in 1973 (Dybwad & Bersani, 1996). The group originated from witnessing

individuals with disabilities living under the control of others, because they were only

seen as a disability. One individual with disabilities accounted the experience as, "

…[they] made us feel as though we were a toy or a robot run by remote control"

(Dybwad & Bersani, 1996, p. 171). People First was started because those with

disabilities wanted to let others know they were just like everyone else (Dybwad &

Bersani, 1996). Specific to self-advocacy, "We wanted to speak for ourselves and show

the world and our communities that we can do many things for ourselves" (Dybwad &

Bersani, 1996, p. 171). Individuals with and without disabilities have begun to recognize

the importance of self-advocacy skills; however, the practice of these skills is not

consistent due to varying beliefs of when such skills should be learned and practiced.

Koch, Beggs, Bailey, and Wall, (2009) stated, "The driving force of the self-advocacy

movement is the idea that only people with disabilities can truly speak for themselves,

because they alone experience the discrimination and the barriers that block their success

and equality" (p. 257). Thus, one of the first steps of developing self-advocacy is for an

individual to explore and realize what he or she wants to accomplish (Calkins et al.,

2011).   As a result, the concept and practice of self-advocacy is important for individuals

with disabilities, and starts at the moment of diagnosis, as early as the elementary level.

<center>Self-advocacy Instruction Within Schools</center>

More than realized in the past history, the push for self-advocacy starts very

young but often goes unnoticed until it is time for adulthood (Daniels, 1982; Wehmeyer,

2015). Self-determination, defined as, "…choosing and setting goals, becoming

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involved in making life decisions…and working to reach goals" (Calkins et al., 2011, p. 3), is the foundation of self-advocacy. These can be fostered through parents and teachers at any age (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Wehmeyer, 2015). The use of self-determination can be correlated with Erikson's psychosocial development, which states toddlers can learn how to express their feelings and attempt to acquire what they need or want (Tribe, 1982b). Even though the theories of Erikson show students have the foundational ability to begin building self-advocacy skills, the concentration of the skill does not emerge in a consistent, concrete form until students are in their final years within the K-12 environment (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). Wehmeyer (2015) further explains the more positive the experiences are for the student gaining self-determination skills, the more likely they will continue to use the skills and begin to self-advocate. Elementary school teachers acknowledge students' need to learn self-advocacy skills at a young age, but limited evidence of its instruction has emerged in the literature (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). As a consequence, students are not adequately prepared to self-advocate, so when it is time to do so, they lack the skills and often fail to be successful in advocating for their needs in employment or higher education settings (Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez, & Ehrensberger, 2007).

<center>Conceptual Framework of Self-advocacy</center>

What is a process for teaching self-advocacy at any age? A framework for self-advocacy has been developed by Test and colleagues (2005). This framework has four components that can be independent of each other and work together. The framework of

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self-advocacy is comprised of (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication skills, and (d) leadership. Knowledge of self is a personal understanding of self as an individual and how all their characteristics make them who they are, including their disability (Test et al., 2005). Knowledge of rights is the understanding of how specific legislation protects individuals with disabilities and furthers their rights as individuals with disabilities (Test et al., 2005). Effective communication skills allow for others to understand and work with the individual to reach goals desired (Test et al., 2005). The final component is leadership. This form of leadership relates to the involvement in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process (Test et al., 2005). This process is one that could be taught and used by students at any age, including at the elementary level.

<div align="center">Elementary School Presence</div>

Typically, students with disabilities at the elementary level are predominately exposed to self-determination skills, which is a component of self-advocacy (Algozzine et al., 2001; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Wehmeyer, 2015). Algozzine and colleagues (2001) conducted a meta-analysis of studies pertaining to self-determination in the K-12 setting, consisting of 22 studies. Out of the 22, only eight were within the elementary setting, and only two of those eight were conducted between 2005 and 2015. These eight studies could be divided into three different focus categories: two focused on decision-making skills (i.e., Adelman, MacDonald, Nelson, Smith, & Taylor, 1990; Artesani & Mallar, 1998), three related to different situations of choice making (i.e., Dattilo & Rusch, 1985; Kennedy & Haring, 1993; Malette, Mirenda, & Kandborg, 1992),

and one related to the use of portfolio assessments to increase self-determination (i.e.,

Ezell, Klein, & Ezell-Powell, 1999). The remaining two were related to teaching self-

determination (i.e., Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2012) or self-determination skills with

self-advocacy skills (i.e., Merlone & Moran, 2008). Table 1 shows results of the two

studies directly related to teaching self-determination skills or self-determination skills

and self-advocacy skills.

Table 1

Summary of Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Research

Author & Year	Population	Research Design	Findings
(Cho et al., 2012)	233 elementary special education teachers	Survey research	After evaluating the perceptions of and frequency of teaching self-determination skills, researchers showed the number of teaching strategies the teacher knew correlated to the time spent teaching the skill.
(Merlone & Moran, 2008)	5th grade students with LD	Qualitative	After teaching a 10-week unit on verbal self-advocacy/self-determination skills researchers found asking for help was the most generalized skill.

Elements of teaching self-advocacy strategies are suggested for a variety of grade

levels but lack a history of consistent implementation at this level. After conducting a

search for funded projects with the key word "self-advocacy" two studies were founded

to be awarded through Institute of Education Sciences. Both studies focused on students

with disabilities in high school. The same type of a search was conducted within the

National Science Foundation and many more studies were found relating to students with

disabilities at the high school level. This push to teach self-advocacy strategies is most

often fostered in high school settings. The delay in growth opportunity is known among

elementary teachers; however, "…barriers to providing that instruction…" are known to

elementary teachers ((Fiedler & Danneker, 2007, p. 1). The lack in instructional

evidence of self-advocacy skills is attributed to teachers not having strategies to assess

and teach what students need (Schreiner, 2007). Although the majority of self-advocacy

instruction is present at the high school level, students with disabilities transitioning to

high school often remain reliant on their parents to be their advocates (McCarthy, 2007;

Zickel & Arnold, 2001).

Importance of Self-advocacy

Although the teaching of self-advocacy strategies is sometimes presented at the

elementary level, support for skill acquisition at this level is limited (Graves & Larkin,

2006; Piaget, 1964; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990). Turnbull and Turnbull (1990) stated

young children can learn self-advocacy strategies and apply them. Piaget (1964) found

children in second grade have the ability to articulate their thoughts in a simple manner

understood by others. In addition, second grade is when children are able to take

initiative for obtaining what they want and need (Graves & Larkin, 2006). The work of

Duke and Nace (2014) harnessed the early and progressive learning of self-advocacy

skills both in their verbal and written forms with a self-advocacy curriculum created for

students in preschool through twelfth grade. This curriculum builds on itself as students

progress in the instructional sequence, from preschool through twelfth grade, with

students first learning verbal self-advocacy skills, then written self-advocacy, and finally using verbal and written skills together (Duke & Nace, 2014). Others in the education realm understand the need for self-advocacy to start at the elementary level and to maintain development throughout the school experience, but many educators have difficulty providing the instruction to support continuous and progressive learning throughout the grade levels (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007).

When students learn to self-advocate, starting at the elementary level, personal ownership of their education begins to become evident (Ezell, Klein, & Ezell-Powell, 1999). Thus, they become prepared for the time that their parents can no longer be their advocate (McCarthy, 2007). Helping students gain self-advocacy at the elementary level could help them become comfortable with self-advocating (Hart & Brehm, 2013). Once students have learned the basics of self-advocacy, then they can take part in their IEP meetings (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Roles could include simply being present at their IEP meeting (Hammer, 2004; Mason et al., 2004) to facilitating their own meetings. These requirements and opportunities are important but require long-term preparation and understanding of the individuals' disability and the IEP process. Allowing students at the elementary level to begin development of self-advocacy skills could allow them to acknowledge and accept their own uniqueness and see it as simply a difference (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Developing self-advocacy skills and celebrating differences can keep students from being surprised when others highlight those differences. One teenager expressed, "The realization that I was not quite like anyone else came gradually and was not fully absorbed until I was, perhaps, about thirteen (Dickinson, 1975, p. 249). Exposing elementary students with disabilities to

self-advocacy skills could help them see that they too can accomplish anything they wish. An individual with orthopedic impairments summarized being able to employ self-advocacy skills as "…life will have little meaning for me except as I am able to contribute toward some such ideal of social betterment, if not in deed, then in the world" (Bourne, 1911, p. 326). Once students, including those with disabilities, reach college, they are the ones that are expected to advocate for their own educational success (Burdette et al., 2013; McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

<center>Overview of Research Around Self-advocacy</center>

The attention to research pertaining to self-advocacy has been both quantitative and qualitative in nature, with the majority of research focusing on middle and high school populations with various disabilities, and limited attention to the elementary grades. A content and methodological review of self-advocacy intervention studies, published between 1984-2004, found that none of the studies had an elementary focus (Test, Fowler, & Brewer, 2005). The teaching of self-advocacy skills has minimal appearance in elementary settings and a need exists for an increase in emphasis at this level (Hammer, 2004; McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). More currency is needed in the area of suggested strategies to increase the self-advocacy skills of elementary students. The studies conducted focused on helping students identify their strengths and weaknesses or students taking part in the process of their own IEP. See Table 2 below for a summary of the suggested strategies and studies.

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Table 2

Self-Advocacy Strategies and Studies for Elementary Students

Studies			
Study	Population	Purpose	Findings
(Kleinert, Harrison, Mills, Dueppen, & Trailor, 2014)	205 7-21 years of age; across disability categories	Analyzed large data set of self-determine goals developed by students.	71.2% of set goals were achieved over one school year; severity of disability correlated to goal setting and independence.
(Zickel & Arnold, 2001)	4th grade students with learning disabilities	Case Study: Learning own strengths, challenges, and working with IEP to develop goals.	When assisting in writing own IEP, students took more ownership in learning.
Strategies			
Strategy	Population	Purpose	Possible Results
ASSERT Yourself (Kling, 2000)	All ages, across disabilities	Steps to coach self-advocacy	Development and application of self-advocacy skills.
Modeling verbal self-advocacy (Foster & Ehrensberger, 2005)	All ages, across disabilities	Develop self-awareness, self-advocacy, problem solving, psychological empowerment	Students were able to recognize difficulties and request accommodations.
(Hart & Brehm, 2013)	Elementary age, across disabilities	Acquire and practice verbal self-advocacy	Students were able to recognize difficulties and verbally request accommodations.

Table 2 shows studies and strategies pertaining to self-advocacy, which include

elementary students. Only two studies have been conducted in the last fifteen years,

focusing on self-advocacy-skills for students within elementary settings across

disabilities. Further, three strategies were identified that could be used with all ages,

including elementary students, across disabilities. The focus across studies and strategies

for elementary students with disabilities was to recognize the need for accommodation and to learn ways to share and request supports for academic needs.

The Cognitive Process of Writing

Having the ability to communicate verbally, and in writing and advocating for what a person needs to be successful, is important at any age and within any career field (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; College Board, 2004). Acknowledging needs and wants, thinking about how to express them, and then verbally articulating them, is much like the cognitive process of writing. Students' skills in any are better developed if these skills are nurtured at a young age and cultivated over time (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Literacy learning is seen as necessary within school; however, a component of literacy, writing, does not receive as much attention. Writing is referred to as "absent" in many elementary classrooms because of a lack for time and professional development (Cutler & Graham, 2008, p. 907). Although writing is a subject that gets less instructional attention, it has a strong research foundation of how it is best taught. Complex writing skills are best studied through "protocol analysis," which is evaluating the thoughts of the writer as they are composing instead of "introspective analysis" when the writing is evaluated for actions while writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 368). Thoughts during the action of writing can be harder to track; however, helping students articulate and develop their thoughts in writing is more important. The act of writing is a continual progression requiring both the learner and the teacher to adapt based on outcomes (Hayes & Flower, 1986).

Writing Instruction within Schools

A general definition of writing is using written language to convey ideas or opinions (Merriam-Webster, 2015). For the purpose of this literature review and study, the act of writing will be defined as:

> When we write, we use graphic symbols (letters or combinations of letters which relate to the sounds we make when we speak). Writing then can be said to be the act of forming these symbols. When a person writes, he produces a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways creating a coherent whole... Writing then involves the encoding of a message of some kind: that is, we translate our thought into language (Alberto & Argente, 2010, p. 685).

Wrapped in these writing contemplations is the complex task of teaching, which has been voiced as stressful and time-consuming by educators (Alberto & Argente, 2010). When writing instruction first became part of instructional curriculum, the instructional format was model, practice, correct with the focus on product over process (Hayes & Flower, 1986). As a result, teachers often take little time to respond to the content of what students write and focus more on whether the assignment was completed based on the directions given (Zamel, 1985). Today, the same instructional approach is used, which does not give students a chance to understand the full reason for developing specific writing skills (Graham, Berninger, & Fan, 2007). Seban and Tavsanli (2015) explained that, "Writing as a process approach highlights the social aspect of writing, because it puts the writer in the center of the activities through allowing the writer to take ownership

of writing, spend time on the writing activities and respond to his or her own and others' writing in many different ways" (p. 218).

Legislation has been a contributing factor to changes in writing instruction in schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2007b). Other factors that have shifted the practice of writing include: (a) history, (b) definition, and (c) approach. In general, these three influences have shaped the discussions and practices of writing instruction for students at all levels and abilities. Considering how these shifts impact the ability for students to share their needs and thoughts through written language is a core consideration.

Alberto and Argente (2010) stated, "teaching writing is everything but an easy activity" (p. 679). Writing instruction across the K-12 continuum has been described in different ways. Hayes and Flower (1986) described it as "simple" with skill attainment resulting from practice and feedback (p. 1106). Decades later, the presence of writing within classrooms began to disappear (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia, & Olinghouse, 2014). Evidence and outcome of minimal writing instruction is clear in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report that shows most students, with and without disabilities, at the end of twelfth grade, only are able to write at a basic level (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2012).

Teaching literacy, in general, was mandated as part of No Child Left Behind in 2001 and was defined as researched-based reading instruction. As a result, all students have to participate in a 90-minute reading block consisting of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Florida Department of Education, 2015). The Florida Department of Education provides specific explanations of what can

be included in the reading block guidelines. For instance, writing has to be incorporated but cannot take precedence (Florida Department of Education, 2015). Specific to the act of creating written language, Language Arts Florida Standards (LAFS) requires second graders to print legibly (LAFS.2.L.1.1a) and third graders to learn and use beginning cursive (LAFS.3.L.1.1a).

Incorporation of writing instruction across the curriculum is an unspoken requirement of the CCSS (Kist, 2013). The incorporation of writing becomes a challenge that stems from a lack of time and professional development in the eyes of educators (Graham & Harris, 2009). Students are immersed in mathematics, sciences, social studies, and language arts primarily focusing on reading skills during the school day (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). Instruction within these four subject areas is not equally distributed, because math and reading receives the most instructional attention due to state testing required by legislation ("IDEIA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act," 2009). Due to the educational demands placed by legislative mandates, writing instruction often has to be infused into the mandated core subject areas.

The approach to writing instruction has evolved over the decades. Despite the absence of specific writing instruction within legislation, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has specific writing standards suggested for each grade level (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2015). Teachers are aware of the writing instruction needed, but do not feel prepared with strategies to provide the instruction. A collective case study conducted by (Tracy et al., 2014) found teachers' perceptions of themselves as writers influenced their

beliefs about their perceptions as writing teachers. A program evaluation of special

education teacher preparation programs indicated more opportunities of field-based

learning were necessary to help shape the skills of teachers in all areas of instruction,

including writing instruction (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum, 2005).

<u>Writing Instruction within the Elementary Grades</u>

The majority of research relating to basic writing instruction has been conducted

in the elementary setting. The research has surrounded what students need to know and

how to effectively teach the needed skills. Even though more writing instruction research

has emerged at the elementary level, teachers have expressed they do not feel prepared to

adequately deliver writing instruction. The preparation teachers need was summarized as

"…institutions need to provide prospective teachers with the knowledge, experiences,

and support they need to meet the writing needs of all of their future students" (Harward,

et al., 2014, p. 221). Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, and Harris, (2012) compiled a meta-

analysis of CCSS writing instruction practices within elementary classrooms and

provided five, effective strategies for teaching writing standards. Of the seven, (i.e.,

handwriting, typing, sentence construction, planning and revising strategies, composition

of different texts, writing for different purposes, using technology) four practices

contribute directly to the skills of written composition. Sentence construction at the

elementary level consists of students learning how to build basic to complex sentences.

The application of planning and revising strategies exposes students to writing

organization techniques. Students also learn how to compose different types of texts (i.e.,

informative, opinion, narrative) in order to convey different thoughts. Another skill

important for students in the area of writing is the ability to write for different audiences, including persuasive writing, which has been linked to self-advocacy. All four of these skills develop strong written composition skills (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State Schools Officers, 2015).

The Importance of Writing Instruction

Taking into consideration the views of writing instruction from teachers, students, and parents, further and continued research is needed. Understanding that the students of today are the future of tomorrow, writing is a skill that needs to be developed and maintained over a lifetime (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; College Board, 2004). Teachers have expressed that they want to become stronger writing teachers but need support in skill development (Graham & Harris, 2009; Harward, et al., 2014). Students want to develop their skills but need to be given the knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the complexities of the written language (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Bradford & Wyse, 2012; Gillespie, Olinghouse, & Graham, 2013). Parents need to be given the support and understanding of why writing instruction should be supported at all levels (Bradford & Wyse, 2012). Research in the area of writing instruction continues to evolve in directions that will support the needs of teachers, students, and parents, but all involved still express the need for more to be accomplished to make sure the next generation of learners is ready to meet writing demands of school, work, and life, so students have the potential to reach their goals through written expression (Graham & Harris, 2009).

<u>Self-advocating Through Writing</u>

With a strong research foundation in how to teach writing, how to blend the art of writing with the needs of students with disabilities limited self-advocacy is an area with limited exploration (Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). Though speaking is the simplest method of initiating wants and needs, possessing the ability to articulate needs in writing also is important (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013; Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). Much like writing, self-advocacy skills are less evident in the elementary grades, but the potential for combining these skills at the elementary level holds promise (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013; Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). For students with disabilities, legal documentation known as an IEP presents what is needed in writing for both short- and long-term success. Students are not likely involved in the development of their IEPs until high school due to limited knowledge and understanding of what is personally needed for educational success. As a result, researchers indicate students with disabilities are not equipped with the self-advocacy skills necessary to access appropriate accommodations for success in college and beyond (McCarthy, 2007). Seban and Tavsanli (2015) explained, "When children write they use voice which is a dynamic expression of oneself and it is linked to children's socially situated identities" (p. 218). When elementary students are taught to self-advocate, they begin to identify their strengths and preferences in a way that can be understood by others (Schreiner, 2007). With self-advocacy skills, students become more comfortable in speaking up about who they are and what they need to reach a desired goal (Foster & Ehrensberger, 2005).

<u>Overview of Research Around Writing Instruction for Students with Disabilities</u>

Research in the field of writing instruction has spanned grade levels and disability populations with a range of purposes. The majority of elementary grade's writing instruction research is based on, or has components of, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), which is based on multiple theories and explicit instruction developed to help writers with disabilities, but has been effective for students without disabilities (Harris & Graham, 2009). The most relevant research studies linking self-advocacy and writing were focused on developing written expository texts for students with emotional behavior disorders using the POW+TREE strategy.

Writing instruction can be approached in a variety of ways; however, the use of the POW+TREE strategy with students with disabilities has been the main research focus within the literature. This strategy been used across grade levels and has been shown as an effective strategy for students to compose persuasive passages (Mason, 2009). Within the elementary grades, students with disabilities (i.e., autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, and emotional behavioral disorders) have shown positive results in using the POW+TREE strategy. Three specific studies (i.e., Asaro-Saddler & Bak, 2012; Harris, Graham & Mason, 2012; Mason & Shriner, 2008) yielded positive results for students being able to clearly articulate opinions using POW+TREE.

The studies summarized in the Table 3 focus on students with disabilities writing within the persuasive genre. Studies focusing on the effects of POW+TREE with elementary students were selected because this study included a POW+TREE component for students with disabilities to learn to self-advocate through writing.

Table 3

Summary of Persuasive Writing Research

Author &Year	Population	Research Design	Findings
(Asaro-Saddler & Bak, 2012)	3rd/4th graders with ASD	Single-subject	After teaching and evaluating the effects of POW+TREE on persuasive writing, researchers showed higher writing quality and increased essay components.
(Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2002)	3rd graders with LD	Case study	The POW+TREE was taught and practiced. Researchers showed students were able to develop and write a cohesive opinion essay with all necessary parts of POW+TREE.
(Mason & Shriner, 2008)	Six 2nd through 5th grade students with EBD	Single-subject	After combining SRSD with POW+TREE for opinion writing, researchers demonstrated students' writing improved across participants, but the amount of improvement varied among participants.

Further, employing the POW+TREE writing strategy as a formula for children to self-advocate provides a framework with supports to convey personal thoughts. Framed around SRSD to support student writers with learning disabilities (LD) has been seen to be repeatedly effective for all students, including those across disability categories (Harris & Graham, 2009). The concept of SRSD follows six steps. These steps are: a) develop background knowledge, b) discuss it, c) model it, d) memorize, e) support it, and f) independent practice. Harris, Graham, and Mason (2003) provided teachers with various writing strategies, including POW+TREE for students with and without disabilities that have resulted in increased writing outcomes. Specifically, after learning about various writing strategies, Harris and colleagues (2003) shared that second graders

"were eager to write papers that would tell their instructor their feelings about a topic" (p. 11). The concept of a model and practice approach has been one with promising results since the 1980's. This approach also gets students interested in writing as a means of communication with a variety of purposes (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes & Flower, 1986).

Empirical Research Combining Writing and Self-advocacy for Students with Disabilities

An abundance of research has been conducted in the separate areas of self-advocacy and writing instruction. Studies pertaining to self-advocacy have been conducted mainly with high school students (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). Studies examining writing instruction have been conducted across grade levels with the variety of targeted research goals. Some researchers have used a phenomenological approach and evaluated student, teacher, and parent perceptions of learning to write (Bradford & Wyse, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2013; Tracy et al., 2014).

Two studies have combined the research constructs of writing instruction and self-advocacy (Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013; Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). Both studies focused on middle school students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders and employed instruction of the POW+TREE writing strategy by the classroom teacher. Cuenca-Carlino and Mustian (2013) evaluated students' abilities to produce cohesive written expression of needs and wants using a multiple-baseline design across participants. Results indicated "...students significantly increased their self-determination knowledge and perceptions of self-determination behaviors and made the connection that persuasive writing is a tool that can be used to communicate needs and wants" (Cuenca-

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Carlino & Mustian, 2013, p. 14). The second study was a group design where the experimental group received instruction on using persuasive essays to self-advocate (Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). Results indicated "… explicit instruction on how the persuasive genre can be used to self-advocate for students' needs" (Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012, p. 91) Both studies support how persuasive writing, specifically the POW+TREE strategy, can help students with disabilities self-advocate through writing.

   How students can learn better ways to advocate for their needs could occur using Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is providing flexibility in how students show what they are learning (representation); how they are learning it (action and expression); and why they are learning it (engagement), giving them choice (Cast, 2013). The use of UDL allows for individuals to exhibit their strengths, preferences and interests in a manner unique to the individual (Cast, 2014a, 2014b). For example, self-advocacy skills could be nurtured using multiple means of expression and engagement by allowing students to talk about, write about and even see videos of ways to advocate for their needs. Through UDL students would have the ability to "…access, participation, and progress" with self-advocacy skills (Katz, 2013, p. 157). Tools such as television and video have been highly engaging for students for decades. The television show, *Romper Room and Friends* (1953-1995), helped young children learn simple morals. More current and still watched by many children is *Sesame Street,* first airing in 1969, with a show in which even the commercials were an educational experiences for its young viewers (Murphy, 2015).   With *Sesame Street,* children are "way less likely to get behind in school" because of the "long lasting academic gains" of its "smart, well-designed educational content for kids" (Huntsberry, 2015). Currently, *Sesame Street* has launched

new characters with disabilities showing self-advocacy skills on television (Smith &

Laddaran, 2015). Although the concept of *Sesame Street* was originally not thought to be

successful (Reimer, 2013) today it is said to help young children develop skills, including

those of a social nature, in preparation for school and beyond (Fisch, 2004).

Schaffer and Marks (2008) also shared the results and power of students learning

through creating their own movies that depicted situations in which self-determination

and self-advocacy were needed to be successful. These researchers successfully used

video modeling to develop these skills; "Rather than teach about self-determination

behaviors and skills in isolation, we believe it is important to promote self-determination

through planned activities in which students problem-solve, create, negotiate, and explain

their ideas" (Schaffer & Marks, 2008, p. 10).

Video as a learning or instructional tool has been used across grade levels and

college settings for a variety of purposes (Aiex, 1988; Kalelioglu & Tekmen, 2012).

Narita (1995) expressed that integrating media into instruction allows students to have

exposure to content or strategies in ways that invite students to connect with material and

develop skills. Specifically, at the elementary level, video has been used to help students

learn and possibly relate to social situations (Aiex, 1988). Using video educationally has

been reported to be a positive indication of presented content understanding and

application among elementary age students with disabilities (Narita, 1995).

Researchers continue to indicate that children are drawn to using video, cartoons

and technology as a way to learn social and emotional skills (Carr & Prater, 2013).

Bjorkqvist and Lagerspetz (1985) studied how children in kindergarten related to cartoon

characters and then how that relationship generalized to the life of the child. The concept

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and lessons of WonderGrove, a series of cartoon-based videos, were designed to teach

life and social skills built upon Bjorkqvist and Lagerspetz work. The WonderGrove

videos are 3-5 minutes and, as suggested by Steedley, Schwartz, Levin, and Luke (2008),

reiterate, "effective social skills programs reflect, and draw upon, the resources of a

school community and respond to the needs of individual students" (p. 5). The cartoons

of WonderGrove take social skills children will face in life and animate them in a way

that can be easily understood and applied to real-life situations (WonderGrove, 2015).

Further, research by the WonderGrove team indicated, "children benefit not only socially,

but also academically, when appropriate behaviors increase their access to instructional

time" (p. 2). WonderGrove videos present positive behavior traits that support the

academic and social growth of young children (WonderGrove, 2015). Effective

application of social-emotional competencies produces a product of better well-being and

success in life (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The

concepts of WonderGrove and how they are presented have impacted the lives of how

students with and without disabilities learn to self-advocate and handle social situations

of different types (WonderGrove, 2015). WonderGrove presents social situations to

children in a manner inviting personal connection and to develop personal skills (Costa &

Kallick, 2015; WonderGrove, 2015). How video tools like *Sesame Street* or

WonderGrove could be used to teach self-advocacy skills is a concept at the elementary

level that is yet to be explored. How to use these videos in relation to teaching persuasive

writing, combined with basic instruction in self-advocacy skills, is an arena of research to

be further developed.

Reflecting on the research provided in this review of the literature, a shared understanding is needed of the potential of combining writing instruction and self-advocacy instruction at the elementary level (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Graham & Harris, 2009). Modeling of self-advocacy behaviors has been found to be effective in writing (i.e., Hayes & Flower, 1986) and through video/television (Anderson, 2007; Steedley et al., 2008). In knowing that modeling is effective in both areas of writing and video, the proposed phenomenological study examined the phenomenon of what occurs when students are provided a UDL approach to self-advocacy through video modeling, writing instruction, and teaching of self-advocacy strategies for elementary students with disabilities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the researcher provides a summary of the methodology to explore self-advocacy skills, written and oral, of students with disabilities at the elementary school level. The primary focus of the research was to determine the written self-advocacy outcomes of students with disabilities after the classroom teacher repeatedly reviewed the process of POW+TREE and had students write about how they would apply self-advocacy traits provided in WonderGrove videos. The research questions and theoretical framework are explained in this chapter, followed by the methodology. The methodology includes (a) researcher as observer, (b) setting, (c) participants, (d) instrumentation, and (e) procedures. The researcher concludes the chapter with method of data collection and data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

Through this phenomenological study, the researcher explored the lived experiences and preferences of elementary students with disabilities and their use of self-advocacy strategies, both in writing and speaking. Written self-advocacy was the primary focus, with verbal self-advocacy as a secondary focus. This exploration discovered the self-advocacy patterns of students with disabilities before and after they were presented strategies to self-advocate in the school setting.

Research Questions

The following research questions pertained to the written and spoken self-advocacy behaviors of elementary students with disabilities at school and home. Additionally, the questions related to the importance of practice and application of self-advocacy skills in the elementary grades, earlier than is mandated through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA;U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The questions focused on students with disabilities' lived experiences for self-advocating in the school and home environments. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities in a second grade, inclusive classroom prior to being presented with self-advocacy instruction in speaking and writing?

2. How do students with disabilities self-advocate socially, verbally, and/or in writing in a second grade inclusive classroom when presented with self-advocacy and writing instructional strategies?

3. What are students with disabilities and others (family members, teachers) involved in the students' lives perceptions of self-advocacy skills?

Qualitative Phenomenological Research Design

In the field of special education, qualitative research often is used to further understand individuals with disabilities (Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson, 2005).

Moustakas (1994) states, "phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis of all knowledge" (p. 26). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of an individual or group of individuals within a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The lack of current research on elementary students with disabilities for learning and practicing self-advocacy skills presents a need for further exploration within this phenomenon (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Thus, use of a phenomenological design allowed the researcher to explore the self-advocacy behaviors of elementary students with disabilities within the school and home settings. Such understanding of the self-advocacy phenomenon can only be realized after extensive immersion in the setting of the situation (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks for this study were based on the conceptual framework of self-advocacy, child development theories, and disability theory. The conceptual framework of self-advocacy, consisting of four components: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills was the primary frame work (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005) Disability theory in itself has changed over time. It was first viewed on a spectrum of either a punishment due to wrong doing or an inspiration to others, and later as a problem or defect that needed a cure (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Today, disability theory is seen as a viewpoint of human differences instead of defect (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The theory of child development, presented by Piaget (1964), noted children have the ability to articulate their thoughts, beginning in second grade. In addition, at this age (i.e., 7-8 years old) is when children

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are able to begin taking initiative for what they want and need (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Through disability theory and child development theories, the phenomenon of students with disabilities self-advocating through writing and speaking were investigated.

Units of Analysis

Graves and Larkin (2006), as well as Turnbull and Turnbull (1990), expressed that children can learn self-advocacy skills. Self-advocacy can be divided into two forms: written and spoken. The spoken form is the most commonly recognized (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). Written self-advocacy also is important but not as widely investigated (Asaro-Saddler & Bak, 2012; Cuenca-Sanchez et al., 2012). In this phenomenological study, two units of analysis were explored. The first unit of analysis was the verbal self-advocacy behavior where the researcher looked for when students with disabilities *spoke up* to gain a want or need (Schreiner, 2007). The second unit of analysis was written self-advocacy.   Written self-advocacy was defined as using "…basic components of a persuasive essay… to help them obtain what they want and need…"(Cuenca-Carlino & Mustian, 2013). Examples and non-examples of self-advocacy are in Table 4.

Table 4

Self-Advocacy Examples and Non-Examples

Example	Non-Example
I need to ask my teacher for extra time.	I hope my teacher will give me extra time.
I am having a hard time so I need to ask for help.	I do not understand, so I am just going to quit.
I want to try something new, and I will keep trying until I get it.	New things are hard and sometimes scary, so I am not going try.
I have a big goal I want to reach.	I have a big thing I want to get done, but it is going to take too long to get it done
I need to sit up front, so I can see, but I don't want to sit by myself. I will ask a friend to sit with me.	I don't want to sit by myself, so I will sit in the back even though I will not be able to see, but I will be sitting with friends.

The basic components of all essays were measured by a POW+TREE rubric, adapted from Mastropieri and colleagues (2009), where the writing of students was analyzed for POW+TREE components, and each component was described for how the student fulfilled that specific component as well as to analyze if students were self-advocating within their writing through the use of POW+TREE. Topics of writing samples came from WonderGrove, a series of video clips that present social skills for children (WonderGrove, 2015). The researcher used these two units of analysis to explore self-advocacy of students with disabilities in the elementary classroom. Verbal self-advocacy was predicted to be seen throughout the classroom setting during core academic time. Written self-advocacy was anticipated to be seen through students using POW+TREE because POW+TREE was a writing strategy taught to the students with disabilities to help them explain their thoughts.

Research Methods

Researcher as Observer

The world of special education has been a part of my life, somehow, since the start of my education. Similar to the description of special education by Fernald (1903), my parents were given the suggestion I be placed in a special school because of my Cerebral Palsy. At a very young age, I was taught self-advocacy strategies by my parents and employed them throughout my education. During times in my educational settings, teachers saw my disability and learning challenges as a reason to keep me from reaching my full potential, despite my parents and me sharing our collective goals. Retrospectively, when I share my journey with others, perseverance and self-advocacy are the traits I try to emphasize and contribute to my success.

Wehmeyer (2015) stated, "if we continue to view disability using models that emphasize defects, I believe that efforts to promote self-determination will remain marginalized" (p. 21). Self-determination is a stepping-stone towards self-advocacy that needs to be fostered by parents, teachers, mentors, and students him or herself (Algozzine et al., 2001; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Wehmeyer, 2015). Although I have developed self-advocacy skills, and continue to develop them, I wish that I had specific instruction pertaining to writing and speaking about my specific needs during my elementary years. My wish is what propels me to conduct this phenomenological study relating to how students with disabilities use written and spoken self-advocacy strategies to reach a desired goal.

I conducted this study as the observer in an elementary classroom, looking at written and spoken self-advocacy behaviors of students with disabilities. Participating as an observer let me "…gain insider views and subjective data…" relative to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 167). Throughout the data collection and analyses, I continually reflected on my biases through memo development and a research journal. Using these tools allowed me to monitor my past and present thoughts regarding self-advocacy throughout the duration of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Setting

The setting for this phenomenological study was a second and third grade, blended classroom during core instruction time at a public charter school in Central Florida. Two grade levels are mentioned because the school had cluster classrooms and students were blended across grade levels. From this point forward, the classroom is referred to as second grade. According to the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools (2015), 210 students are enrolled in pre-K through fifth grade. The central mission of the school is to provide support, education, and therapies for students with and without disabilities. This mission is grounded in the belief that all children can become leaders when they are guided through unique, educational opportunities that are differentiated for each child through the teamwork of a general educator and exceptional educator, in each classroom, with fifteen students to two classroom teachers, and one teacher assistant ratio. Classroom staff consisted of a certified special education teacher, certified general education teacher, and a teaching assistant. The campus was an inclusive educational environment that served children with and without disabilities. All elements

of the study requiring direct participant involvement took place in the classroom or on the school campus during a time period agreed upon by the teacher and the researcher.

Phenomenon Described

The need for students to acquire and practice self-advocacy skills at the elementary level is acknowledged (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007); however, the main instructional time for this critical skill is not until students reach high school (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). The occurring phenomenon is parents advocating for their children through grade school, which leads to students not prepared to become the voice of their success and needs, once they are in college (McCarthy, 2007). In response to the lack of focus in the elementary grades, a specific self-advocacy phenomenon was studied within a blended, second grade classroom.

Participants

<u>Student Participants</u>

The setting is an inclusive, general education environment. Within the school, grade levels were clustered. Students with disabilities, ranging from mild to moderate disabilities, were taught the general education curriculum with modifications and accommodations made as necessary. The sampling methods used were and convenient. Purposive was used to select participants who met the inclusion criteria of students who had an IEP; were enrolled in second-grade, and who had the ability to communicate through verbal and written communication (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013). Convenient sampling was used to select participants from school near the researcher who were

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"…available and willing…" (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2013, p. 16). The researcher inquired about all students with disabilities participating; however, only two students provided parental consent to be included in the final study outcomes. Data about the final participants included knowledge of both having an IEP but access to the document was not acquired, due to specific details of the IEP not needed for study purposes. In addition, other records (i.e. IQ scores or other work samples) were not obtained. Student IQ scores were not seen as relevant information for the study and due to the age of participant IQ scores may have not been available. Student work samples, outside of what was directly part of the study, were not collected but were observed as the occurred in the context of everyday lessons. Both students were in second grade. Participant 1 was a Caucasian male diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder and high-functioning autism. Participant 1 was seven-years-old for the first three weeks of the study and then turned eight-years-old at the start of the fourth week. He was the second oldest of four children in his home. His attitude while participating in the study remained consistently willing and eager. Participant 2 was an African American female diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy. The classroom teacher also provided she was retained in Kindergarten. She was nine for the first six weeks of the study and then turned ten at the beginning of the seventh week. Her attitude while participating in the study started willing and eager and then become reluctant.

Classroom Teacher

The classroom teacher was a Caucasian female who was 29 at the start of the study and then turned 30 at the end of week 5. She had six years of experience, with

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five years being at this school and one year at a different school. Her professional

certifications were Elementary K-6, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Reading

K-12, and Exceptional Student Education K-12. When she was asked what inspired her

to become a teacher, she shared about an experience in high school where the high school

students helped teach preschool students. The teacher of this class and the preschoolers

influenced her inspiration, which later led her to pursue her elementary education degree

upon graduating high school.

<u>Parents</u>

One parent of each participant was interviewed. They ranged in age from 30 to

40-years-old. The parent of Participant 1 shared that her son had been attending the

school since he was 23 months old. The parent of Participant 2 shared that her daughter

had been attending the school for a total of three years.

Instrumentation

The data for this study were collected through observations, a self-advocacy

checklist, interviews, and document analyses of writing samples after students watched

WonderGrove clips. The researcher collected all data. The total duration of the study was

11 weeks. Table 5 shows the weeks; actions of students, teacher, parent, and researcher;

the data collected; and the analyses of data.

Table 5

Study Timeline

Week	Parent	Teacher	Student	Researcher	Data Instrument	Data Collected
1	Parental consent	IRB, meet with researcher	Assent	Met with teacher	IRB letters	IRB letters
2-4	Interviews	Interviews	Self-advocacy checklist, first interview	Interviewed and observed class	Self-advocacy checklist, observation/interview protocol	Protocol summaries, self-advocacy checklist, interviews
5	N/A	Tools exposure and use 1st time with students	N/A	Provided exposure to POW+TREE and WonderGrove	Suggested scripts for POW+TREE and WonderGrove	Fidelity check and observation summaries
6-8	N/A	Use new tools	WonderGrove videos	Observed phenomenon within writing and speaking	Field notes, observation protocol, POW+TREE checklist, POW+TREE rubric	Writing samples, POW+TREE rubric scores, protocol summaries
9-11	Interviews	Interview	Interview	Interviewed and observed class	Interview protocol, observation protocol, field notes	Observation summaries

The classroom teacher executed scripted lessons provided by the researcher. The outcomes of the scripted lessons were writing samples. The researcher maintained a digital field protocol file to document behaviors of the classroom teacher, student participants, and parents (Brantlinger et al., 2005). All instruments described relate to the procedures followed and are located in the Appendices in the order discussed.

<u>Field Protocol</u>

The field protocol helped the researcher maintain primary data collection sources. Within the study, the researcher used a field journal to record observations, changes, and activity schedules throughout the study. Also within this file, the researcher maintained research-related activities. An artifacts folder held the writing samples evaluated through document analyses. Items in the artifact folder were labeled based on the self-advocacy trait (from the WonderGrove video the students watched) watched before the particular collection of writing samples. The field and artifact logs allowed the researcher to maintain detailed and clear data collection procedures. Also noted in the field journal were "thick descriptions" of all research related interactions (Brantlinger et al., 2005, p. 201).

<u>Observation Protocol</u>

Observation is an essential part of qualitative research, because "it is the act of noting a phenomenon in the field setting through the five senses of the observer… (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). The researcher developed an observation protocol following the example provided by Creswell (2013), encompassing the framework of self-advocacy provided by (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). Within this conceptual framework of self-advocacy are four aspects: a) knowledge of self, b) knowledge of rights, c) communication, and d) leadership (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). Combining what Test and colleagues (2005) stated as evidence for each aspect with findings from a pre-observation session the researcher conducted, the protocol was developed with what was and was not going to qualify as evidence for each of the four aspects of self-advocacy. A

pre-observation session was used because no current research provided suggestions of what each of the fours aspects looked like within elementary age populations. What the researcher deemed qualifying evidence was noted as a reminder with a plus (+) and what was deemed as not qualifying as evidence was noted as a reminder with a minus (-). The observation protocol was similar to the example from Creswell (2013) with a column for each component split into two sections, with one section for descriptive notes and one section for reflective notes. Descriptive notes consisted of the researchers', "…attempt to summarize, in chronological fashion, the flow of activities in the class session" (Creswell, 2013, p. 169). Reflective notes consisted of "…the process, refection on activities, and summary conclusions about the activities for later theme development" (Creswell, 2013, p. 169). During observations, the researcher watched how the two students with disabilities expressed and demonstrated: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of their rights, (c) communication skills, and (d) leadership skills. First and second observations were conducted using the same protocol. (See Appendix A)

Self-advocacy Checklist

A self-advocacy checklist was given to both student participants. The checklist was administered as a guide to individualize the first student interview. The purpose of the individualization process was to see the perceptions of the students' skill levels within concepts related to the conceptual framework of self-advocacy, developed by Test and colleagues (2005), prior to interviewing them. (See Appendix B). The 22-item checklist was developed from concepts found in the *My Future My Plan: A Transitional Planning Resource for Life After High School.* For the purpose of this study, the checklist was

adapted to include only 16 items. Items omitted were not considered appropriate for

elementary age students. The full resources were developed by the National Center on

Secondary Education and Transition at the Institute on Community Integration at the

University of Minnesota to see how confident individuals with disabilities were in

communicating about different needs and wants (State of the Art, Inc., 2003).

Interview Protocol

Three different interview protocols with two different versions were developed

for this study. The first version, Interview 1, was used with the students, students' parent,

and classroom teacher during the same time classroom observations were conducted with

the purpose of discovering present self-advocacy skills of students. Interview 2 was used

to discover if any additional self-advocacy skills had been noticed by the parent or

teacher in the study following the videos and writing tasks. Each interview focused on

the perceptions of self-advocacy skills from the perspective of the interviewee.

Interviewing students, students' parents, and the classroom teacher allowed the researcher

to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. All interviews were based on the

main theoretical framework component of self-advocacy; a) knowledge of self, b)

knowledge of rights, c) communication, and d) leadership (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al.,

2005). (See Appendices C-E). All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for

topic content.

POW+TREE and WonderGrove Occurrence Checklist

The researcher completed a 20-criterion checklist in a journal format of whether or not the criterion occurred each time the teacher implemented the strategies with the student participants. The first criterion was whether or not the teacher gained the attention of students. The second through fourth criteria were the implementation steps of WonderGrove. Criterions five through twelve were the step-by-step review of POW+TREE. Remaining steps, thirteen through twenty, were the preparation, activation, and completion of student writing time (see Appendix F).

Self-advocacy Tools

In this study, the classroom teacher implemented the self-advocacy tools while the researcher was present for support but primarily remained an observer. The self-advocacy tools shared were WonderGrove and POW+TREE. Both were explained to the classroom teacher as a means that could support the development of self-advocacy skills. The first step in helping to teach self-advocacy skills was the introduction of WonderGrove. This video was selected for participants to watch by the researcher but initiated by the classroom teacher. Second, the classroom teacher reviewed the POW+TREE writing strategy with the participants through a scripted lesson provided by the researcher. Third, the participants dictated their written responses as they progressed through the POW+TREE strategy by the classroom teacher. The only time the students wrote their own response was during the introduction to the self-advocacy tools. Writing samples were collected and evaluated by the researcher.

WonderGrove

As part of the self-advocacy tools presented, participants were shown Habits of Mind videos within WonderGrove. The videos shown were based on social skill lessons, through cartoon characters acting out real situations. The range of length for all videos was three to four minutes. One animation was watched per day for a total of nine possible. See Table 6 for all scheduled video clips and a description of how each video relates to self-advocacy. An asterisk indicates the videos shown in this study. Appendix G provides an overview of the scripted procedures used by the classroom teacher when showing the video clips.

Table 6

WonderGrove Video Clips and How They Relate to Self-Advocacy

Title of Video Clip	How Topic Relates to Self-Advocacy
*Persisting	Staying with a goal that is wanted or needed
*Managing Impulsivity	Expressing wants and needs with self-control
*Thinking Flexibly	Expressing preference but open to new things
*Striving for Accuracy	Expressing struggles
*Thinking About Your Thinking	Articulating and expression of wants and needs
*Questioning and Problem Posing	Identifying and acting on challenges
Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations	Using strategies to help with new things
Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision	Being able to independently process and express wants and needs clearly
Remaining Open to Continuous Learning	Expressing needs/wants for trying new things

POW+TREE Review

The teacher reviewed the steps of POW+TREE with participants as a whole group before each writing sample was initiated. The review consisted of the teacher reminding the students what each letter of POW+TREE means and asking and responding to any questions students posed. At the close of the review, the teacher provided participants with a model of the POW+TREE strategy on the front board of the classroom (see Appendix H).

POW+TREE Writing

Participants dictated while the teacher scribed one paragraph about how they would use the character trait from the WonderGrove video to self-advocate. The writing time was about 30 minutes across all six writing sessions. Writing samples were collected by the teacher and given to the researcher at designated increments within the study.

Procedures

Access to Site

The researcher contacted schools that may have participants that would meet the desired population and sampling. A school was identified and the principal began to talk to teachers about participating with their classes. Formal access to the site was initiated and necessary Institutional Review Board (IRB) applications were submitted. The IRB application included requests for human subject research and digital recordings.

<center>Timeline</center>

<u>Week 1</u>

Prior to week one, the researcher developed the IRB and submitted it for approval. Upon approval, the researcher met with the teacher at the identified school. The classroom teacher identified six potential students for the study. At the end of the consent period, two participants, and their parents, created the total sample of student participants. During week one, informed consent forms were sent home with all student participants, which included an option to schedule two parent interviews. Participant identification codes of student initials were used to collect the study artifacts. For example, if a parent-related artifact was collected, the researcher coded "parent" before the initials of the student.

<u>Weeks 2 to 4</u>

Weeks two through four had three components, which were unstructured observations, self-advocacy checklist data collection, and interviews. These weeks began with unstructured observations, conducted by the researcher within the classroom, during the first two hours of the day during core reading instruction, three days a week for three consecutive weeks. After observations were coded by the researcher, for reliability, a peer conducted inter-coder agreement on the observation summaries and the observation protocol was created to determine reliability as to how the information was being identified. During the first day of observation, the students completed the 16-item self-advocacy checklist. Assigned inform consent forms were returned, indicating permission to be interviewed. Interview 1 was scheduled for parents, if they were willing to

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participate in this component. Parent interviews were offered after school through either

a face-to-face or phone interviews. All scheduled interviews occurred face-to-face and

had a duration of 10 minutes each. For the students' parents who gave consent for their

child to be interviewed, student interviews took place in a room near the classroom and

lasted between 10 to 20 minutes each. An interview with the classroom teacher also was

scheduled to occur after and lasted approximately 15 minutes. To address reliability, the

researcher audio recorded interviews and transcribed all observations daily after each

observation was completed (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also had a peer conduct

inter-rater agreement on the student interviews. To ensure validity, all interviews were

transcribed soon after each was completed and copies of interviews conducted with adult

participants were sent for member checking (Creswell, 2013). Upon transcriptions of

observations and interviews, and coding of initial data, themes began to develop.

Week 5

During week five, the researcher shared with the classroom teacher how to

implement POW+TREE and WonderGrove with students. Activities during this week

occurred over three days with daily sessions lasting a maximum of one hour.

WonderGrove Sharing

The researcher met with the classroom teacher after school the first day of week

five to share how to implement WonderGrove. Sharing consisted of a brief description of

how WonderGrove has benefited the social skills of children, with and without

disabilities, followed by step-by-step instructions of how to access and implement the selected video clips. See Appendix I for the specific procedures followed.

POW+TREE Sharing

The researcher met with the classroom teacher after school for the first day of week five to share how to implement POW+TREE. Sharing consisted of a brief description of how this strategy has benefited the writing outcomes of children with and without disabilities, followed by step-by-step instructions of how to implement the strategy. See Appendix J for specific procedures followed.

Student Introduction of WonderGrove and POW+TREE

On the last two days of Week 5, the researcher observed the teacher implementing WonderGrove and POW+TREE with the students. For the WonderGrove introduction, the four character introduction videos were shown. The videos were "Meet Marcus," "Meet Dee," "Meet Peter," "Meet Maria", and "Meet Chris." For the POW+TREE introduction, the researcher provided a scripted lesson (See Appendix K) for the teacher and a list of strengths and preferences of the four WonderGrove characters to be used as part of the lesson (See Appendix L). Using the traits list of two of the characters (each participant wanted to choose his or her own character), the teacher walked the students through how to use POW+TREE to describe his or her WonderGrove character. During this introduction, the research assistant completed an introduction checklist (See Appendix M). Specific feedback about sessions was not provided but general questions about procedures were answered if asked.

<u>Weeks 6 to 8</u>

This part of the study was two weeks long, three days per week. The purpose of the repeated implementation was to provide participants multiple, self-advocacy strategies and provide opportunities to develop written expression of how they would use those strategies to self-advocate. For these weeks, the teacher used the scripted lesson to implement WonderGrove and POW+TREE with the students. During implementation, the researcher observed. The total duration of each day was approximately 45 minutes. During Weeks 6 to 8, Interview 2 notification was sent to the parents. Upon collection of writing samples for participants, each week, initial document analyses occurred by the researcher, and at the end of the writing sample data collection period, by a research assistant to review emerging themes of self-advocacy within each writing sample. A rubric score using the total in Appendix N was derived, but due to the qualitative nature of this study, only the steps completed by Participant 1 and Participant 2 are presented

<u>Weeks 9 to 11</u>

Weeks 9 to 11 had two components. The week began with unstructured observations, conducted by the researcher within the classroom, during the first two hours of the day during reading instruction, three days a week for three consecutive weeks. The parents, who agreed to be interviewed during Weeks 2-4, were interviewed again. All parent interviews were face-to-face with a duration of approximately 20 minutes. Student interviews occurred during the beginning of the school day and had a duration of approximately 20 minutes each. A second interview with the classroom teacher also occurred after school for approximately 10 minutes. To address reliability, the researcher

audio recorded the interviews and then transcribed them soon after they were completed

(Creswell, 2013). The researcher also had a peer conduct inter-rater agreement on the

student interviews. To ensure validity, all interviews were transcribed soon after each

interview were completed and a copy of interviews conducted with adult participants

were sent home for member checking (Creswell, 2013). Upon transcriptions of

observations and interviews, a continuation of initial data coding occurred to expand

upon and refine emerging themes.

Data Collection

Observations

A total of six weeks of observations (3 per week; 9 per participant) were

conducted through the duration of the study. During the first three weeks, the researcher

observed to see if participants exhibited self-advocacy skills such as knowledge of self,

knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills. Observations occurred

during the first two hours of the day in the classroom of the two participants. Following

exposure to self-advocacy skills through WonderGrove videos, the researcher observed

for the last three weeks of the study to see what self-advocacy skills, as defined by the

first observations, were present among participants. Observations occurred during the

first two hours of the day but were in the school cafeteria due to third grader testing in the

regular classroom of the participants.

Self-advocacy Checklist

A 16-item self-advocacy checklist was given to student participants. The checklist was administered and used as a guide to conducting the first interview. The purpose was to see the perceptions of the students' skill levels, related to the conceptual framework of self-advocacy (Test et. al, 2005). Student responses were used to help guide the first interview (See Appendix B). The original checklist contains 22-items; however, for the purpose of this study, students were not asked to answer six of the items because it was not viewed as appropriate to ask about this when talking to elementary age participants as they may not be able to comprehend the concept of college, nor are the participants a part of their own IEP meetings at the intended school setting. The omitted items were:

- Understand my disability

- Talk about my disability

- Speak up in my IEP and transition planning meetings

- Know my rights and what laws protect people with disabilities

- Know who to call to learn about my rights and laws that protect people with disabilities

- Find out about colleges and support services

The teacher conducted these checklists with the participants, one-on-one, by reading each item and then marking the response of the student.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with students with disabilities, the students' parent(s) and the classroom teacher. The basic format was 10-15 questions for 10 to 30 minutes, depending on participant. Interviews took place during Weeks 2-4 for Interview 1 and Weeks 9-11 for Interview 2. Following each, the researcher transcribed the interview. For the parents and teacher who interviewed, a transcript of the interview was provided for member checking.

Student Interviews

Students with disabilities were interviewed, one-on-one by the researcher, in a separate room near the classroom. Interviews were on two sets of questions. Interview 1, questions were based on their answers to the "Self-advocacy Checklist," developed as part of a future planning curriculum for high school students (See Appendix B). Interview questions were developed to correspond to how the students answered the concepts of the "Self-Advocacy Checklist" (2003; See Appendix C). The concepts within the checklist also align with the conceptual framework of self-advocacy developed by Test and colleagues (2005). Interview 2 consisted of questions regarding the self-advocacy tools in which they were exposed. The interview sessions were audio recorded. The recording device was kept in a locked location at the university of the researcher.

Parent Interviews

Parents of the participants were interviewed, on site, one-on-one, by the researcher after school. Each parent was interviewed twice. The first interview had

questions regarding their child's self-advocacy skills in terms of knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills. The researcher also asked parents about their child's strengths and preferences as well as how important it was to them for their child to learn to self-advocate at this age (i.e., 8 and 9 years old). The second interview had questions regarding if they had seen any growth in their child's self-advocacy skills since the start of the study.

Classroom Teacher Interviews

The classroom teacher was interviewed twice, on site, one-on-one, by the researcher after school. The first interviews had a few general questions about the self-advocacy of all students with disabilities in her class and the participants of the study. The questions about the study participants pertained to how each of the participants exhibited knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills. The second interview focused on how each of the two participants exhibited self-advocacy skills after exposure to WonderGrove and POW+TREE for self-advocacy strategies in speaking and writing.

Collection of Writing Samples

A total of nine writing samples was the goal, but only six writing samples per participant were successfully attempted. Of the attempts, Participant 1 provided five writing samples and Participant 2 provided four.   The other three did not occur due to school-wide science fair (one day) and grade level testing (two days). Each writing

sample was labeled with the corresponding participant code. Writing samples were kept

in a locked cabinet at the university of the researcher.

<div align="center">Data Analyses</div>

The data sources collected in this study included unstructured observations;

interviews with students, teachers, and parents; and document analysis of students'

writing samples. The framework for all analyses was based on the conceptual framework

components of self-advocacy which are a) knowledge of self, b) knowledge of rights, c)

communication, and d) leadership (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). Data analyses were

ongoing as described in the procedures. Below is the definition of each component. The

aspects of each component were the key aspects evaluated from all data sources.

(a) Knowledge of self (KS),"…[verbal and/or written expressions] of one's own

interests, preferences, strengths, needs, learning styles, and attributes of one's disability"

(Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005).

(b) Knowledge of rights (KR), "…[verbal and/or written expressions] one's rights

as a citizen, as an individual with a disability, and as a student receiving services under

federal law" (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005).

(c) Effective communication skills (C), "…[verbal and/or written expressions

through] negotiation, persuasion, and compromise…body language and listen skills…to

include effective and appropriate communication of feelings, needs, and desires…" (Test,

Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005)

(d) Leadership (L), "learning the roles and dynamics of a group and the skill to

function in a group" and then acting within them (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005).

These four categories were the unit of analysis and other categories were expected to emerge from the observations. For analyses of all categories that emerged from the data gathered, the researcher focused on the verbal and written self-advocacy behaviors of the students with disabilities. Interviews allowed the researcher to better understand the perceptions of self-advocacy skills based on the interviewee. Lastly, the researcher conducted a document analysis of the writing samples gathered over the course of the study. All data were triangulated to see if the same overall findings emerged across all data sets. Collected data were sorted under identified "coding families" that were predetermined prior to analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 173). The process of coding was conducted through manual coding with a collective database for all artifacts. Manual coding was suggested by Saldaña (2009) for smaller studies and is said to also provide the researcher with deeper immersion within the data to better understand the phenomenon. Table 7 describes the data types and how each were analyzed.

Table 7

Summary of Data Collection Procedures

Data Type	How it will be analyzed
Observations	What evidence is there of the four components of self-advocacy?
Interviews	What evidence is there of the four components of self-advocacy from the viewpoints of students, teachers, and parents?
Document Analysis	What evidence is there of the four components of self-advocacy when following the POW+TREE rubric and describing what is seen in the writing samples?

Observations

A total of 18 observations were conducted over the course of the study because an "essential process is recording information" to better understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 170). Nine observations occurred during between weeks two through four and nine occurred during weeks nine through eleven. The field notes from observations were transcribed with detailed descriptions for clarity of event occurrences. Transcribing the observations helped provide "thick descriptions" of observations for later discussion. Observations were the first pieces of data coded, as data collection began before interviews and writing samples.

Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with participants during or after school, depending on the participant being interviewed. Student interviews took place first thing in the morning as they arrived in the classroom and lasted approximately 10 minutes. Parent and teacher interviews took place at the end of the school day and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Short memos were completed after interviews by the researcher. Developing short memos allowed the researcher to monitor her own thought process, pertaining to data collected in the interviews, and to begin the process of coding the collected data (Creswell, 2013). Data were sorted into all four codes discussed above. Interviews were manually transcribed and provided for parent and teacher participants to review. This transcription is a form of member checking and is one of the credibility measures used in this qualitative research study (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Document Analyses

Document analyses had two components for each writing sample collected. See Table 8 for a description of each component.

Table 8

Summary of Document Analysis Procedures

Part 1	Part 2
Does the writing sample have evidence of POW+TREE components based on the POW+TREE rubric?	Does the writing sample explain how he or she would use the shown WonderGrove trait to self-advocate?

The foundational analysis of the writing sample was the students' use of POW+TREE, because researchers have found students produce better writing at the elementary level when they are explicitly taught writing strategies (Graham, McKeown, Kiuhara, & Harris, 2012).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was employed to ensure the quality of the research methods (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). The overarching method of trustworthiness was triangulation of three data sources to provide "corroborating evidence" in support of the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). The specific forms of trustworthiness used were member checking (Carlson, 2010) and "thick, rich descriptions" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). During member checking, the researcher took the time to "…solicit participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Lincoln and Guba (1985) considered member checking to be "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Thick description were used to give the researcher

"abundant, interconnected details…" (Stake, 2010, p. 49) to be used in the final analyses of the data.

Ethics

For the duration of all research activities, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of participants by assigning specific codes for identification during the study. Parental informed consents were provided and explained. Signed parental consents were obtained for all student participants prior to interview and document analyses. All study materials produced by participants were coded and secured per Institutional Review Board guidelines.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the phenomenological study of students with disabilities' use of self-advocacy skills in speaking and writing. The data are organized into four themes, matching the aspects of self-advocacy developed by Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy, (2005), which are: a) knowledge of self, b) knowledge of rights, c) effective communication skills, and d) leadership skills. Employing a phenomenological approach the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of how two second graders with disabilities self-advocated in the classroom and home settings before and after they were exposed to self-advocacy strategies. Data collection occurred through two sets of observations, two sets of interviews, and document analyses of writing samples.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section is an overview of the setting in which the phenomenon was explored. The next three sections evaluate each research question individually. The last section is an overview of the findings across research questions and participants. Each section is discussed in context of themes. The following research questions explored were:

1. What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities in a second grade, inclusive classroom prior to being presented with self-advocacy instruction in speaking and writing?

2. How do students with disabilities self-advocate socially, verbally, and/or in writing in a second grade, inclusive classroom when presented with self-advocacy and writing instructional strategies?

3. What are students with disabilities and others (i.e., family members, teachers) involved in the students' lives perceptions of self-advocacy skills?

<center>Instrumentation</center>

Data for this study were collected through observations, a self-advocacy checklist, interviews, and document analyses of writing samples with the researcher or research assistant collecting all data. The classroom teacher shared two self-advocacy tools, WonderGrove and POW+TREE, with the two participants after the researcher trained the teacher on how to use these tools. All collected data were analyzed for the evidence of participants' application of knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication skills, and leadership skills. Each piece of data were analyzed using qualitative methods with an additional quantitative method for document analyses of writing samples. The researcher used a POW+TREE rubric adapted from Mastropieri and colleagues (2009) to first quantify how each component of POW+TREE was represented in each writing sample. Following the quantification of POW+TREE components, an explanation was given on how it was represented in each writing sample.

<center>Setting of the Phenomenon</center>

Two of the three research questions for this study included the phrase "second grade, inclusive classroom." Therefore, the researcher discusses the phenomenon of self-advocacy for each participant individually, and then how they compared through the researcher's lens, as a classroom teacher and a person with a disability, compared to their same age peers. The overall learning environment where the phenomenon was observed

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was outfitted like a typical classroom. Surveying the room from the classroom door, students' desks were situated for group work in two, kidney-shaped tables on either side of the room. Located in the very front of the room was a large carpet area, a SMARTBoard, and two whiteboards on either side of the SMARTBoard. While in this setting, the researcher observed self-advocacy in a variety of student working scenarios (e.g., independent, whole group, one-on-one, small group). See Figure 2 for an image of the actual environment in which the phenomenon of students with disabilities self-advocating occurred.

Figure 2: Second Grade Classroom

The typical classroom occurrences, during the time the researcher was present, consisted of students a) arriving in the morning, b) participating in independent iPad activities, and c) rotating through small group, teacher-led reading activities. All activities were structured in a way that students with and without disabilities could not always be clearly identified, but all students received necessary supports in the inclusive environment.

Data Analysis Procedures

All data were first analyzed in the order it was collected. Analyses consisted of each of the four codes being used to classify all data (e.g. knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication skills, and leadership skills). Each data category was assigned a color for identification of themes as analyses progressed. As data were separated into codes, each piece of data within a category was entered into a Microsoft Excel document consisting of three sheets. The first sheet displayed data by participant and type of data collected. The last two sheets were specific to each of the two student participants. The layout of the data analyses allowed the researcher to see results as they emerged for each participant, across data sources and themes. The results of the study are presented by each research question across themes.

Data Analysis by Research Question

Lived Experiences: Research Question 1

The first research question was: What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities in a second grade, inclusive classroom prior to being presented with self-

advocacy instruction in speaking and writing? From the beginning, observations, completion of a self-advocacy checklist, and interviews indicated both participants had self-advocacy skills as defined as knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication skills, and leadership skills. Early on the researcher observed what was missing was a basic level of independence within each of the areas. At the start of the study, the classroom teacher was questioned about the current self-advocacy skills of all her students with disabilities and expressed, "most of them can, but a lot of them need help or need frequent reminders" (T1, I1, p. 1).

Overall Self-advocacy Skills for Participants

A basic level of self-advocacy skill was observed for both participants, as compared to their peers, but the strategies used and clarity of how they self-advocated was lacking. As it relates to knowledge of self, the majority of the class was observed as being independent in coming into the room, prepared with all needed materials, and tending to basic needs with permission from a teacher. For knowledge of rights, most of the students observed were able to follow rules and expectations without prompting, but those needing prompting typically needed specific directions using their names and the specific action required. The majority of students would tend to basic needs with permission from a teacher, but some were seen asking permission to complete a task. When the teacher would ask the student, what he or she was doing, most often the student would answer as they moved to the specific tasks. Transitions between activities followed the same patterns of prompting, coded as knowledge of rights, where the teacher would need to state the specific names of students and the action needed.

Communication skills were observed and present but differed depending on the scenario. If students needed help, most of them would initiate help by raising their hands and waiting for a teacher to respond. Some students would state, "this is hard" and stop working and not initiate help from the teacher. In regards to talking through upsetting situations, most students would ask to be excused to another part of the room to cool down, and then go to the teacher to talk through what was upsetting them independently. Despite most students being able to isolate themselves in a situation, their ability to come up with an appropriate solution seemed to need prompting from the teacher for all students. Leadership skills of the students in the class were observed to be dependent on the activity. If a student liked the activity, they were more willing to lead. Students more hesitant or reluctant to lead would take on a leadership role after the teacher would provide them with either an individual or whole class incentive.

Overall, the self-advocacy themes observed as compared to peers were a combination of the behaviors exhibited by Participant 1 and 2. Table 9 summarizes how both participants exhibited self-advocacy as compared to their peers, during the first three weeks of the study, during observations by the researcher. Table 9 shows, although Participant 1 had stronger self-advocacy skills and was more like his peers in the general education setting, the skill set of Participant 2 was not that different of some of her peers.

Table 9

Self-Advocacy Skills Before WonderGrove and POW+TREE Strategies

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	As Compared to Peers
Knowledge of Self	Wrote name on assignments	Wrote name on assignments	Same
	Comes to class with materials without prompting	Comes to class with materials with prompting	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
	Tended to basic needs with permission	Tended to basic needs without permission	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
Knowledge of Rights	Followed rules and expectations without prompting	Followed rules and expectations with prompting	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
	Asked to leave room	Did not ask to leave room	Like Participant 1
	Transitioned independently	Transitioned with prompting	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
Communication Skills	Asked for help without prompting from teacher	Waited to be prompted to receive help from teacher	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
	Needed prompting to talk though upsetting situations	After cooling down, would talk through upsetting situations	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
	Talked with teachers and friends	Talked with teachers and friends	Same
Leadership Skills	Eager to be a leader in all activities	Eager to be a leader for preferred activities	Most like Participant 1; some peers too were like Participant 2
	Leader in home and school	Leader in home and school	Only seen being a leader at school
	Would help friends without prompting	Leader if the activity involved a preferred item or activity	Most like Participant 1; some peers were like Participant 2

Participant 1

Knowledge of Self

Observing the specific skill set of Participant 1, the researcher reflected the phenomenon of self-advocacy compared to peers prior to learning any self-advocacy skills or writing strategies. Before any instruction in self-advocacy, Participant 1 was able to state his strengths, interests, and preferences in speaking. During the first interview, he was asked about his personal strengths. He explained he was good at soccer and writing, then further expressed that he did not like writing (S1, I1). In the same interview he was asked to explain a goal he had. He explained that he wanted to earn enough money, by doing chores, to buy a Minecraft game. Written knowledge of self also was present for Participant 1 by the consistency of him writing his name on his paper, both independently and when verbally directed to do so. Participant 1 seemed to be able to provide information pertaining to his knowledge of self in a way that reflected that of his overall inclusive classroom of his peers.

Knowledge of Rights

A clear knowledge of rights was present for Participant 1, but his reaction to how he and others followed them was observed as a challenge throughout the study. He was continuously cognizant of classroom routines and expectations. He would often remind others to follow the rules, but if the whole class had a privilege taken away because the majority were not following directions, he would get upset (T1, I1). In reference to following classroom expectations, he was just like the majority of his peers, and he would

enter the classroom or a task with the expected materials (e.g. binder, reading book, iPad). If he forgot something, he would realize it independent of teacher or peer redirection and then ask to go get it. Besides writing his name on his work, as mentioned with knowledge of self, which could also be seen as following an expectation, no additional written forms of knowledge of rights was present at this part of the study.

Communication Skills

Participant 1 was eager to communicate with all those around him, but the clarity of his thoughts were missing in some instances. For example, when communicating with his peers about general ideas and preferences (i.e. what he did over the weekend, commentary on something a peer was saying) all communications often were clear and if clarification was requested, it was provided without signs of frustration. On the contrary, when he was attempting to verbally self-advocate and was not being understood, frustration often was presented in the form of crying. His peers were observed to have the same type of communication skills but were not prone to becoming noticeably upset. Asking clarifying questions, if he was unsure of something, was consistently observed. Most of his peers would also do the same. An instance of him asking clarifying questions was when he noticed peers around him on different iPad apps than normal. As a result, he asked the teacher what apps he could be on to be sure he was following directions. Written forms of communication skills were not observed at this point of the study. As compared to his peers, he was more particular than most about how rules and expectations were followed.

Leadership Skills

Verbal leadership skills of Participant 1 were observed to be strong and apparent from the very beginning of the study, but written forms of leadership were not observed. Participant 1 often was observed helping others when he saw that they might need assistance. For instance, during free iPad time, a peer next to him saw he was on an interesting game and asked how to get to the same application. Participant 1 provided peer verbal directions with pointing gestures to assist his peer in getting to the game. As compared to his peers, Participant 1 was seen to offer the most assistance to individuals he thought were in need and also provided clear, understandable assistance when asked by a peer. Whereas, while many of his peers would take over a task for their friend instead of guiding them through it, participant 1 used his leadership skills to guide instead of take over for a peer. All throughout this part of the study, Participant 1 was eager to help others but only helped if his offer was accepted by a peer. This skill set was similar to his peers.

Overall, as compared to his peers, Participant 1 was observed to be the same as his peers. He had the same level of knowledge of self. The knowledge of rights and leadership skills were also similar to his peers. Communication skills were the most different compared to his peers because after exposure to self-advocacy skills, he used more ways to express himself, especially if upset, than his peers.

Participant 2

Knowledge of Self

Participant 2, was able to state her strengths, interests, and preferences in speaking. During her first interview, she was asked about her personal strengths. She explained she liked playing with friends, specifically playing outside with them (S2, I1). When prompted to give more detail about what she liked to play with friends, no additional information was provided. In the same interview, she also was asked to explain a goal she had for the future. She stated, "I want to read big books, and I want to be a teacher when I grow up. I am so excited to grow up…I want to be a first grade teacher" (S2, I1, p. 1). Her written knowledge of self also was present, because she consistently wrote her name on assignments both independently and when directed to do so by the teacher. She seemed to be able to provide a knowledge of self to others in the same way as her peers.

Knowledge of Rights

Participant 2 was observed as having a knowledge of rights, but the way she followed the rules and expectations was different from Participant 1 and the rest of her peers. She often was observed acting on her knowledge of rights when she wanted something or when was prompted constantly by the teacher. For example, she would come in with the necessary materials, but would sometimes forget something and have to be prompted to get the specific item she was missing. In the area of following given directions, Participant 2 would comply with a given direction if it was related to a

preferred activity or if she was interested in being involved. Indications of interest were

if she started asking questions about the activity, like wanting to go first or asking about

materials involved. At times, Participant 2 would completely ignore verbal directions

given be a teacher or join on her own time schedule. An example of this behavior was

observed when the teacher asked her to come join her small group that was working on

spelling words. In response to the direction, Participant 2 stated she did not want to work

on spelling, but when the teacher said candy was involved, she came over to join the

group and complied with the rest of the activities and the directions given by the teacher.

Evidence of written skills in knowledge of rights was not apparent at this point in the

observations except for writing her name on assignments independently or when directed.

At this time in the study, Participant 2 was more reluctant in using her knowledge of

rights as compared to the rest of her peers within her class.

Communication Skills

Participant 2 was able to communicate in general conversations with her

classmates and teacher, but when it was necessary for her to self-advocate, she would

only demonstrate this behavior in small group settings. For example, when she was

observed doing an activity one-on-one with a teacher, she would ask clarifying questions

without prompting. Whereas, during an independent, whole class, writing activity, she

sat at her seat not attending to the task, until asked if she needed help. Instances like these

two described occurred throughout the study with the same behaviors, making it possible

that Participant 2 was more comfortable communicating in smaller settings with adults.

As compared to the rest of her peers, some of her peers had the same communication

skills, but the difference is her peers would attempt to get assistance in all settings, not in one-on-one settings with the teacher. Written self-advocacy was not observed.

Leadership Skills

At this point in the study, leadership skills were evident in speaking for Participant 2, but not in writing. The predominant instances of leadership were among her friends and within preferred or classroom activities related to her interests. A clear example of leadership was observed when the class was learning about hobbies and her friend next to her could not think of any hobbies. Participant 2 began to provide examples of hobbies for her friends to choose. In comparison to her peers, she was the most vocal leader, but only chose to lead when she was among students she identified as her friends.

Overall, as compared to her peers, Participant 2 was varied the most from them in all self-advocacy categories except for knowledge of self. For knowledge of rights and leadership skills, she would follow through only if it directly interested her or one of her friends. In the area of communication skills, prior to exposure to self-advocacy strategies, she would wait to be assisted; whereas, most of her peers would initiate gaining help.

Self-advocacy Behaviors: Research Question 2

The second research question was: How do students with disabilities self-advocate socially, verbally, and/or in writing in a second grade, inclusive classroom when presented with self-advocacy and writing instructional strategies? At the initiation of the

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strategy part of the study focused on teaching writing and self-advocacy skills of

POW+TREE and WonderGrove, both participants were excited to participate. By the end

of week one of tool sharing, and the introduction of three videos and written paragraphs,

the willingness to continue to participate wavered.

Summary of Intervention and Participant Reaction to Self-advocacy Tools

The researcher shared with the classroom teacher select WonderGrove videos to

show the two participants that contained self-advocacy strategies and shared the

POW+TREE writing strategy. The sharing of these strategies were estimated to take one

session but took three sessions. Throughout the sessions, the research assistant indicated

Yes or No and provided comments on a 21-item checklist of how the sharing of the tools

occurred. The first session, both participants were present and the classroom teacher

played the five WonderGrove character introduction videos that were suggested (e.g.

Meet Marcus; Meet Dee; Meet Peter; Meet Maria; Meet Chris). The next day, only

Participant 1 was present but the classroom teacher shared the POW+TREE strategy with

him and the following day, shared it with Participant 2. Of the 21-item checklist, all five

of the suggested WonderGrove character introduction videos were shared with

participants.

For the sharing of the POW+TREE strategy, the teacher completed most of the

steps suggested except providing a specific sentence quantity for each part or entirety of a

writing sample. In addition, the classroom teacher was provided with a POW+TREE

chart to use with the students, but instead she wrote the strategy on a white board.

Altogether, the way that the classroom teacher initially shared WonderGrove and

POW+TREE with the participants did not take away from the process or permanent products the participants produced. To lead the participants through POW+TREE, it was suggested the classroom teacher choose one of the WonderGrove characters and scribe a paragraph about that character as students dictated it. Instead, both students chose to write about their own, favorite WonderGrove character. Once participants were introduced to WonderGrove and POW+TREE, the classroom teacher began to implement the viewing of select WonderGrove videos, review of POW+TREE, and writing sample collection. The researcher was present during all attempted sessions and completed a checklist and notes of each session outcome. Out of the total, nine scheduled sessions, six were completed. Sessions took place after lunch in the classroom, for a 45-minute period, and consisted of participants watching a selected WonderGrove video, reviewing the POW+TREE strategy, and producing a writing sample by each student dictating their paragraph while the teacher scribed for them. Both participants only physically wrote during the WonderGrove and POW+TREE introduction session. For the writing samples received, excluding the introduction session, number 2 to 6 were from Participant 1 and numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5 were from Participant 2. Verbatim scribing occurred due to the short timeframe allowed this part of the study and due to participants' needs or attitudes. Participant 1 was capable of writing, but wanted the classroom teacher to write so it was easier and faster for him. Participant 2 could also write, but did have had a lack of gross motor skills hindering prolonged writing due to her disability. After the classroom teacher offered to write for both participants, all writing samples beyond the introductory session were all verbatim scribed by the classroom teacher. Participants watched the clips together on either the classroom projector or the laptop of the classroom teacher.

Each time, once the concepts of the video were mentioned by the WonderGrove characters, the classroom teacher would stop the video and asked the participants to say what the video was about to ensure they were paying attention. The classroom teacher introduced the writing part each time by asking the question, "How would you use [WonderGrove character trait] to help you get what you want or need?" Reviewing of the POW+TREE strategy occurred each time, but the duration of the review decreased over time. The first two sessions, POW+TREE was reviewed in full with the sequence and definition of each part with a duration of about five minutes. The third session had a quick review of what each letter meant, with a duration of about two minutes, where the teacher wrote each letter of the strategy as the participants stated what each part was and why it was needed in writing. For the fourth session and beyond, students told the teacher they already knew the strategy and went straight into writing and referencing POW+TREE as needed. See Table 10 for an overview of writing sample outcomes.

Table 10

Writing Sample Collection Outcome

Writing Sample	Participant 1	Participant 2	POW+TREE Steps
Persisting	Absent	Teacher scribed response	One-by-one
Managing Impulsivity	Teacher scribed response	Teacher scribed response	One-by-one
Thinking Flexibly	Teacher scribed response	Refused	One-by-one
Striving for Accuracy	Teacher scribed response	Teacher scribed response	Overview at the end
Thinking About Your Thinking	Teacher scribed response	Teacher scribed response	Overview at the end
Questioning and Problem Posing	Teacher scribed response	Absent	Overview at the end

For the first part of the strategy (POW) each time, the classroom teacher scribed as they planned and verbally organized their thoughts into a bubble map drawn on the whiteboards. Even when there was not a formal review of the letters for POW+TREE, the steps were still displayed on a board for the students to reference. Across writing participants and writing samples, most, if not all of the POW+TREE components were present. The rubric used to evaluate individual writing samples was adapted from Mastropieri and colleagues (2009) with seven components. Total score for each component ranged from one to three points possible for a possible total score of ten. Across writing samples and participants', total score for each completed sample was either a perfect 10 or a 9. Out of the seven areas of POW+TREE (a letter is an area), two areas were inconsistent in scoring across writing samples for each participant. The "R" stood for "Reasons." Participants would provide one sentence per reason; either list reasons all in one sentence or only provide two of the three requested reasons. The second "E" stood for "Ending," and some writing samples were missing a conclusion sentence or it did not have any connection to what was in the paragraph. See Table 11 for each writing sample for Participant 1 and Participant 2, related to each component of POW+TREE being used.

Table 11

Use of Each POW+TREE Component Based on Interrater Reliability

	Rater	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
		P		O		W		T		R		E		E	
Participant 1	Writing Sample Persisting						Absent								
	Managing Impulsivity	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Thinking Flexibly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
	Striving for Accuracy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
	Thinking About Your Thinking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
	Questioning and Problem Posing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Participant 2	Persisting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	
	Managing Impulsivity						Refused								
	Thinking Flexibly	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Striving for Accuracy	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Thinking About Your Thinking	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	Questioning and Problem Posing						Absent								

*Blank indicates component not counted as included or unable to account for the step

Three sessions were not able to be collected due to either a school science fair or statewide testing within the school. The outcomes presented by each participant were the opposite of what he or she expressed when referring to the act of writing in their first interview. Participant 1 told the researcher, "I am really good at writing at school. I don't really like writing, but I am just good at it" (S1, I1, p. 1). He produced the most writing samples, but he also continuously expressed how much he liked the watching and writing activity he did with the classroom teacher. Whereas, Participant 2 told the researcher about writing in her journal when she is trying to express thoughts to others, but she produced the least number of writing samples and referred to the watching and writing activity as boring and repeatedly expressed WonderGrove being "baby videos" or "I did this in Kindergarten, so I don't want to do it again" (S2, I1, p. 2).

During the writing portion of the study, all components of self-advocacy were present across participants, but the quantity of each written component varied amongst the two participants. See Table 12 for a summary of self-advocacy skills during this part of the study by theme across participants. Others behaviors listed in the chart were mentioned by the classroom teacher to the researcher during the writing part of the study that happened outside of the timeframe of study sessions. During WonderGrove and POW+TREE sessions, participants would mention previous WonderGrove videos that they thought could also apply to the WonderGrove videos they were currently watching. For example, Participant 1 related that is a great idea to try and manage your impulsivity while striving for accuracy. The teacher asked him what he meant, and he said, It is important to remain calm when things are not going exactly as wanted and keep trying until you reach the goal" (WonderGrove Occurrence Checklist #5)

Table 12

Summary of Self-Advocacy Skills During WonderGrove and POW+TREE

Theme	Participant 1 Included	Participant 2 Included
Knowledge of Self	Characteristics of self	Characteristics of self
	Strategies learned from videos	Likes and dislikes
Knowledge of Rights	Ways to appropriately express wants and needs	Reward if she does what is asked
Communication Skills	Wanting a friend like Dee	Wanting Chris in his class
	Stated ways to talk to others	Stated ways to talked to others
		Wrote in journal when upset
Leadership Skills	Importance of sharing and being nice	Taking the time to think through what is said to others
		What she does to get what she wants

Participant 1

Knowledge of Self

Of the four components of self-advocacy outlined by Test and colleagues (2005), knowledge of self was first of the two most prominent across his writing samples. The first writing sample participants provided were not analyzed using the POW+TREE rubric, because the purpose of this sample was to introduce participants to WonderGrove and POW+TREE. Nevertheless, these initial samples had noticeable evidence of knowledge of self. For the introductory POW+TREE writing activity, participants wrote about their favorite POW+TREE character. Participant 1 wrote about Chris and comparing him to himself. He stated, "He looks kind of like me but he has blonde hair" (S1, W0, p. 1). This sentence provides support that Participant 1 can describe his personal characteristics to others. Also, although brief, he was able to provide an

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explanation of how he likes to try new things. In a specific example he referred to food

by explaining, "I'm mostly flexible on eating, because I love trying food" (S1, W3, p.1).

Knowledge of self was not only applied to personal self-advocacy, but also in academics.

At the end of the "Managing Impulsivity" WonderGrove video he expressed, "I learned

this new word today [referring to 'impulsivity'] and it's going to help me, and I'm going

to use it every day" (S1, W2, p. 1). In addition to mentioning things he learned, he

provided examples of how he uses strategies from WonderGrove. After watching the

"Striving for Accuracy" video, he stated in his writing,

> "I used to use accuracy when the words sound the exact same, and I turn up the
>
> sound on my headphones. I do one of the math problems and instead of doing
>
> them all and when I'm done if it is correct I move on." (S1, W4, p. 1)

In the example above from his writing, Participant 1 provided a concrete example of how

he takes steps to ensure he is doing things correctly the first time.

Knowledge of Rights

Knowledge of rights was evident in the writing of Participant 1 on only one

occasion. After watching the "Managing Impulsivity" video clip, he mentioned an

application of the strategy as, "…speak nice words, don't argue back with anyone, and do

not use rude language" (S1, W2, p. 1). Through this statement, he directly referenced a

classroom and home expectation that he was to follow. Although this one instance was

the only written self-advocacy statement found in regard to knowledge of rights, it

provided evidence he could explain his rights in written words in the same way he has

shown this skill through spoken self-advocacy.

Communication Skills

Expressing strengths and preferences were part of the communication skills within self-advocacy and were evident in two of the writing samples produced by Participant 1. During the introductory lesson, in his writing describing why Chris was his favorite character, he wrote, "We both like to read. We like a lot of the same things" (S1, W0, p. 1). Within these sentences, he expressed an activity that he and Chris liked. He also expressed wanting to play a game that he liked and wanted to share it with Chris, "Maybe we could play Minecrafts someday" (S1, W0, p. 1). Participant 1, ended this writing sample with, "I wish that he was in our class," which is seen as a communication of a want (S1, W0, p. 1). In another WonderGrove video, "Questioning and Problem Posing," Participant 1 explained how he would use the skill of asking questions to gain information. In reference to losing something. he explained, "I would ask everyone around me questions…" to help him find what it was he lost (S1, W6, p.1). Within these three examples, written self-advocacy skills focusing on communication skills were noted by Participant 1. He demonstrated he could apply in writing what was learned in the video and ways to communicate about his wants and needs to others in writing.

Leadership Skills

Evidence of leadership skills, the fourth component of self-advocacy, also was seen in writing samples provided by Participant 1. Across writing samples, there were a total of four instances coded as leadership skills within his writing. The first emerged following the video clip titled, "Managing Impulsivity," when he wrote, "share things with other people and be nice" (S1, W2, p.1). This example was the first, but as the study

progressed, more written self-advocacy skills emerged. For example, after the video, "Thinking Flexibly," Participant 1 explained, "If I got a Terraria toys and I wanted a mine craft toy, people might not know the right one to get me, but I would be flexible" (S1, W3, p.1). This statement explained how he would not get upset if he received a gift that was not exactly what he requested, which can be seen as a leadership quality. Another leadership skill was evident in the writing sample after the video clip, "Striving for Accuracy." This participant likes to play soccer and is in a soccer club at school. In this writing sample, he explained, "I'll use this [striving for accuracy] when I'm in soccer to decide which kick or where I should kick the ball" (S1, W5, p.1). This statement perhaps hints that he knows different soccer skills, and it is up to him to use all of his knowledge to make the best decision while he is playing the game. The last example of written self-advocacy, relating to leadership skills, was evident in his writing when he focused on how he would get back items he lost. After watching the WonderGrove video, "Questioning and Problem Posing," he stated, "If I lost something, I would look for it first…" (S1, W6, p.1). This is an example of a leadership skill, because often a leader will take the initiative to do something before getting others involved. Of all the components of self-advocacy focused on within this study, leadership skills were the second of the two most prominent aspects of self-advocacy within the writing samples of Participant 1.

<u>Participant 2</u>

Knowledge of Self

Written self-advocacy first emerged when Participant 2 expressed a knowledge of self when she was writing about her favorite WonderGrove character, which was Dee. In the beginning of this writing sample, she stated, "I picked her because she is like me" (S2, W0, p. 1). Participant 1 stated later in this writing sample, "When she runs around she needs to lie down and rest" (S2, W0, p. 1). Through previous observations, although she was unable to specifically identify her specific type of physical disability, it seemed as if she was relating to the character when she referenced needing to rest. Through these writing sample statements, a basic knowledge of self seemed to emerge in the form of written self-advocacy.

Knowledge of Rights

A knowledge of rights, defined as knowing and following rules and expectations set by adults, was present in the form of written self-advocacy. After watching the "Thinking About Your Thinking" video clip, Participant 2 talked about how Dee and Chris gave her examples of how to plan out what she was going to say. The specific action she described she was going to do was stated as, "I plan to clean my room, because I know I will get like a bunch of stuff like candy, toys, or money" (S2, W5, p.1). This statement shows Participant 2 knows home expectations and what will happen if she meets the expectations. This use of knowledge of self is seen as a clear form of written

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self-advocacy, because she stated what she needs to do to gain something she wants in return.

Communication Skills

The use of communication skills was apparent across four of the writing samples produced by Participant 2. During the introductory character videos when she chose to write about the WonderGrove character, Dee, Participant 2 stated how they were similar. "She likes drawing like me" (S2, W0, p. 1). With this sentence, Participant 2 exhibited the ability of expressing herself through comparing herself to that she had seen in another person.

The first collection of a writing sample occurred after Participant 2 watched the video clip titled, "Persisting." Within this writing sample, she provided two examples of communicating specific items she wanted. First she stated, "I want makeup and my own room" (S2, W1, p. 1). Through this simple statement, she indicated specific wants. Further into the same writing sample, she explained how she will try and get one of those items. "I will keep asking my mom for makeup, makeup, makeup" (S2, W1, p. 1). Not only has Participant 2 communicated what she wants, but how she will attempt to obtain it.

Another clear instance of her describing how she would use communication skills to self-advocate emerged after she watched the video clip titled, "Thinking About Your Thinking." In describing how she would think through talking to others before talking to them, she provided the example, "When I was going to talk to my brother I thought about what I was going to say, and I do like the way I was thinking about it before talking to

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my brother, so I don't say random words (S2. W5, p. 1). This statement provides an example of how she would use her communication skills to self-advocate with others; in this case, her family. Across writing samples, the self-advocacy component of communication skills was apparent in multiple ways in the writing of Participant 2.

Leadership Skills

Leadership skills also were apparent within writing samples produced by Participant 2. Within her writing sample, she shared she would use persistence to gain a want or need by first stating the skill and then explaining how she would use it. Her exact wording was as follows, "I will use persisting to get what I want. I will work hard and clean around my house" (S2, W1, p.1). This statement exemplifies that she knows what persisting means and can provide a clear example of how to use this self-advocacy trait. In the same writing sample, she provided another clear leadership statement about how she would get things that she knows she needs even if others will not help her. She expressed this trait by saying, "If I need water and food, I'm going to find it by myself, because I need it to live (S2, W1, p. 1). This statement is another example of how she would use leadership skills to self-advocate because it describes an action plan about how she would use obtain what she wanted.

A video clip about being open to new ways of thinking was also shown during this part of the study. Participant 2 expressed, "I wanted a polka dot dress, but I got a Barbie doll, because and I accepted it" (S2, W3, p. 1). This statement was an example of leadership skills by making adjustments when things do not go her way.

Leadership skills expressed in writing also were evident when she explained how, at home, she works with her family to get something done, and once it gets done, she gets a reward. She specifically stated, "Tonight we have to clean up the boys' room. I will try to do my best to get what I want or need" (S2, W4, p. 1). This statement can be seen as leadership because she states what needs to be done and how she will do it in order to receive a reward.

The last instance of self-advocacy skills, in the form of leadership in her writing, was first mentioned in communication skills when talking to her brother. Here, that same instance can be seen as taking leadership within self-advocacy, because it refers to her initiating a thought process before she acts on what she needs to do. As referenced prior, the statement was, "When I was going to talk to my brother I thought about what I was going to say and I do like the way I was thinking about it before talking to my brother so I don't say random words (S2. W5, p. 1).

Summary of Written Self-advocacy Occurrences Across Participants and Themes

Collectively, both participants were observed to exhibit self-advocacy skills throughout their writing, with varying quantities of each self-advocacy components, as identified by Test and colleagues (2005). Across writing samples, each participant had between 9 and 10 instances of self-advocacy. Table13 shows the specific occurrences for each self-advocacy component for each of the two participants in their POW+TREE writing samples.

Table 13

Amount of Written Self-Advocacy Across Participants By Theme

Self-Advocacy Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2
Knowledge of Self	4	2
Knowledge of Rights	1	1
Communication Skills	4	4
Leadership Skills	4	5
Total Skills	13	12

The second set of the observation (Weeks 9-11) focused on application of learned

self-advocacy skills in the form of verbal statement or actions after exposure to self-

advocacy strategies. At this stage of the study, the researcher used observation and

interviews to determine any application of self-advocacy, socially and verbally, compared

to their peers. Table 14 summarizes the findings observed for this part of the study

according to theme, by participant, and compared to their peers

Table 14

Summary of Self-advocacy Skills After WonderGrove and POW+TREE

Overarching Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Compared to peers
Knowledge of Self	Described personal strengths with detail	Described personal strengths with no detail	Same
	Could state a personal short term goal	Could state a personal long term goal	Same
Knowledge of Rights	No further application observed	Asking to leave the room	Most like Participant 2
Communication Skills	Not getting upset if he is not understood the first time.	Telling teacher what she needed could not be found and asked to use something else	Some like Participant 1; most like Participant 2
Leadership Skills	Using strategies to couch self through iPad activity	No further application observed	Some like Participant 1
	Tries to help peer and when he cannot he initiates getting help from teacher		Same as Participant 1

Participant 1 Applications as a Result of Exposure to Self-advocacy Tools

Knowledge of Self

The most observed application of skills that emerged in verbal and social

interactions with peers was observed in knowledge of self after exposure to self-advocacy

tools. When Participant 1 was asked about a personal strength, he was observed adding

more detail without prompting. The strength mentioned by Participant 1 was the same as

his first interview (i.e., soccer), but now he was able to provide more detail about why it

was a strength for him without the researcher asking for details. When asked to state a

goal, he provided a short goal with simple, descriptive detail in a way that provided the listener with understanding of what was said without the need for a follow-up questions. His written knowledge of self remained the same as earlier, with him writing his name on assignments.

Knowledge of Rights

Participant 1 had no noticeable additional application of new skills emerge in his knowledge of rights.

Communication Skills

In the area of communication skills, he was observed not be getting upset as much when he would not be initially understood. Clarification questions also were asked outside of the normal classroom environment. For example, during the last part of the study, the class was in the multipurpose room because their normal classroom was being used for state-testing. As Participant 1 was coming into the multipurpose room, he could be seen and heard asking the teacher if he needed to go sit on the blue carpet. Often, he was observed directly referencing self-advocacy strategies from WonderGrove, through phrases like, "I should [act differently] because Chris taught me." After making this statement, he was observed following through with the strategy he learned to stay calm, showing he had successfully learned communication skills to deal with a situation instead of becoming upset or crying. This application was the biggest application observed from the researcher's perspective.

Leadership Skills

Two applications in the leadership skills of Participant 1 were observed after exposure to self-advocacy tools. Each application was observed in different situations. First, while the class was in the multipurpose room and his group was working on an independent iPad activity, Participant 1 was observed saying, "I am having trouble remembering what happened in the book. I am going to go back and re-read before I keep going with the quiz." (S1, O11). After saying this, he proceeded to read the book again before taking the quiz he was assigned. Perhaps this behavior was recalled from the WonderGrove video, "Striving for Accuracy," which provides examples and ways to apply strategies such as slowing down and making sure things are correct before continuing. The second application was seen in the actual classroom environment. Participant 1 saw a peer struggling to open the classroom bathroom door. He got up and tried, but then went to get a teacher to help (S1, O13). Not only did he go to get help, he explained to the peer what he was going to do to try and solve the problem.

Participant 2 Applications as a Result of Exposure to Self-advocacy Tools

Knowledge of Self

In the area of knowledge of self, Participant 2 was observed as being the exact opposite after exposure to self-advocacy tools as she was before. Specifically, when she was asked to describe a personal strength, she did not provide detail, even when prompted, although she did so prior to exposure to self-advocacy tools. Before exposure to strategies, she did not state a personal longer term goal without prompting in a way the

listener could understand. Following exposure, she was able to provide more direct clarity to her thoughts regarding her goals.

Knowledge of Rights

In the area of knowledge of rights, Participant 2 was seen asking for permission to leave the room before leaving. The application of this skills was the one that emerged most often throughout the study. Perhaps it was because the strategies she was exposed to in WonderGrove, "Managing Impulsivity," as well as the behavior chart the classroom teacher implemented with her at the beginning of the study prior to any exposure to self-advocacy strategies.

Communication Skills

The application of the skill of using more effective communication skills also was observed. For example, during a class writing activity, the teacher indicated for students to use a red crayon. A box of crayons was on her table, but she could not find a red one, so she asked the teacher if she could use a red colored pencil or marker. The teacher allowed her to choose whichever one she preferred (S2, O16). The WonderGrove video, "Questioning and Problem Posing," did model this behavior, but Participant 2 was absent when it was shown. Perhaps she mirrored the behaviors learned from this video from Participant 1 who did get to watch it or picked up the observed behavior from other peers in her class. Either way, this application and use of communication skills was not observed during the first observation period.

Leadership Skills

Participant 2 had no noticeable additional application of new skills emerge in the area of leadership.

Perceptions of Self-advocacy Skills: Research Question 3

The third research question was: What are students with disabilities and others (family members, teachers) involved in the students' lives perceptions of self-advocacy skills? Interviews with the classroom teacher and a parent of each participant were used to answer this questions.   The data sources gathered for this question occurred both before and after the sharing of self-advocacy and writing strategies. The perceptions of self-advocacy skills were positive throughout the study from both students with disabilities, and family members, as well as the classroom teacher.   The applications noted were clarity of communication skills, more compliance with rules and expectations, and openness to talking to more than just a preferred adult.

General Perceptions of Self-advocacy

Perceptions of the importance of self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities in the second grade were ascertained from interviews with the classroom teacher and each parent of the two participants. The classroom teacher expressed, "Yes, I think it is very important for them to be able to do things on their own" (T1, I1, p. 1). She mentioned how she tries to allow students to practice these skills and build confidence with them. She added, in the inclusive setting, she expects all students, typical peers and those with disabilities, to have the opportunity to "help and learn from others" (T1, I1, p.

1). The parents of both participants expressed importance of their child beginning to develop self-advocacy skills in the second grade. The parent of Participant 1 expressed, "I want him to always feel like his needs and wants are important" (P1, I1, p. 1). She later added, "I want him to kind of filter when we are out somewhere, so he is not just explosive when he gets upset (P1, I1, p. 1). The parent of Participant 2 said it was important for her daughter to develop self-advocacy skills in the second grade "because she is moving forward, becoming more independent. It is also important to me that she develop them" (P2, I1, p. 1). All of the adults in the lives of the students with disabilities within the study had a positive, general perception of their students, son, or daughter developing self-advocacy skills in the second grade. The classroom teacher wanted them to have the skills as a source of independence. The parent of Participant 1 shared she wanted her son to have more self-control when expressing issues with a self-advocacy nature (P1, I1). The parent of Participant 2 wanted her daughter to develop these skills, so she can grow in her independence (P2, I1).

Perceptions Before WonderGrove and POW+TREE

All components of self-advocacy were perceived to be present at the beginning of the study, but some areas were less developed than others for each of the participants. Interviews with parents of participants and the classroom teacher provided insight to each of the components of self-advocacy. As for knowledge of self, both participants were seen as able to express his or her likes and dislikes. A knowledge of rights also was present, but how and when rules were followed, differed among participants according to both parents and teacher. For communication skills, both participants were identified as

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verbal. Participant 1 had a tendency to get upset when he was not being understood by others. Whereas, Participant 2 would often write things down in a journal when she was upset before talking to others about those feelings. Leadership skills were seen and acknowledged in both participants by their parents and classroom teacher. Overall, the perceptions of self-advocacy skills were positive, with different insights provided based on who was interviewed. See Table 15 for a summary of the perceptions of self-advocacy skills before students were exposed to self-advocacy strategies.

Table 15

Perceptions Before Self-advocacy Strategies

Overarching Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2
Knowledge of Self	Can express likes and dislikes	Can express likes and dislikes
Knowledge of Rights	T: Has a hard time with whole class discipline P: Wants to follow exact rules but sometimes needs reminders to follow	P: Know what she can and can't do but likes to test boundaries
Communication Skills	T/P: Gets upset because he is not being understood S: Always open with teachers, friends, family	T/P: Will often write down feelings
Leadership Skills	T/P: Has ways been a leader	T/P: Has always been a leader

Through observations of the student participants, interviews with them, their parents and classroom teacher, both exhibited self-advocacy skills within the inclusive classroom setting. Their self-advocacy methods were different from each other, but were effective. Participant 1 self-advocated independently. Participant 2 was able to self-advocate following minimal prompting given an instance requiring self-advocacy. During one of

the interviews with the classroom teacher, she stated a goal for her class, including

students with disabilities, was to make sure "they can trust me and have fun at school,

and grow as a learner and grow as a reader and have a great time at school and want to

come to school" (T1, I1, p. 1). The way the teacher interacted with all her students, and

further information ascertained from interviews, showed her class goal was being

accomplished.

Participant 1

Knowledge of Self

Throughout the first interviews with his parent and the classroom teacher, the

researcher learned Participant 1 was probably unaware of his disability. His parent

stated,

> "No, I don't think he knows. And I don't think even if he did, I don't think with his
>
> personality that it would really make a difference, if he knew that he had a
>
> disability. I think it would be the same. He would still react the same way. That
>
> is just the way that he is." (P1, I1, p.1)

His teacher alluded to the same idea; Participant 1 did not know about his disability as

well. In reference to the knowledge of self seen within Participant 1, she expressed, "I

think that he is aware that he needs help on certain things." (T1, I1, p.2). From the

viewpoint of those that did not know this student as well, she said, "others would not

notice that he has a disability" (T1, I1, p. 2). This same behavior was observed, through

situations where Participant 1 was asked about what supports he was receiving to help

him manage his disability, and he would either verbally or physically (i.e. shrug) not knowing.

Knowledge of Rights

Both his parent and teacher shared that it is difficult for him to sometimes come away from a preferred activity, even when he knows that it is time to transition to something different. His parent explained,

> "If he can't do a preferred activity, if someone is trying to break him away from that, and he is just not happy about it. Yes, if it is not what he wants to do, then you definitely know that that is not what he wants." (P1, I1, p. 2)

The researcher asked how he would let know someone know and two different indications of frustration were provided. His parent said he would start screaming about it if he was really upset. His classroom teacher provided an example that he would start to cry in a way to get the attention of everyone around him.

Communication Skills

Communication skills of Participant 1 were described as very open by both his classroom teacher and parent. The classroom teacher simply explained, "he gets upset if things don't go his way" (T1, I1). In the first interview with his parent, she provided a detailed description of his communication skills,

> "He can definitely tell you what he likes and what he does not like. He is very passionate. If he really likes something and somebody is trying to interfere with that, he is very emotional. Like he is either very happy or not. If someone is

praising him or telling him he's doing good, he is very happy. I think he thrives

on praise and being rewarded for doing good things. But then whenever

something negative, like if someone says something negative to him, then he

automatically just goes to the opposite end where he is really upset. So he can tell

you exactly what he does not like, he is just very emotional with that, very, very

emotional." (P1, I1, p. 2)

Further, she explained, "He is always open and wanting to communicate his wants and

needs with others. He just seemed to lack how to do so appropriately" (P1, I1). Another

description of his verbal presentation style was that he had "…no filter at all. If

something is bothering him he will immediately just say it and say why and who was

doing it...he just will immediately react…like he does not even think about it" (P1, I1, p.

1). The behavior described was not observed by the researcher.

Leadership Skills

Leadership skills were apparent in observations, as well as acknowledged and

described by his parent and classroom teacher from the very beginning of the study.

Prior to exposure to self-advocacy strategies, his parent said, "He definitely is a leader

with the way that he speaks and the way that he does things" (P1, I1, p. 2). The

researcher also observed his leadership skills during multiple situations where he offered

to help and then helped his classmates. In addition to helping others, the classroom

teacher expressed, "He can tell goals and strategies to get there" (T1, I1). The researcher

also was able to see this behavior during his first interview where he stated a specific goal

(i.e. buying a Minecraft game) and stating his strategy to reach that goal (i.e. saving a specific amount of money).

<u>Participant 2</u>

Knowledge of Self

The perceptions related to knowledge of self for Participant 2, held by her parent and classroom teacher, mirrored those regarding Participant 1. When asked about disability as an aspect of her knowledge of self, her parent simply answered, "Not really I don't…nope. honestly not really. I don't necessarily know if she whole heartedly thinks that she has one." (P2, I1, p.1). The classroom teacher expressed a similar statement to the parents of Participant 2, but also explained that Participant 2 can express her strengths and challenges. Her classroom teacher specifically said, "I am pretty sure she can explain what is hard for her and what she is working on, but I have never asked her specifically what her disability is." (T1, I2, p. 2). Such knowledge of self also was evident in observations.

Knowledge of Rights

The perceptions of knowledge of rights for Participant 2 were the same among her parent and classroom teacher. Her parent explained, "She knows what she can and cannot do at home and school but like all kids will test the boundaries" (P2, I1, p. 1). When asked to give examples, none were provided. The classroom teacher provided the same information but was able to give concrete examples of how Participant 2 functions best within a set of rules and expectations. She explained,

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"Some days she just does not feel like doing something. We have to motivate her, or we have to not bribe her, but remind her of her behavior chart and when she finishes tasks she earns some type of a reward. So she knows that she is working for something that she will get." (T1, I2, p. 2)

In observations at the beginning of the study, situations described by the classroom teacher occurred. After learning some self-advocacy strategies, she was more willing to comply with expectations if she understood the reasoning behind the request and was acknowledged for following them.

Communication Skills

The communication skills of Participant 2 were similar to those of Participant 1. Her parent stated, related to any want or need, "She just says it…she is very forth worth. She has no qualms with just telling you. This is what I need. This is what I want. I have to do this. I need you to help me do this" (P2, I1, p. 1). This same behavior was observed by the researcher, but it was more prominent if it related to a preferred or desired activity. The classroom teacher supported what the parent stated and what was seen in observations by explaining, "I think if she knows what she is supposed to do or get done, she can communicate that to you and can get it done" (T1, I2, p. 2). This ability to communicate needs also was observed, but self-advocacy in this area occurred more often with a task of interest to her.

Leadership Skills

Leadership skills in Participant 2 were acknowledged and described by her parent and classroom teacher. Her parent explained leadership in the way of preferred activities,

"With certain things at home, if there is something that she wants to do she will lead that activity like cleaning if she wants everyone else to participate. She has been so shy for so long that she is just now coming out of her shell." (P2, I1, p. 1)

The classroom teacher depicted the leadership skills of Participant 2 as it relates to her gaining assistance, interacting with friends, and willingness towards doing an activity. She summarized,

"If she does not know how to do something, she will definitely let us know. If she struggles with something, she will ask for help. I see her as a leader within her friends. If she does not what to do something, then she will not do it." (T1, I2, p. 3)

What was summarized by the classroom teacher also was seen during observations conducted by the researcher, prior to exposure to self-advocacy strategies.

Perceptions After WonderGrove and POW+TREE

The sharing of WonderGrove and POW+TREE seemed to give both participants different strategies they could use to self-advocate, both in speaking and in writing. WonderGrove provided them with modeled strategies to use to verbally self-advocate. The POW+TREE writing strategy provided a method to communicate their wants and needs in writing. At the end of the second session of observations, the researcher asked

each participant if they liked, or if they learned, any new strategies to help them self-advocate for their needs and wants.

Perceptions from the Viewpoint of Participant 1

Participant 1 indicated that he liked learning the self-advocacy strategies presented. He went into great detail about what he learned about each strategy. He shared three different strategies he learned from WonderGrove. First he said he learned, "more ways to talk to friends" (S1, I2, p.1). Second, he indirectly mentioned the "Questioning and Problem Posing" video clip and shared, "If you are missing something, you could ask someone where it is" (S1, I2, p.1).   Third, he talked about "learning how to think through how to do things, so they are right the first time" (S1, I2, p. 1).

For the second part of the interview, Participant 1 was asked about how, and if, the POW+TREE strategy helped him gain the ability to share his needs and wants through writing. He simply stated that the POW+TREE strategy helped him to, "…plan what you are going to write and then you can write it on the paper" (S1, I2, p. 1).

Perceptions from the Viewpoint of Participant 2

First, she was asked if she liked each of the specific self-advocacy strategies that were shared with her. Her response about the WonderGrove videos was, "Yes, because they were talking about what they like, and how old are they, and how they like things, and how they be outside, and how they just be around things all the time" (S1, I2, p. 1). Through previous observations and a prior interview with Participant 2, she perhaps liked the WonderGrove videos because the characters did things she also liked doing (i.e.

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playing outside). In addition, she liked to get to know new people, and through the charter introduction videos at the being of the strategy tools sharing week, she was able to "meet" five different characters. Next, when she was asked whether she liked learning the POW+TREE writing strategy, she simply said, "Well, not really" (S2, I2, p. 1) and provided no further explanation when prompted.

After gaining whether or not she liked learning the strategies, she was then asked if either one helped her express herself either with her voice or in writing. Regarding the WonderGrove strategy, she only mentioned how characters, "expressed his feeling like to other people" (S2, I2, p. 1), but then did not provide further explanation as to how that helped her use the strategy to express wants and needs using her voice. In reference to the POW+TREE strategy, she did acknowledge that she learned a new way to express herself in writing, but then expressed "But pretty much it is pretty easy for me to write things" (S2, I2, p. 12). She also expressed, "I have used teachers to help me get the questions right and wrong. So yeah, I pretty much get all the help I need and want" S2, I2, p. 1).

Perceptions from the Viewpoint of Parents and Classroom Teacher

Parents and the classroom teacher were interviewed again to see if they saw any additional examples of application in self-advocacy skills following exposure to self-advocacy strategies. Overall, in some, but not all areas, examples of application of self-advocacy skills emerged. See Table 16 for a summary of parent and teacher perceptions after the exposure to self-advocacy strategies.

Table 16

Perceptions After Self-Advocacy Strategies

Overarching Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2
Knowledge of Self	P: Using more feeling statements	P: No further examples of application
		T: More open with teachers
Knowledge of Rights	P: Expressing why something is not fair if he feels it is not fair	P: No further examples of application
		T: More willing to comply with rules and expectations without reminders
Communication Skills	P: Using more "self language" and putting himself in the situation when he is explaining something,	P: No further examples of application
	T: Not getting upset as easily or as often	T: Will to talk to more teachers instead of just one or two if she is having a problem
Leadership Skills	P: No further examples of application	P: No further examples of application
	T: No further examples of application	T: No further examples of application

Participant 1

Knowledge of Self

His parent indicated that he was using more feelings statements and explaining himself within a situation (P1, I2). When asked to explain further, she provided that he is being more specific and direct about what and why something is making him upset. The classroom teacher did not mention anything specific about what Participant 1 learned about knowledge of self, just that he "caught on to the video and learned a lot from them" (T1, I2, p. 1).

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Knowledge of Rights

In regards to knowledge of rights, his parent described that he is explaining more why he feels something is not fair instead of just staying that it is not fair. There were no comments regarding this aspect of self-advocacy provided by the classroom teacher.

Communication Skills

His parent also described Participant 1 as being "more assertive" (P1, I2, p. 2). To do so, he is using more "self-language" and putting himself in the situation to help explain why it is not fair to him (P2, I2, p. 2). The classroom teacher also provided that she had not seen him get upset as easily or as often since the self-advocacy strategies had been shared with him.

Leadership Skills

In regards to leadership skills, his parent and classroom teacher did not see any further examples of application.

Participant 2

Knowledge of Self

There were two different perspectives of knowledge of self for Participant 2. Her parent indicated observing no new examples of application of self-advocacy skills after sharing the self-advocacy strategies. On the contrary, her teacher indicated she was more open with teachers. When asked for further explanation, her teacher said, before,

Participant 2 would favor one or two teachers, but now she is more open with all teachers in taking about likes and dislikes. This example of application of this skill also was seen in the second half of the observations, because Participant 2 would mention how other teachers have helped in different ways.

Knowledge of Rights

Two different perspectives were presented for knowledge of rights. Her parent indicated no further examples of application of this skill were observed. However, the classroom teacher shared that Participant 2 was more willing to comply with classroom rules and expectations without reminders. The researcher noticed this example of application of knowledge of rights as well within the classroom environment.

Communication Skills

Again, different perspectives were provided in the area of self-advocacy. Her parent did not express observing any further examples of application of self-advocacy skills in her communication skills at home. However, the classroom teacher shared that she had seen Participant 2 more willing to communicate with all her teachers if she has a problem, instead of only talking to one or two about any given problem (T1, I2). This behavior was seen through the observations by the way Participant 2 would mention specific teachers by name, other than her homeroom teacher, and expressed ways that he or she had helped her through a problem.

Leadership Skills

In regards to leadership skills, her parent and classroom teacher did not see any further examples of application in this area.

Fidelity of Procedures

Reliability

Three methods of reliability were used throughout the study. They were a) intercoder agreement, b) interrater reliability, and c) audio recording. At the end of each observation session, the researcher wrote observation summaries. At the conclusion of each observation period, the peer research assistant conducted intercoder agreement on observation summaries. Intercoder agreement was 100% between the researcher and the peer research assistant. Interrater agreement was conducted on the writing samples. Agreement was indicated if the rater or raters indicated inclusion of each POW+TREE component. The research assistant was trained on this rating system by reviewing the introductory writing samples where Participant 1 and 2 wrote about their favorite WonderGrove character. Training was conducted by the researcher reviewing the POW+TREE rubric with the research assistant and then going through introductory writing samples together and discussing specific issues when clarification was needed. Audio recording of interviews were used to ensure accurate documentation of interview findings.

Validity

Two validation strategies were used to ensure fidelity procedures. As data were collected, it was entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and triangulation of themes across all data sources occurred. Triangulation assisted in providing organization to better identify emerging themes (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation occurred at the end of each data collection period, approximately every three weeks across observations, interviews, and writing samples. Member checking by adult participants of interviews were accurately recorded through transcription. Member checking was attempted with all three adult participants. Results from member checking were obtained from the classroom teacher and one parent. Minor corrections were offered from the classroom teacher and the returned transcriptions of the parent's interviews did not indicate any necessary changes. Formal member checking was not conducted with Participant 1 and 2's interviews due to the age of the participants, so the peer research assistant listened to the audio recording of all student interviews to ensure they were transcribed by the researcher accurately.

Conclusions According to Theme

The researcher used four, pre-determined themes to categorize all data. Test and colleagues (2005) developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy consisting of four components. These components (e.g. knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, effective communication skills, and leadership skills) were the pre-determined themes. All themes were evident in all data sources, with different themes having more presence than others.

Each theme was summarized according to findings before and after the sharing of WonderGrove and POW+TREE by participant.

Knowledge of Self

Both participants had a basic knowledge of self at the beginning of the study; however, after the sharing of the self-advocacy tools, both had a clear way of expressing their knowledge in this area. Member checking of adult interviews, which were then triangulated with observations and document analysis, indicated both participants had growth in this area. All data sources for Participant 1 indicated growth. For Participant 2, the majority of the data sources indicated growth. In this case, no further examples of application in the knowledge of self was indicated in the second interview with her parent, but within the setting of the study, the teacher noted she was more open to talking with other teachers.

Knowledge of Rights

At the beginning of the study, a knowledge of rights was present for both participants, but it appeared to be stronger for Participant 1 than for Participant 2. Following member checking and triangulation of all data sources across the study, both students showed growth in his or her knowledge of rights in both the school and home settings. Data for Participant 1 showed calmer and more expressive way of following and working within rules at school and home. Participant 2 did not have any further

examples of application of this skill within the home environment but was seen complying more with school rules and expectations.

Communication Skills

In communication skills area of self-advocacy skills, examples of application of this skill were seen in both participant, but not in both settings. For Participant 1, in the home setting, he was expressing himself more in situations where he used to just say he was upset. To the same effect, his classroom teacher indicated he was not seen getting upset as often, and when he did, he was able to express himself in a way to get others to help him through the situation. As for Participant 2, the parent did not see an further application in her communication skills after exposure to the self-advocacy strategies, but within the classroom environment, she was seen communicating more with teachers.

Leadership Skills

As for growth in leadership skills, before and after exposure to self-advocacy strategies, further examples of application of this skill were not noted in either the home environment or the school setting.

Conclusions Across Themes and Participants

Overall, based on triangulation across all data sources, self-advocacy skills were evident, as compared to their peers, for two students with identified disabilities, in a second grade classroom. Both participants were provided instruction in writing and self-advocacy, through WonderGrove videos, to provide an opportunity to increase self-

advocacy skills. Following the training in writing and videos on self-advocacy, areas of growth were identified for both participants. More growth was seen across both participants within the school setting than at home. Across themes, both participants showed evidence of applying self-advocacy skills in all areas, but the most growth was in the area of communication skills. Such findings lend importance to continuing research and practice in self-advocacy skill development, both in speaking and writing at the elementary level, for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The researchers in this study, using a qualitative phenomenological approach, explored the verbal and written self-advocacy skills of second grade students with disabilities in an inclusive setting. A study was designed to guide the exploration of the lived experiences and preferences of these students, self-advocating through speaking and writing. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analyses. Two interviews were conducted with student participants, student participants' parents and the students' classroom teacher. Observations were conducted at the beginning and end of the study for two hours a day, three days a week, for three consecutive weeks. Document analyses of writing samples, collected as part of the self-advocacy training, also were analyzed. All data were analyzed manually and triangulated across sources. Four, pre-selected themes were presented across the four areas of self-advocacy as identified by Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005): a) knowledge of self, b) knowledge of rights, c) effective communication skills, and d) leadership skills across all data sources gathered.

The researcher beings this chapter with a discussion of the study findings as it corresponds to each research question and the current literature within the field. Limitations to the study and how they may have impacted the outcomes are presented. Implications for practice as they are relevant to themes of the study are discussed and compared to embedded personal examples of the researcher as a person with a disability. The chapter concludes with future research recommendations to continue exploring the written and verbal self-advocacy skills of elementary students with disabilities.

Research Questions

1.   What are the lived experiences of students with disabilities in a second grade, inclusive classroom prior to being presented with self-advocacy instruction in speaking and writing?

2.   How do students with disabilities self-advocate socially, verbally, and/or in writing in a second grade, inclusive classroom when presented with self-advocacy and writing instructional strategies?

3.   What are students with disabilities and others (family members, teachers) involved in the students' lives perceptions of self-advocacy skills?

Summary of Themes

Using the theoretical framework of Test and colleagues (2005), the data were analyzed for evidence of (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) effective communication skills, and (d) leadership skills. These four aspects were pre-determined themes and remained as the themes throughout the study. Each theme will be discussed individually as it appeared across observations, interviews, and analyses of writing samples of the students with disabilities as compared to theirs peers. An action plan is provided to help teachers and parents equip students with disabilities at the elementary level with self-advocacy skills built upon the literature, the personal experiences of the researcher, and the finding from this study.

Knowledge of Self

Knowledge of self was defined as, "…[verbal and/or written expressions] of one's own interests, preferences, strengths, needs, learning styles, and attributes of one's disability" (Test, Fowler, Wood, et al., 2005). This theme permeated throughout all sources of data. Even though parents and teachers indicated that neither participant could identify their exact disability, both participants were able to talk about themselves and express what was difficult for him or her. What they expressed was unbeknownst to them, an aspect of his or her disability. All adult interviewees supported that the student participants knew they were different from their peers, but were not able to label it as a "disability." Parents expressed that, even if their child did know he or she had a disability, there would be no further examples of application in his or her self-advocacy behaviors (P1, I1; P2, I2). Perhaps the importance of their child learning to self-advocate is unrelated to the fact that a disability is present. Moreover, student participants' knowledge of self mirrored disability theory. Each student participants' disabilities were simply viewed as a positive rather than a negative aspect of who they were as a person (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The effect of the self-advocacy strategies on knowledge of self varied, depending on participant. Participant 1 referenced that he had never heard of POW+TREE or seen the WonderGrove videos, and was eager to learn more. He appeared to have increased his ability to self-advocate because he was being exposed to new information and ways to think about himself and to communicate. Participant 1 mentioned he liked to try new things (S1, W3) and appeared to use the skills learned in new ways in the post-observations.

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In contrast, Participant 2 did not seem to show as many examples of applications of new skills after watching the video and learning POW+TREE. Her lack of application of self-advocacy skills may have stemmed from the fact that she had seen the WonderGrove videos before and did not think she could get anything out of them a second time. She also made it clear she did not like the repeated pattern of the WonderGrove and POW+TREE strategy. She specifically stated in her second interview, "…because you have to do it over and over and over and over again" (S2, I2, p.1). Being exposed to the videos again and the repetitious activity of POW+TREE may have inhibited her in expanding the ways she expressed her wants and needs.

As related to their peers, Participant 1 and Participant 2 were the same as their classmates with identified disabilities. The two participants, like their peers, could not clearly talk about the specific name or nature of their disability. These two participants and their peers appeared to be able to speak around their disability (i.e. characters of the disability) but could not provide specific names or details (i.e. Cerebral Palsy or Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). Peers that did not have a disability, but were heard in conversation talking about a sibling with a disability, could only speak about his or her sibling in generalities very similar to the way Participant 1 and 2 talked about his or her needs.

An action plan related to understanding the nature of a disability in a positive and conversational tone is something for the field to consider using, even at the elementary level. From the researcher's perspective, as a person with a disability and based upon findings from the literature, students with disabilities and their typical developing peers should have a working and accurate understanding of disability (i.e., name of disability

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and basic traits of it), of either their own disability or that of their siblings. Such knowledge being shared early in a child's life could help students with disabilities be prepared for advocacy needs early in life and make them "College and Career Ready," ready to know and understand what they need for the greatest success possible in life. Unfortunately, some students do not even learn about their disability until they try to enter postsecondary settings. McCarthy (2007) emphasized this reality as, "Sometimes, the growth and increased knowledge that comes from self-advocacy are more powerful than the fairness of the solution" (p.15). Children and students of all ages and all abilities and disabilities should know about themselves and be able to use the skills of self-advocacy outlined by Test and colleagues (2005). The need for formal training and discussion around self-advocacy is critical, so all students can use that knowledge to identify and act on a solution for what they aspire to become, not what others think or want them to become.

Knowledge of Rights

The guiding definition used for knowledge of rights was, "…[verbal and/or written expressions] of one's rights as a citizen, as an individual with a disability, and as a student receiving services under federal law" (Test et al., 2005, p. 50). Due to the age of participants, this definition was simplified to simply reflect following rules and expectations at home and school. This specific aspect of self-advocacy was the most challenging to observe and articulate. The definition provided by Test and colleagues (2005) was deemed to be at a level of higher thinking than what second graders are cognitively able to follow and comprehend. While knowing and following rules and

expectations in the classroom or home setting were difficult to report due to the attitudes and inconsistent patterns both participants showed with this specific aspect of self-advocacy, these behaviors were the only ones the researcher could logically align with this aspect of the Test and colleague framework. Knowledge of rights was apparent with both student participants across data sources. Participant 1 was observed by the researcher and referred to as someone that wanted to follow and have everyone around him follow the rules in an immediate and deliberate manner. Participant 2 was the opposite; she would comply on her own time and in her own way, if she did not want to do as she was told. Knowledge of rights was present for each student, but expressed in different ways. Participant 1 was referred to and observed as being vocal in following rules and expectations; whereas, Participant 2 more often silently exhibited her thoughts towards the rules and expectations within any given situation. Hart and Brehm (2013) provided steps in how to introduce and promote self-advocacy within the elementary classroom. One of the steps is to present options students can use to comply with an expectation. Both participants exercised this choice in their own ways throughout the study.

The self-advocacy strategies presented through WonderGrove and POW+TREE, referencing knowledge of rights, had differing outcomes. Participant 1 remained as particular about following rules and expectations as at the beginning of the study, but how he reacted to others following or not following them was different. At the end of the study, the researcher noted he was less impacted by how others complied to rules around him and more focused on his own behaviors regarding rules and procedures (T1, I2). As a researcher, he seemed to realize their compliance was not about how others functioned

within their rights, it was only about how he functioned within them (T1, I1). Participant 2 acknowledged she knew rules and expectations but still chose only to follow them when and if she wanted (T1, I2; P2, I2). This inconsistent behavior was thought to be because she was comfortable with her environments and had learned that she can choose what a rule was for her and what was not.

As related to their peers, their class showed the same attitudes toward the rules as both participants. Knowing the rules and following them were two different concepts for all of the students in the class. Test and colleagues (2005) defined that knowing the rules refers to not only the basics of the classroom, but also protective legislation. Classroom rules were the guiding lens for this study. Participant 2 continuously commented, "Why do I have to do this?" across strategy sharing sessions. Her classroom teacher would encourage and explain that it is the rules of the activity and also explained that it would help her learn to self-advocate. She would not always comply, even after encouragement. Knowing and complying within ones' rights, as an individual, provides for him or her to be afforded the same opportunities as those without disabilities by being able to offer an acceptable alternative for not following the prescribed rule.

The peers of Participant 1 and 2 in the inclusive second grade setting were more alike than different. All of the students in the class appeared to know the general rules and expectations, but all were unaware of specific laws to protect them (i.e. ADA). Students with disabilities need to know and learn to explain their rights at a young age, because later in life, they will be responsible to explain their needs to others if they are to have the same opportunities as their peers without disabilities (McCarthy, 2007).

Effective Communication Skills

Effective communication skills, "…[verbal and/or written expressions through] negotiation, persuasion, and compromise…body language and listen skills… include effective and appropriate communication of feelings, needs, and desires…" (Test et al., 2005, p. 50). Participant 1 and Participant 2 exhibited effective communication skills, each unique to their personality. Participant 1 chose to vocalize his communication needs between parents, teachers, and peers. Communication was consistently attempted, although not always initially understood. This challenge was observed by the researcher and supported by interviews with the classroom teacher and his parent (T1, I1, P1, I1). Often for Participant 1, if his first communication attempt was not initially understood, he would try again, using the same method of communication, but with a level of frustration present toward anyone he was trying to communicate with in the process.

Participant 2 would either wait for communication to be initiated with her to address an instructional challenge, or show she did not want to comply with directions by avoiding tasks and/or vocalizing not wanting to do something. Hart and Brehm (2013) suggest modeling communication skills for students can to help them self-advocate. The classroom teacher in this environment employed this modeling technique. Parents also expressed modeling effective communication skills for Participant 2.

Effective communication skills remained the same for both participants, even after sharing WonderGrove and POW+TREE strategies. For instance, Participant 1 remained vocal with his parents, teachers, and peers but did add a layer to his communication skills by employing strategies he learned from WonderGrove. He seemed to really like the WonderGrove character, Chris, and he often referred to wanting to be

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like him. Within all shown WonderGrove videos, Chris would talk about things he liked that were identical to those of Participant 1 (i.e. sports, reading), which may have contributed to the connection and employing strategies shared by this character.

Participant 2 was reported to be more willing to communicate with other teachers than just her homeroom teacher (T1, I2) after watching the WonderGrove videos, but from the researcher's observations, her classroom behaviors remained the same. This lack of application in Participant 2 was not surprising as she seemed to believe her communication style worked well in the past, so there was no need for her to try something new.

As related to their peers, both Participants 1 and 2 looked like the majority of their peers. All of the students appeared to be able to speak up for their needs and wants while trying new strategies if suggested. The lack of flexibility for application of this skill in Participant 2 in adopting new ideas was one variance observed.

Students with disabilities, as do all elementary students, need to be exposed, encouraged, and supported to explore new and different ways to reach a goal. This skill set needs to be attained by giving students knowledge and practice through avenues like WonderGrove, through role plays, or by having students write or talk about various ways to reach a goal. If individuals with disabilities are not exposed to multiple strategies nor given a safe place to practice these skills, they may not have the resources needed later in life to independently use strategies for goal attainment. Hart and Brehm (2013) provide steps to teach elementary students with disabilities strategies to accomplish those tasks. This type of direct instruction of skills could help students take action in their own goal setting and to have a voice in their future, but these skills must be taught by teachers and

parents, alike (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Erwin et al., 2009; Palmer et al., 2013; Wehmeyer, 2015).

Leadership Skills

Leadership was defined as, "learning the roles and dynamics of a group and the skill to function in a group" and then acting within them (Test et al., 2005, p. 50). Leadership skills were evident with participants, as defined by Test and colleagues (2005), and supported by documentation across all methods of data collection. Participant 1 was observed helping his classmates in times of need. His parent and teacher referred to him as a leader with a willingness to offer a helping hand (P1, I1; T1, I1). Participant 2 would help her friends, but also talked in her first interview about how she was hesitant to lead some things because she was afraid of the response she would receive (P2, I1). Leadership skills for both participants were most evident among those he or she trusted. Perhaps this presentation of leadership skills was due to learned behaviors or past experiences when trying to use leadership skills within different groups. The attitude of both participants about taking chances and using leadership skills did not have examples of further application after exposure to the WonderGrove and POW+TREE strategies. This lack of further application of this skill was thought to be because they were comfortable with the skills they already had and did not see the necessity to learn any new methods of leadership in order to meet a want or a need.

As related to their peers, both participants had similar leadership skills as defined as helping friends or expressing a way they wanted to do an activity. The one difference was their peers would help all classmates instead of those they saw as their friends.

Students with disabilities need to lead in situations where they are both comfortable and uncomfortable when it comes to meeting their specific needs. They also need the skills to assert themselves when they are being excluded, especially if the exclusion is based upon their not having needed accommodations. Their ability to lead their future goes hand-in-hand with knowing strategies to advocate for individual needs, wants, or desires.

Summary of Findings

Although the present study focused on exploring the phenomenon of second-grade students with disabilities, self-advocating in the classroom and home settings, a similar finding emerged from a study focusing on high school students with disabilities learning to self-advocate. Eisenman and Tascione (2002) reported high school students with disabilities do not display an awareness of their own disability by stating,

> Most students could not recall ever talking about their disabilities or special
> education needs with an adult in a school setting. When discussions did occur, it
> was most often initiated by a parent or counselor around initial testing and referral
> for special education services and students represented these discussions as
> limited (p. 39).

This same finding was evident in the present study. The age or educational level of participants in the present study is a consideration, but not a reason to exclude them from developing knowledge about their disability and beginning to learn to self-advocate earlier than high school. Having knowledge of their disability, starting in the elementary years, could help prevent the finding of Hong, Ivy, Gonzalez, and Ehrensberger (2007). These researchers found many students with disabilities do not learn they have a

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disability until they reach college because their parents advocated on their behalf without the student with a disability being a part of the process. Exposure to self-advocacy strategies, in elementary school, for students with disabilities, has been a concern among elementary teachers across research; however, action among those teachers has been limited. Fiedler and Danneker (2007) reported teachers acknowledging the need for self-advocacy starting at the elementary level, but this type of instruction is lacking. Strategies that could be used (i.e. Foster & Ehrensberger, 2005; Hart & Brehm, 2013; Kling, 2000) to help students at the elementary level self-advocate, or research being conducted (i.e. Kleinert, Harrison, Mills, Dueppen, & Trailor, 2014; Zickel & Arnold, 2001), focused on this age group, is currently limited both in strategies to teach these skills, or evidence-based practices for this age of student.

In an effort to contribute to the field, more research and strategies to teach self-advocacy skills at the elementary level is needed. The researcher in the present study yielded some initial findings to consider, specifically strategies needed for verbal and written self-advocacy.

Verbal Self-advocacy

Verbally, both participants could self-advocate for their wants and needs. The focus population of this study on second graders and their ability to speak up for their wants and needs was supported by the development theory, which explains students at the elementary level can articulate his or her wants and needs (Piaget, 1964). As the study progressed, participants' strategies used to self-advocate became more diverse and better understood by others (T1, I1; P1, I1; P2. I1). This finding strengthens the support that

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exposing students with disabilities to self-advocacy skills during their elementary years begins to build the needed practice with these skills, critical for later years when independence is the goal for all students.

Compared to peers, Participants 1 and 2 appeared to apply some of their self-advocacy skills through strategies presented through POW+TREE and WonderGrove. When Participants 1 and 2 were exposed to more direct self-advocacy strategies, they used some of the skills presented. Self-advocacy strategies are essential for all students; however, students with disabilities often do not learn these skills or until they reach higher levels of education, because they "…rarely talked to anyone about those issues" (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002, p. 38) or any issue that arises is resolved by their parents, teachers, and counselors without the student involved. Ensuring strong, verbal, self-advocacy skills is critical to learn as early in life as possible.

<center>Written Self-advocacy</center>

In writing, both participants provided ways they could implement the self-advocacy strategies they were exposed to through WonderGrove, while providing reasons for implementation in a manner that was simple, yet understood by others. Research conducted by Cuenca-Carlino and Mustian (2013), as well as Cuenca-Sanchez, Mastropieri, Scruggs, and Kidd (2012), provided the starting foundation of teaching elementary students with disabilities to self-advocate through writing. The presented study helped to extend this same reasoning by exposing elementary students with disabilities to strategies and applying them in ways to help self-advocate for wants and needs. Empowering students with disabilities with strategies to self-advocate through

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written composition allows for a different mode to be used rather than just speaking as a way to be better understood by others (Sulzby, 1992). Sulzby (1992) stated, having the ability to write in a conventional manner allows for readers of to understand the message of the writer. In turn, writing to self-advocate allows students with disabilities another method of expressing their wants and needs.

Writing to self-advocate, in the educational research field, is a concept that has only focused on students with disabilities at the secondary level (Bogard & McMackin, 2012; Graham & Harris, 2013; Peterson-Karlan, 2011). The use of conventional writing needs to be taught and applied to all students at all grade levels (Sulzby, 1992). Students with disabilities need to be able to self-advocate in all four areas identified by Test and colleagues (2005), so they can obtain the services specific to their needs in all educational environments.   Sharing the tools of WonderGrove and POW+TREE provided a means through which the development of self-advocacy skills could be facilitated. Facilitating these skills is important for writing and thinking development so individuals can clearly articulate and convey issues in which they are using self-advocacy skills.

Limitations

By definition, a phenomenological study "describes the common meeting for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). At the beginning of the study, the researcher sat down with the classroom teacher and selected students with disabilities to participate in the study. Six were identified but only two returned parental consent forms. The limited number of participants made it a challenge to stay true to the phenomenological definition provided

by Creswell. The result of a small sample of participants limits the generalizability of the findings within the study. The use of prolonged engagement is suggested when conducting a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013). The full duration of the presented study was 11 weeks, and additional time to conduct the study could have yielded more evidence to support the research needed within this area of interest and evidence of self-advocacy for participants. Lastly, one primary researcher to collect and analyze the data lends opportunity for researcher bias to become a consideration when interpreting and presenting the collected data. Consequently, the results should be read as suggestions to support the current research field and expand opportunities for future research in the area of elementary students with disabilities learning to self-advocate through strategies that could be used in speaking and writing.

Field trips, school testing schedules, and other school-wide events presented challenges in prolonged engagement within the phenomenon. Field trips (2 days), school-wide testing (2 days), and other school-wide events (1 day) limited the prolonged engagement in different ways. The two days the class was on field trips and the 2 days of school-wide testing did not allow for data to be collected consistently over the 11 weeks of this study. In addition, data could not be collected because the entire grade level was taking part in a science fair that made it not conducive to collecting any data. In turn, two of the days of writing had to be eliminated, and the equality of observation over consistent days of the week did not occur.

<u>Recommendations for Practice</u>

As the researcher in this study, I have synthesized the current literature in the field in the area of self-advocacy skills for elementary students with disabilities. Due to my rich, personal experiences as a researcher, teacher, and person with a disability, I have decided to frame my recommendations for practice through all three lenses. I have combined my experience as an elementary teacher and being a person who has learned to advocate for my disability throughout my life with the findings of this study. I, myself, reflected upon the critical need in this section for giving people with disabilities the ability to advocate for their own needs.

From this perspective, as well as my professional experience in teaching elementary level students, and the rich data I collected in this phenomenological study, provides a lens for me to share direct recommendations for practices to teach elementary students with disabilities self-advocacy skills. These practices are described within each of the four themes to provide a framework for elementary teachers to consider in relation to working with students with disabilities.

Action Plan for Knowledge of Self

Students need to be aware of, and be able to talk about, their disability with others in a way that sets them apart. Whether the disability is physically obvious, or silently present, those around students with disabilities need to know their unique attributes and see them as an individual with a disability and not a disabled person.

At the age of five, the summer before I started Kindergarten, my family and I were travelling back to Russia from summer vacation to the United States. At that time, I

was just learning to walk, so we used a big stroller for me. We were going through

airport security and the agent explained to my mother that they needed to take me by

myself to a different screening room because I was a "handicapped child" and there were

separate screening procedures for individuals "like me." Terrified, I was wheeled off and

screened. When I returned, I looked at mother and said "what is handicapped?" I knew I

was different from my peers, but on this trip, I learned I was different in a way I did not

understand. From then on, my mother vowed, and so did I, to learn more about myself

and about my disability, always thinking first and foremost about my abilities. That year,

and every year after in elementary school, I talked to my class about how I was still a kid

just like them but had some unique challenges. I always made sure to let my peers know

the things they needed to be aware of maybe to help me, but they did not need to be

afraid of me. The Russia experience was a scary one for me, but a lesson where I learned

to share with others who interacted with me, my needs and rights.

Individual with disabilities need to know how to talk about their disability (i.e.,

name disability and basic traits of it) with others so they can share their differences

and/or challenges. Helping others be aware of the needs of an individual with a disability

can help with students functioning in a more inclusive environment. Teachers and parents

need to have open conversations with their students and children about who they are as

individuals with a disability based upon strengths and needs. For example, Participant 1

and Participant 2 could talk about the general characteristics of his or her needs, but did

not have any concept about the specific nature or name of the disability, giving them

rights in school and society. Open conversations with Participant 1 and 2 about the

nature of their specific disability may help further their understanding in how to express

their needs, strengths, and rights as they progress through school (Campbell-Whatley, 2008).

Action Plan for Knowledge of Rights

Individuals with disabilities need to know all their rights under federal legislation; however, the first step is for elementary students to understand their IEP accommodations. I spent the first three years of elementary school in Russia. I did not have an IEP, but I did have psycho-educational testing completed to document my needed supports in school. My parents had an individual join my family in Russia, from the United States, to provide me with additional support. Even though I had all of the testing to say I needed supports to be safe and successful, in a country without laws and protections for people with disabilities, they still refused to provide me with what I needed. The individual who joined us went to school daily with me, so I would be safe and successful at moving throughout the school environment. I was still taught by my classroom teacher, just like my classmates, but this individual was there for my safety because no disability safeguards were available at my school.

Much different is the classroom today for individuals with disabilities and those educated in the United States. Yet, despite the presence of safeguards for people with disabilities, the understanding of these protections is still limited for many individuals. In the present study, Participant 1 and Participant 2 knew the rules and expectations for home and school but did not have an awareness of legislation meant to protect them as individuals with disabilities. Sharing with children about these protections (i.e. ADA) should occur as early as possible, so they realize they have a right to an equal education

in the least restrictive environment. Students and children of all ages should understand their rights, policies, and safeguards afforded to them in school and society.

Three years later, my family and I moved back to the United States, and I was once again empowered and given the right in this country to attend school by myself. My third grade year was the first year I attended school without an aide, because we were back in the protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This first year also was the first year I was given the rights and protections provided by an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This document, along with my past development as a person who could advocate for her needs, ensured I had basic knowledge and an understanding of what supports I was to receive in school. That year, my classroom was on the second floor and my school did have an elevator. However, it would break every so often, and I would be asked to stay in the library, on the bottom floor, and classwork was brought to me for the day. I quickly realized I was not learning with my peers for the day. Throughout my education, my parents and I had requested I be in an inclusive environment to learn. Despite my strong self-advocacy skills at a young age, I did not know I could ask someone to help me up the stairs, nor how to tell them to help me up the stairs. Students with disabilities need to know they have a right to have their needs met physically, socially, and emotionally and how to demand access to those rights. A way to have students learn these skills is through modeling, and practicing written and verbal self-advocacy skills (Luckner & Becker, 2013; McCarthy, 2007)

Participant 1 and 2 both had emerging skills in self-advocacy, as they could tell what was hard for them, but could not offer strategies to help them achieve in areas of difficulty. For instance, Participant 1 had a hard time processing a situation. When he

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was exposed to strategies to help with cognitive processing, he then choose what he thought worked best for him. Participant 2 did not like loud noises. She often was given sound softening headphones. Instead of her asking for tools or being given options (i.e. quiet area of testing) she often took the one option provided by her teacher. The next step for her would be to give her a range of options, related to noise, and let her select the best option for her. Knowing what is expected, and having choices to address areas of weakness, can help individuals be empowered and to have an array of strategies to choose from in the future when they are faced with similar situations (Sparks, 2015).

Moving forward, I was in fifth grade and understood that I had an IEP and the basics of what was on it to help me succeed in the school environment. I was finishing a test and knew I was allowed extra time, but I was pressured to finish. I simply told the teacher I was allowed extra time because of my IEP. She still forced me to finish on her time. I did not know how strong to ask for what I now know I had the right to use. Yet, students with disabilities need to know how to stand-up for what they need to be successful. Teachers and parents need to discuss the supports that are provided for their students and children and tell them who to talk to if they are not getting the needed supports. The use of role playing and meeting the personnel who monitor support services is needed so students have a specific reference point to fully access what they are to be provided. Participant 1 and 2 did not know of specific supports that he or she had to succeed in the classroom. Parents and teachers need to tell the children what is specifically in place for them to succeed. Knowing what is allowed and getting them are two different issues. Both are imperative for success (McCarthy, 2007).

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Action Plan for Communication Skills

A plan for communication skills is also imperative. In my elementary years, I had for the most part, tried to self-advocate, but often I accomplished this task by saying something to my parents who then worked with me to find a solution. During my fourth grade year, I attended a school that required a uniform. Their winter uniform required tights that I could not independently manage. The school had a hard time figuring out what they should let me wear instead of the tights. An IEP meeting was held, with me in attendance, because I had to explain why I could not dress like the others. I communicated the challenge and then said, "Why don't I wear something with thicker elastic?" By the end of the meeting, it was a part of my IEP to allow me to wear leggings instead of tights. I was able to communicate this need because I had tried on different options and knew what worked for me. The outcome being I was able to communicate that information.

Students with disabilities need to be able to test different strategies to see what works for them and then express the best option for their specific needs (Hart & Brehm, 2013). Participant 1 and 2 had basic communication skills but had a hard time communicating what was needed within different situations. For example, before the self-advocacy strategies were shared, Participant 1 used the same method of communication in all situations that made him upset (i.e. screaming and crying). Exposure to different strategies (i.e. walking away to regroup) earlier in the school year or in his life would have given him the option to try to explain why he was so upset. Participant 2 would not ask for help and just sat at her desk until a teacher came to help her. Exposure to different methods to gain help (i.e. raising hand, a special card on her

desk) could have been tested to see what methods of communication she was most comfortable with to independently gain help when needed. Having choices in how to meet an individual need (i.e. help) is essential, so students can confidently communicate with others (Hart & Brehm, 2013).

Action Plan for Leadership Skills

Leadership skills develop when someone sees something they really want to participate in, and they understand how to make it possible. I was never in an actual adaptive P.E. class. I just worked with the teacher to adapt activities, so I could participate with my peers in an inclusive setting. Games I loved were Capture the Flag, scooter soccer, and volleyball. For Capture the Flag, the normal rule was if an individual was tagged one time, he or she was out. Knowing that I would not stand a chance, I asked if more people could "tag me" to equal an out. The teacher and I agreed that 10 different people had to tag me for me to be considered out. For scooter soccer, I could not move around on a regular PE scooter, so I asked for a scooter I could lay down on, so I could move around with my hands instead of my feet. The teacher worked with the school and ordered a full, body-length scooter that I used to play the same as my peers. I also loved volleyball, but I did not have the balance to hold the ball and serve it at the same time. I worked with my peers and came up with a way where one peer would hold the ball, so I could serve. In all of these activities, I took the lead and said what I needed to have to ensure I had the same opportunities as my peers. To accomplish these tasks, though, I had to know my strengths and limitations and be able to express my needs to empower others to help me come up with a solution.

Participant 1 and 2's abilities to lead in activities were similar in daily activities. They both had stronger skills in leading others to help them find a solution when they knew what task they wanted to accomplish. Yet, both students would leave the initiating of finding solutions to adults to help them participate or complete activities that were new. Teachers and parents need to help individuals with disabilities make their own path to leading their lives as much as possible to increase the likelihood of future success with new encounters (Kozacek & Specht, 2014).

My entire life, I have had trials and triumphs where my disability was a factor, in one situation or another, in some way. Learning and applying self-advocacy skills, knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills, have all been a part of my life. This empowerment I have felt in my life truly framed my perspective in this study, but also I am reminded my situation is not the same for all students with disabilities. My emerging question from this study, though, is, why not? The concept of self-advocacy skill's instruction, within the elementary setting, is a known necessity, yet neglected due to a lack of time, training, and resources (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Three implications for practice emerged from this study and align with what I have learned through my personal experience, professional experience, and from the participants in this study. The three implications, related to self-advocacy skills, are (a) allowing exposure and practice of self-advocacy skills is critical, (b) increasing students' use of skills must occur earlier in the education process, and (c) infusing strategy instruction with regard to reading, writing and communicating needs should occur within the classrooms. All recommendations provided are supported by previous

investigated research, input from parents and classroom teachers, as well as findings from the present study.

Exposure and Practice of Skill

Exposure to, and practice with, self-advocacy strategies is the first emerging practice from this research. Currently, the focus of self-advocacy skills for students with disabilities does not occur until high school (Hammer, 2004; Phillips, 1990). Starting to address this skill so late in a student's life with a disability, especially those who have had an identified disability since birth, leaves them both wondering why they are different and a limited time to practice. A lack of self-advocacy skills at a young age means, by the time the student reaches post-secondary education where they must self-advocate, it may be too late for success. (Hong et al., 2007; McCarthy, 2007). Exposing students at the elementary level to self-advocate (i.e. methods to climbing stairs with assistance; awareness of what is in their IEP, options to participant in a game, learning strategies for stressful situations) will begin to provide them with the skills they will need when the responsibility of advocacy shifts from the parent to the individual with the disability (McCarthy, 2007). Exposure and practice of self-advocacy skills needs to be approached in a developmentally appropriate way. Suggestions for such practice and exposure include developing a progressive curriculum in which students are guided through theses skill beginning in elementary and continuing without interruption through high school. This practice and exposure must be explicitly taught through practice situations that individuals with disabilities will and could face throughout their lifetime.

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<center>Increase of Students' Use of Skills</center>

Past research and the present study support positive outcomes when students are given opportunities to use self-advocacy skills at the elementary level (Kleinert, Harrison, Mills, Dueppen, & Trailor, 2014; Zickel & Arnold, 2001). Not only have previous researchers yielded positive effects when students are taught to self-advocate, parents and teachers of the students within the present study noticed and acknowledged an increase in the child participants' use of self-advocacy skills (P1, I2; P2, I2; T1, I2). The frequency and confidence of using such skills (i.e., being invited to participant in discussions involving how they will best manage a task) also has been seen to carry over into the high school and post-secondary education settings. Encouraging and fostering increased use of self-advocacy skills can be accomplished through facilitating activities requiring the use of self-advocacy. The importance of use of skills should involve teachers and parents working together to prepare the child to self-advocate (Walker & Bunsen, 1995).

<center>Methods to Infuse Strategy Instruction within Classrooms</center>

Acknowledging the need for self-advocacy instruction at the elementary level is a start, but teachers need to be provided tools (i.e. give options and let the student test them out to see what works best for him or her) to use in self-advocacy instruction and ways to infuse these skills into the school day (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Just like students need instruction, teachers need to be provided training in their elementary preparation programs as to how to best teach students with disabilities to advocate. Tools provided for teachers could be a curriculum for students from elementary through high school and is used progressively and continuously throughout all grade levels. Such curriculum

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would provide teachers the tools they desire and students a structure of spiraling skills that could be built upon as they progress and develop throughout their life. Too many times, programs focus on identifying students with disabilities instead of techniques to teach students to accommodate for their needs starting at the elementary level (Zickel & Arnold, 2001).

<p style="text-align:center">Further Recommendations for Research</p>

The need for more self-advocacy instruction at the elementary level is a reoccurring theme across the literature in the field (Hammer, 2004; McCarthy, 2007; Walker & Bunsen, 1995; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997) and emerged as a finding in this study. Through close investigation of research, and input from parents and teachers of individuals with disabilities, suggestions for future research have emerged. First, researchers in special education and in transition suggest the need for transition strategies at the elementary level, but currently there is limited evidence of effect for specific strategies (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). For instance, the strategies A.S.S.E.R.T Yourself (Kling, 2000), and teacher modeling of self-advocacy skills (Foster & Ehrensberger, 2005), have been suggested, but a lack evidence exists for use with students with disabilities, including those in the elementary grades.

Three additional areas of future research emerged from the closing interviews with the parents and teacher of the students in this study. The first parent suggested conducting the same type of a study but with targeted situations (P1, I2). A study could be developed employing classic situations which individuals with disabilities could face

(i.e. asking for accommodations/modifications and assistance within the school setting) and then helping students discuss the best options to meet for their needs.

The second parent suggestion was replicating the present study with a stronger home component, so self-advocacy in the home could be seen and not just heard (P2, I2). Such studies could be conducted where individuals with disabilities are observed as to how they self-advocate within the home setting, and then WonderGrove videos could be used again and discussed between the parent and the child. After WonderGrove implementation, observations could occur again to see if there are further applications of how the individuals with disabilities self-advocate at home, and if there are any further transference into school and the community.

The classroom teacher in the present study made the final suggestion for consideration in future research. She suggested replication of this study occur with a "higher level group" who were more "independent" and be provided with more time with the strategies presented (T1, I2, p. 2). The same POW+TREE and WonderGrove sharing could occur with an entire class over a full year. Students with disabilities would be observed before and after exposure to self-advocacy strategies. Conducting this study over a full year would allow the teacher to have more time to find ways to infuse the strategies into the classroom and give students more exposure and time to develop self-advocacy skills. Fiedler and Danneker (2007) stressed the need for time and resources to provide students with self-advocacy skills over a year for these skills to further develop. From these suggestions, replication across an entire school year is needed. This work then should be followed up with observations and interviews starting at the elementary level and following these same students into the workforce. Individuals with disabilities

are expected to self-advocate starting at the elementary level (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007).

This longitudinal study on self-advocacy could look much like what occurred with the

NLTS ("National Center for Special Education Research (NCSER) Projects and

Programs," 2000) and NLTS2 ("National Center for Special Education Research

(NCSER) Projects and Programs," 2010) studies. The program could follow students

with identified disabilities in Kindergarten and through their first paid employment. This

type of research could lead to strong and standardized models of practice for self-

advocacy of students with disabilities across the lifespan.

Within the three areas for future research the need to incorporate executive

functioning skills is also present. Dawson and Guare (2009) explain that executive

functioning skills are the skills used to complete a task or goal. When an individual is

self-advocating, a goal is normally the driving the act of self-advocating; however, often

students with disabilities have difficulty reaching goals due to the lack of executive

functioning skills and/or self-advocacy skills (Dybwad & Bersani, 1996). To further

explore this idea a study could be conducted of students watching WonderGrove clips of

strategies like those used in the present study and then are guided through tasks practicing

executive function as a way to reach a self-advocacy goal. For example, if an individual

wishes to read a certain number of books in a month, planning out the executive

functioning steps to reach that goal (e.g. number of pages to read each day) and then

monitoring how he or she is progressing towards the goal within the four aspects of self-

advocacy would be measured. Such research could be conducted in the school, home or

across the school and home environments. Individuals taking part in this type of study

could begin to develop not only self-advocacy skills, but also executive functioning skills

to empower them to further self-advocate by having stronger executive functioning skills to set, monitor and reach goals.

Conclusion

This study is a steppingstone in extending the limited research surrounding how students with disabilities in elementary, inclusive classrooms self-advocate, both verbally and in writing, when exposed to self-advocacy strategies. The researcher's goal in conducting this study was to explore the lived experiences and preferences of these students, self-advocating through speaking and writing. Exploration across many students was not accomplished, due to sample size, so results are not generalizable. However, exploration of strategy exposure provided positive insight and future directions. Through this study, the researcher was able to learn first-hand about the self-advocacy strategies of second grade students with disabilities in the inclusive classroom, through observations, interviews, and document analyses. All adults in the study continuously reiterated the importance of elementary students learning to self-advocate with the resounding echo for efforts in this area to continue. In addition, parents requested more information and further mentoring of their children. The classroom teacher was thankful for exposure to the verbal and written self-advocacy strategies and expressed a desire to use these tools with her students in the future. As a researcher, it was fulfilling to see the desire to continue the ideas presented beyond just this study.

Reflecting on my own experiences with learning to self-advocate and continuing to strengthen my own self-advocacy skills, I am grateful for my early learning and application of this life skill. The learning and application of self-advocacy came from the

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role models around me who nurtured, guided, and supported my efforts of advocating for my own passions and desires. My research passion and goal is to share self-advocacy strategies with elementary students with disabilities and their teachers, as well as their parents, so they too can have the opportunity and tools to reach any goals they desire.

This present study combines writing and self-advocacy, which are critical skills for individuals with disabilities to possess. Guided in this combination were the works of Cuenca-Sanchez and colleagues (2012) and Cuenca-Carlino and Mustian (2013), focusing on the effects of the POW+TREE writing strategy to help students with disabilities at the elementary level self-advocate in writing, as well as the use of the WonderGrove videos as an instructional tool (Aiex, 1988; Narita, 1995). Much work is still needed in the area of verbal and written self-advocacy skills for elementary students with disabilities. Nevertheless, a belief exists, and was further supported in this research, about the power of teaching students strategies to advocate for their own needs, especially students with disabilities. The next step is simply a matter of extending and strengthening the impact of any tools provided to students with disabilities at the elementary level to self-advocate for their needs through more research at this level in inclusive settings. The results of the present study suggest that when students with disabilities are exposed to self-advocacy skills, application of these skills can be seen in different forms. Such results, further support the significance of this study – students with disabilities learning self-advocacy skills in elementary school actively use these skills to be "the voice" that is self-advocating for their needs and that their voice is the primary one both heard and heeded.

APPENDIX A:
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Participant Code: _____ Date of Observation: _____ Duration of Observation: _____

Self-advocacy Aspect	Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Knowledge of Self + Personal routine awareness + Gaining materials for activities + Requesting bathroom + Requesting food - Gaining basic morning materials - Following classroom routine Knowledge of Rights + Following verbal directions + Expressing can and cannots for school + Expressing can and cannots for home - Whining -Tattle tale -Talking back Communication + Asking clarifying questions + Expressing preferences verbally + Expressing needs verbally + Expressing wants verbally - Grabbing for items - Poking and/or tapping others - Asking for something out of turn - Argumentative yelling Leadership + Volunteering (vocal or raising hand) + Helping others + Doing chores without prompting - Answering teacher teaching questions - Taking care of personal needs without asking - Forcing/arguing what they want to help do		

Adapted from (Creswell, 2013; Test, et al., 2005)

APPENDIX B:
SELF-ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

How easy is it for me to	I can do this.	I need to work on this.	I really need help with this.
Know what I am good at.			
Learn from others.			
Tell other people what I need.			
Share my ideas with others.			
Plan for my future.			
Set goals for myself.			
Know what kind of a job I would like.			
Ask for help from others.			
Know what people I can trust to ask for help.			
Do things in my community.			
Make my own choices and decisions.			
Get information I need to make a good decision.			
Meet new people and make friends.			
Learn new things on my own.			
Tell my friends what I think and how I feel.			
Tell my family how I feel.			

Adapted from (State of the Art, Inc., 2003)

APPENDIX C:
STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Questions for Interview 1

1. When I asked you how easy it is for you to know I am good at something, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. Tell me what you are good at.

2. When I asked you how easy it is for you to learn from others, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. Tell me about how you learn best from others.

3. When I asked you about how easy it was for you to tell other people about what you need, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. What kind of things do you tell other people you need?

4. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to share your ideas with others, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. How do you share your ideas with others?

5. When I asked you about how easy it is for you plan for the future, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. How do you plan for the future?

6. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to set goals for yourself, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. What is a goal that you have set for yourself?

7. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to know what kind of jobs you would like, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. What is a job that you would like?

8. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to know which people you can trust to ask for help, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. Who is someone you trust and can ask for help?

9. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to do things in your community, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. Tell me something you do in your community.

10. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to make your own choices and decisions, you told me [self-advocacy checklist response]. Tell me a choice or decision you have had to make.

11. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to get information to make a good decision, you told me I really need help with this. Tell me some information that has helped you make a good decision.

12. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to meet new people and make friends, you told me <u>I can do this</u>. Tell me how you meet new people and make friends.

13. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to plan things to do with your friends, you told me <u>I can do this</u>. Tell me how you plan things with your friends.

14. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to learn new things on your own, you told me <u>[self-advocacy checklist response].</u> Tell me how you learn new things on your own.

15. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to tell your friends what you think and how you feel, you told me <u>[self-advocacy checklist response].</u> Tell me how you tell your friends what you think and how you feel.

16. When I asked you about how easy it is for you to tell your family what you think, you told me <u>[self-advocacy checklist response]</u>. Tell me how you tell your family how you feel.

Adapted from (State of the Art, Inc., 2003)

Questions for Interview 2

1. Have you learned tools that can help you tell others your needs and wants?

2. Did you like the WonderGrove videos? Explain.

3. Did you like learning the POW+TREE writing strategy? Explain.

4. Did WonderGrove show you new ways to express yourself with your voice? Explain.

5. Did POW+TREE give you a new way to express yourself in your writing? Explain.

APPENDIX D:
PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Questions for Interview 1

I have been observing how [student's name] self-advocates within the classroom setting. I am also interested in how [he or she] self-advocates at home.

Self-advocacy is commonly identified as a verbal skill, defined as "speak up for what we want and need." For the purpose of this study, self-advocacy will be defined as recognizing one's preferences and strengths, and then being able to express those to obtain desired outcomes (Schreiner, 2007).

1. Is [student's name] able to speak up for what [he or she] wants and needs?

2. Is [student's name] able to recognize [his or her] preferences and strengths when trying to reach a goal?

3. Is it important to you that [student's name] develop self-advocacy skills at [his or her] age?

4. Why is such skill development important for [student's name] at [his or her] age?
   a. If answer is yes: What are the strengths [student's name] has in relationship to self-advocacy?
   b. If answer is no: Why is such skill development not important for [student's name] at [his or her] age?

5. What are the preferences [student's name] has when it comes to self-advocating?

A researcher in the field of self-advocacy has developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy. I am going to ask you question about [student's name] and [his or her] self-advocacy skills based on the framework.

6. Knowledge of self is a personal understanding of one's self as an individual and how all [his or her] characteristics comprise one's self, including the disability. Can [student's name] describe [him or herself] in this way?
   a. If the answer is yes… How does [student's name] describe [him or herself]?
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to describe [him or herself] is this way?

7. Knowledge of rights is the understanding of how specific legislation protects individuals with disabilities and furthers [his or her] ability to self-advocate. Does [student's name] know and understand this?
   a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has illustrated this understanding.
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to illustrate this understanding?

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8. Effective communication skills allows for others to understand and work with the individual to reach goals desired. Does [student's name] have effective communication skills?
    a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] communicates with others?
    b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to clearly communicate with others?

9. Leadership is [student's name] ability to express what does or does not work for [him or her] when trying to reach a desired goal. Does [he or she] have leadership skills?
    a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has taken leadership in reaching a goal?
    b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to take a leadership role in reaching a goal?

Adapted from (Test et al., 2005)

Questions for Interview 2

1. Your child has been exposed to self-advocacy activities and instruction within his or her classroom. He or she has watched WonderGrove videos and also learned POW+TREE a writing strategy. Has your child mentioned either at home? In what way?

2. Have you seen any evidence of your child using self-advocacy strategies outside of his or her classroom? Explain.

Has it been evident in…

1. Knowledge of self is a personal understanding of one's self as an individual and how all their characteristics comprise one's self, including their disability, can [student's name] describe [him or herself] in this way?
   a. If the answer is yes… How does [student's name] describe [him or herself]?
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to describe [him or herself] is this way?

2. Knowledge of rights is the understanding of how specific legislation protects individuals with disabilities and further their self-advocacy. Does [student's name] know and understand this?
   a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has illustrated this understanding.
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to illustrate this understanding?

3. Effective communication skills allows for others to understand and work with the individual to reach goals desired. Does [student's name] have effective communication skills?
   a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] communicates with others?
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to clearly communicate with others?

4. Leadership is [student's name] ability to express what does or does not work for [him or her] when trying to reach a desired goal. Does [he or she] have leadership skills?
   a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has taken leadership in reaching a goal?
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to take a leadership role in reaching a goal?

Adapted from (Test et al., 2005)

APPENDIX E:
TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Questions for Interview 1

I have been observing how students with disabilities self-advocate within the classroom setting.

Self-advocacy is commonly identified as a verbal skill, defined as "speak up for what we want and need" (Schreiner, 2007, p. 300). For the purpose of this study, self-advocacy will be defined as recognizing one's preferences and strengths, and then being able to express those to obtain desired outcomes (Schreiner, 2007).

I am going to first ask you questions about all students with disabilities in your classroom.

1. Are the students with disabilities able to speak up for their wants and needs?

2. Are the students with disabilities able to recognize preferences and strengths when trying to reach a goal?

3. Is it important for your students with disabilities to develop self-advocacy skills at their age?
   a. If the answer is yes…What are the strengths of students in relationship to self-advocacy?
   b. If the answer is no…Why is such skill development not important for students with disabilities at their age?

Next I am going to ask you some questions that I would like answers, specific to each student with disabilities in your class.

4. What are the preferences [student's name] has when it comes to self-advocating?

5. What are the strengths [student's name] has when it comes to self-advocating?

A researcher in the field of self-advocacy has developed a conceptual framework of self-advocacy. I am going to ask you questions about [child's name] self-advocacy skills based on the framework.

6. Knowledge of self is a personal understanding of one's self as an individual and how all [his or her] characteristics comprise one's self, including the disability. Can [student's name] describe [him or herself] in this way?
   a. If the answer is yes… How does [student's name] describe [him or herself]?
   b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to describe [him or herself] is this way?

7. Knowledge of rights is the understanding of how specific legislation protects individuals with disabilities and furthers their self-advocacy. Does [student's name] know and understand this?
    a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has illustrated this understanding.
    b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to illustrate this understanding?

10. Effective communication skills allows for others to understand and work with the individual to reach goals desired. Does [student's name] have effective communication skills?
    a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] communicates with others?
    b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to clearly communicate with others?

11. Leadership is [student's name] ability to express what does or does not work for [him or her] when trying to reach a desired goal. Does [student's name] show leadership skills?
    a. If the answer is yes… Please provide an example of how [student's name] has taken leadership in reaching a goal?
    b. If the answer is no… Why do you believe [student's name] is unable to take a leadership role in reaching a goal?

Adapted from (Test et al., 2005)

Questions for Interview 2

1. Was there value of your students watching WonderGrove as a part self-advocacy activities and instruction?

2. Was there value of your students learning and using the POW+TREE strategy as a part of self-advocacy activities and instruction?

3. Would you use either WonderGrove or POW+TREE with students in the future?

4. Knowledge of self is a personal understanding of one's self as an individual and how [his or her] characteristics comprise one's self, including the disability. Can [student's name] describe [him or herself] in this way?

5. Knowledge of rights is the understanding of how specific legislation protects individuals with disabilities and furthers their self-advocacy. Does [student's name] know and understand this?

6. Effective communication skills allows for others to understand and work with the individual to reach goals desired. Does [child's name] have effective communication skills?

7. Leadership is [student's name] ability to express what does or does not work for [him or her] when trying to reach a desired goal. Does [he or she] have leadership skills?

APPENDIX F:
POW+TREE AND WONDERGROVE OCCURRENCE CHECKLIST

Date _____   WonderGrove Trait _____

WonderGrove and POW+TREE

Did the teacher…?	No Yes	Comments
Gain attention of students		
Indicate the purpose of the lesson		
Play the intended WonderGrove clip		
Review the focus of the WonderGrove clip		
Introduce the review of POW+TREE		
Review Plan		
Review Organize		
Review Write		
Review Topic Sentence		
Review Reason		
Review Explain		
Review Ending		
Make sure all students had paper and pencil		
Provide students with POW+TREE chart		
Ask students if they had any questions		
Set and start timer to begin writing duration		
Verbally indicate for participant(s) to begin writing		
Verbally indicate for participant(s) to stop writing		
Stop timer to end writing duration		
Collect all materials from participant(s)		

APPENDIX G:
SELF-ADVOCACY TOOLS IMPLEMENTATION SCRIPT

Step 1: Tell students they are going to watch a WonderGrove video. Play selected WonderGrove clip. After clip, ask student what they just learned about from the clip.

Step 2: Review definition of character trait shared in WonderGrove clip.

Video	Character Trait Definition(s) in Video
Persisting	"finding ways to keep going, to reach your goal, and to keep trying…not quitting no matter what"
Managing Impulsivity	"stopping and thinking before you do or say something"
Thinking Flexibly	"being open to new ideas and trying new things"
Striving for Accuracy	"double checking your work to make sure it is correct" or "trying hard and taking the time to do something the right way" or making sure things are "complete and correct"
Thinking About Your Thinking	"focusing on what you are doing and how you can do it better"
Questioning and Problem Posing	"ask powerful questions about why"
Applying Past Knowledge to New Situations	"taking what you already know to help you find answers to new problems"
Thinking and Communicating with Clarity and Precision	"being careful about the words I choose so other people can understand what I am describing."
Remaining Open to Continuous Learning	"willing to learn from every experience in life"

Step 3: Review POW+TREE with students and display the POW+TREE chart.

Step 4: Tell students that they are going to write [character trait] and how they would use it to self-advocate. Set the timer for 30 minutes. Tell students they can begin writing. At the end of the 30 minutes ask students to stop writing and collect writing samples.

APPENDIX H:
POW+TREE MNEMONIC CHART

POW

P   Pick my Idea

O   Organize my Notes

W   Write and Say More

TREE

T   **TOPIC** Sentence
Tell what you believe!

R   **REASONS - 3 or More**
Why do I believe this?
Will my readers believe this?

E   **ENDING**
Wrap it up right!

E   **EXAMINE**
Do I have all my parts?
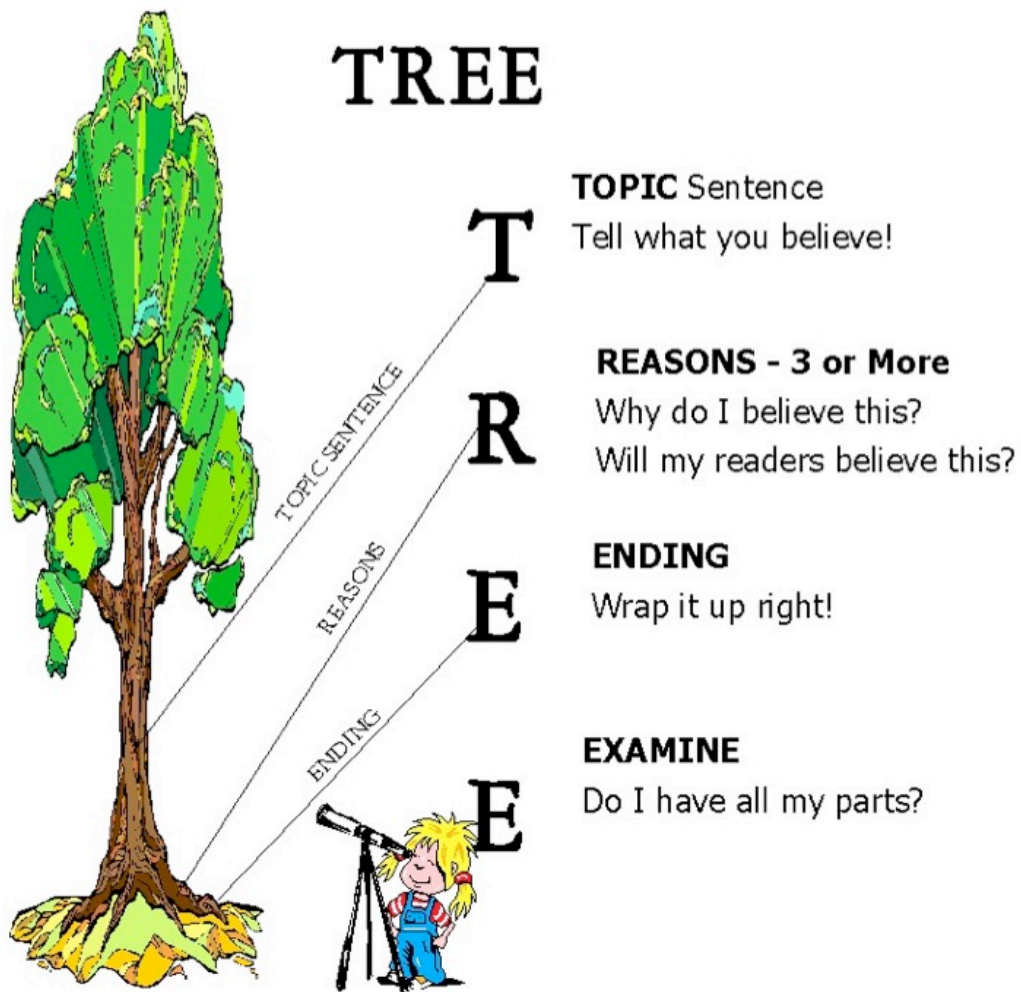
(Mastropieri et al., 2009)

APPENDIX I:
WONDERGROVE SHARING SCRIPT

Researcher Says: The cartoons of WonderGrove take social skills that children will face in life and animate them in a way that can be easily understood and applied to real-life situations (WonderGrove, 2015). Today I am going to show you how to access and implement the WonderGrove part of my study.

Researcher Says: [have the teacher do the steps as you walk through them] I will provide you with a scripted lesson for this part of the study. When you are working with the videos over the course of the three weeks, you can have the video for the day already cued.

Researcher Says: When you are introducing the WonderGrove Kids, you will begin by saying:

Teacher Says: Today you are going meet four characters that will work together to show you good ways to interact with others. The first character that you will meet is Marcus. Watch and listen carefully.

Researcher Says: For all five a of the character videos you will do and say:

Teacher Action: Play the [character's name] clip.
At the end of the clip: Ask students for things they learned about [character's name].

Teacher Says: Next you are going to meet [character's name]. Watch and listen carefully.

Researcher Says: You will go through the above sequence for all five characters consecutively.

Researcher Says: When you are working with the videos over the course of the three weeks, I will give you a script that is specific to that video.

Teacher Says: Today we are going to learn from Marcus, Dee, Peter, Maria, and Chris what [character trait] means. Watch and listen carefully.

Teacher Action: Play [character trait] video clip.

Teacher Says: Who can tell me what character trait we just learned about from Marcus, Dee, Peter, Maria and Chris?

Teacher Action: Call on student to say what character trait they just learned about.

Teacher Says: Yes, [student's name] that is right. Who can tell me what [character trait] means?

APPENDIX J:
POW+TREE SHARING SCRIPT

Researcher: Today I am going to explain each component of the strategy and show you how to use it with students. You will initially introduce students to POW+TREE and then review it after watching the WonderGrove video clips. You will introduce this by:

Teacher Says: Now that we have met all the characters, we are going to write about one of them.

Teacher Action: Pick the character that students will write about.

Teacher Says: I am going to show you how to use POW+TREE to write about [character's name]. You will be using POW+TREE by yourself to write about what you learned from [teacher's chosen character].

Teacher Action: Display the POW+TREE mnemonic chart. Researcher: shows chart

Researcher: Each time you will review the POW+TREE steps with students and display POW+TREE mnemonic chart. Remind students what each letter means.

Teachers Action: Go through each step of POW+TREE explaining what it means. Call on students as you explain each step and as you write your model paragraph about a WonderGrove character using POW+TREE.

Researcher Says: When you review POW+TREE with the students before they write, after watching a video, you will:

Teacher Action: Display POW+TREE mnemonic chart on board.

Teacher Action: Ask students what each letter of POW+TREE stands for and what it means for their writing.

Teacher Says: I am going to leave the meaning of POW+TREE on the board for you to use. Now it is your turn. Using your paper and pencil, write one paragraph about how you would manage your impulsivity. I am going to set a timer. When I say start, you may begin writing and when I say stop, please stop writing.

Teacher Action: Set timer for 30 minutes and start timer.

Teacher Says: You many begin writing.

[After the timer goes off] Teacher Says: Please stop writing.

Teacher Action: Collect the writing samples and give to the researcher.

APPENDIX K:
STUDENT INTRODUCTION OF WONDERGROVE AND POW+TREE
SCRIPT

Teacher Says: Today you are going meet four characters that will work together to show you good ways to interact with others. The first character that you will meet is Marcus. Watch and listen carefully.

Teacher Action: Play each character's video clip. At the end of the clip, ask students for things they learned about each character.

Teacher Says: Now that we have met all the characters, we are going to write about one of those characters.

Teacher Action: Pick the character that they will write about for your paragraph.

Teacher Says: I am going to show you how to use POW+TREE to write about [character's name]. Later you will be using POW+TREE, by yourself, to write about what you learn from Marcia, Dee, Peter, and Maria.

Teacher Action: Display the POW+TREE mnemonic chart

Teacher Says: There are seven steps to do when we use POW+TREE. The first step is Plan. Plan means we make notes about what we want to say. We are going to write about [character's name]. I have here a plan of what I want to see about [character's name].

Teachers Action: Call on three students to each pick one thing they want to include in the paragraph about selected character. Mark what students want to include.

Teacher Says: The next step is to Organize what we want to say.

Teacher Action: Place a one, two, or a three by what the students have selected.

Teacher Says: The next step is to write our paragraph. The first step to writing our paragraph is to write a Topic sentence. A topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph is about. We are writing about [character's name]. How about our topic sentence is: [character's name] is a friend that I met on WonderGrove.

Teacher Action: Write the provided topic sentence.

Teacher Says: Earlier we organized by picking the three things we want to say about [character's name]. These three things are our Reasons for choosing [character's name]. First we want to say [first character trait]. Let's put that into a sentence.

Teacher Action: Pick a student to come up with that sentence and write what they say.

Teacher Says: Next we want to say [second character trait]. Let's put that in a sentence.

Teacher Action: Pick a student to come up with that sentence and write what they say.

Teacher Says: Now we can put our last reason into a sentence.

Teacher Action: Pick a student to come up with that sentence and write what they say.

Teacher Says: We have one last sentence to write to finish our paragraph about [character's name]. This sentence is called our Ending.

Teacher Action: Pick a student to come up with that sentence and write what they say.

Teacher Says: We now have our full paragraph written about [character's name]. We need to do the last step of POW+TREE, which is Examine. To Examine, we need to make sure our paragraph has five sentences.

Teacher Actions: Count the sentences in the paragraph to make sure there are five total.

Teacher Says: Today, I have Marcus, Dee, Peter, and Maria and we have written about one of those characters. Starting next week, we will watch a WonderGrove video of Marcus, Dee, Peter, Maria, and Chris sharing something with us. After the video, I will review POW+TREE with you, and then I will ask you to write your own paragraph.

APPENDIX L:
WONDERGROVE CHARACTER TRAITS LIST

Marcus (run tine 2:27)
- Seven-years-old
- Likes trying new things (really likes science experiments)
- Loves Mom's homemade mashed potatoes
- Likes volcanoes
- Likes watching movies with Dad
- Movies about robots are my favorite
- Friends and I like to play board games, ride bikes, do homework together
- I love when my friends and I play hide and seek. I find best hiding place
- Plays the saxophone
- Camping with family in backyard with a tent, roast marshmallows and watch planes
- I love finding the twinkling star in sky like the North star

Dee (run time 2:27)
- Seven-years-old
- Loves when colors in clothes match
- Loves when my shoes and hairbands match clothes
- Loves polka dots
- Loves pink
- Loves flowers
- Loves spring time
- Loves picnics at the park
- Loves watching the squirrels running around
- Favorite food is Grandma's homemade peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with fresh lemonade
- Likes to fly my kite
- Likes to rest in the grass after flying kite
- Looking at pictures in clouds – calls them "cloud cartoons"
- Likes to help cook in the kitchen
- Does not like getting food on my clothes so I wear an apron

Peter (run time 3:07)
- Seven-years-old
- Loves playing sports, especially soccer
- Soccer team is the Mighty Lizards
- Likes playing catch with Dad
- Uses my Dad's glove when we play catch
- Like using my dad's glove because it reminds me of him
- Throw the ball for my dog Sammy
- I like to pretend to be an explorer when I hike with Dad
- Loves running around with my dog Sammy
- Loves to lay on the slide at recess and watch the birds fly

Maria (run time 2:44)
- Seven-years-old
- Love to dance
- Takes dance class two times a week
- Had first dance recital and my friends and family came to watch
- Love being on stage
- Was not afraid of all the people watching me dance on stage
- Wants to be singer one day
- Love practice singing
- Love my grandma
- Loves Grandma's tortilla soup
- Loves to pick vegetables in Grandma's garden for the soup
- Loves picking carrots because it rhymes with parrots
- I love cumbers and I sometimes find them in Grandma's garden
- Loves to go to the zoo to see all the animals
- Giraffes are my favorite animal
- Went camping with family in a national park
- Loved standing in the middle of the trees and listening to birds chirping, wind blowing through the leaves, waterfall
- Loves painting

Chris (run time 3:08)
- Seven-years-old
- Love to read science and history
- My favorite is to read about animals
- I love apples
- When I grow up, I want to dig up dinosaur bones
- Dinosaurs are cool
- I like to dress up like an alien
- I want to be a horse if I could
- I like to look at all the star charts that show the stars in space

APPENDIX M:
WONDERGROVE AND POW+TREE INTRODUCTION CHECKLIST

Did the Teacher…	No or Yes	Comments
Play the WonderGrove video for Marcus		
Play the WonderGrove video for Dee		
Play the WonderGrove video for Peter		
Play the WonderGrove video for Maria		
Play the WonderGrove video for Chris		
Introduce the purpose of the strategy		
State P is for Plan		
Provide an example of how to Plan		
State O is for Organize		
Provide an example of how to Organize		
State W is Write		
Tell students a total of five sentences are needed		
State T is for Topic Sentence		
Explain that a topic sentence explains what the paragraph is about		
State R is for Reasons		
Tell student that three reasons need to be included in their paragraph		
State that the first E is for Ending		
Provide an example of an ending sentence		
State that the last E is for Examine		
Tell students that this is when they make sure that their writings has five sentences		
Display the POW+TREE mnemonic chart provided by the researcher		

APPENDIX N:
POW+TREE RUBRIC

Component	Score	Comments
Pick Does the writer mention the specific WonderGrove topic?	_____ out of 1	
Organize Does the writing sample have organization that can be followed by the reader?	_____ out of 1	
Write Does the writing sample adhere to the WonderGrove topic?	_____ out of 2 (1 point if only half of the writing sample adheres to WonderGrove topic)	
Topic Sentence Does the first sentence identify the WonderGrove topic?	_____ out of 1	
Reasons Does the writing sample provide at least 3 reasons why the writer and reader should believe what is being suggested?	_____ out of 3 (1 point per up to 3 reasons)	
Ending Does the writing sample have a conclusion sentence?	_____ out of 1	
Examine Did the writer take time to make sure all parts of POW+TREE are included to answer the prompt?	_____ out of 1	
	Total _____ out of 10	

Adapted from (Mastropieri et al., 2009)

APPENDIX O:
IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
          FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Lindsey R. Massengale and Co-PI: Faith Noelle Ezekiel-Wilder**

Date: **January 21, 2016**

Dear Researcher:

On 01/21/2016, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 01/20/2017 inclusive:

Type of Review:	UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title:	The Lived Experiences of Elementary Students with Disabilities Self-Advocating Through Speaking and Writing
Investigator:	Lindsey R Massengale
IRB Number:	SBE-16-11958
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	N/A

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at https://iris.research.ucf.edu .

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 01/20/2017, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Joanne Muratori

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 01/21/2016 04:51:00 PM EST

IRB Manager

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