

CASE STUDY:

Sam

Name

Date

EDUC 4291

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## Case Study

I did my case study on an eighth grade student. My student was a thirteen year old African American male. During this case study I will refer to my student as *Sam*. There is no specific reason for this, just a name I made up to protect the student's anonymity. I am in READ 3255 right now and our class was held at Piedmont Open Middle School in Downtown Charlotte. Our class was held on Tuesdays and Thursdays. During our time there half the class period was set aside to tutor eighth grade students. They assigned students to us based on our concentration and the students' needs. I asked specifically if I could get a student that I could do a case study with.

Sam has ADHD and comes from a broken family. Sam's mother is a full time real estate agent with an erratic schedule. This causes Sam to have to come home from school and watch his 9 month old sister, thus Sam does not have adequate time to do his homework. He has on numerous occasions made comments about being poor, and the lack of time his mother has.

Sam seemed to work really well when he was just with me. I really didn't have many discipline problems. A lot of times I would have to help remind him of things like he needed to bring his homework with him every time we meet and to stay on task. However I was a very pleased and surprised with how well he behaved. The only problem I had with Sam was he would get off task a lot, which I will talk about later. Sam seemed to have really good attendance, over a whole semester I was there two days a week and he only missed two days. He also shows positive effort during our sessions. I think Sam is a very smart individual, and he does not show any social anxiety. I've

noticed him talking to a lot of students as we walk through the halls to and from class. From what I've seen of Sam he really doesn't act too much out of the norm.

One thing I've really noticed while working with Sam is that he has a really hard time focusing if there is a lot going on around him. Sam is classified as ADHD. We can be in the middle of working on our math work and somebody walks by and he loses focus. Like many kids with ADHD he is distracted very easily. Sometimes he gets more worried about what is going on around us and what other kids are doing instead of paying attention to what I'm trying to tell him. I often have to remind him of what we are doing. He has also forgotten his book and assignments on numerous occasions. Sam is a pretty unorganized boy; he has all his papers thrown in a folder. He doesn't really know what is what. Although when Sam does stay focused he does really good work. He just can't work with a lot of people around him.

Sam is about five feet tall and about 115 pounds. He seems to be average size compared to the other eighth grade students in the school. Sam has legible writing, and has noticeable speech impediments. Sam plays sports, not for the school but in recreational leagues. He is on a step team. Sam also likes to play football and basketball for fun. He likes to watch baseball sometimes as well. Sam seems to be an ordinary eighth grade student.

I talked with Sam's math teacher and also the program coordinator. The teacher was very surprised by the way he reacts to me. She said Sam talks out a bunch in class; he is off task a lot and sometimes distracting others. The teacher told me she puts Sam at the front of the classroom right in front of where she teaches most of the time. She does this so the rest of the class is behind him. She is trying to limit the distractions as much

as possible. The teacher also thinks by being close to her she can walk by his desk more often to get him back on task. She also can walk by more easily if he misbehaving. She doesn't give him any kind of leniency on his homework. She told me she doesn't have time to worry about all the kids because she has way too many students. The teacher told me she feels that the student should be able to find time to get his homework done or come ask her for help if he really needs it. From the way it sounded to me the teacher has never talked to Sam to get to know him personally to even know what's going on in his life. So after talking to the program coordinator I think this was a way they found to be able to help Sam out. By letting me tutor him twice a week, I could help him with his homework and get him caught up on his assignments. The one-on-one help is the best way to reach someone with ADHD. From talking with both teachers and talking to Sam, I could see how much the tutoring sessions were really helping Sam.

The whole time I've been with Sam, I've just been thinking what are all the things I could do as a classroom teacher to help Sam. He is a very good kid he just needs help. One thing that would really help him in the classroom is if they teacher would let him get up during class (O'Brien, 2007). Assign him duties like to hand out papers or maybe even be the line leader if there was ever a need for one in a high school classroom. Allowing Sam to get up in the middle of class gives him a chance to move around, then he is more likely to pay attention and stay on task when he sits back down. Another good thing for ADHD students is to make sure you provide smooth transitions (O'Brien, 2007). By providing smooth transitions you don't give the students any down time to get off task or stop paying attention. So as a teacher you need to make sure you manage your time wisely and make sure your students never have any time where they are doing

nothing. As a teacher you can provide students such as Sam with organizational assistance (O'Brien, 2007). Maybe you have the opportunity to have a tutor help you do this or maybe you can take a little bit of time out of class ever so often to help get your students organized. If the students stayed organized they are less likely to lose assignments. Make sure as a teacher you are very brief and clear with directions (O'Brien, 2007). An ADHD student has a hard time paying attention, so the longer your directions the more likely they will stop listening and drift off to somewhere else. Also if the directions are unclear they will not understand what they are supposed to do. I think another good thing to do for students with ADHD is to provide them with timelines for long-term assignments (O'Brien, 2007). If you give the student a timeline you can keep them on task. They are more likely to stay on schedule with what they are supposed to have by when, instead of waiting until the end and getting nothing done. I really liked some of the things Sam's teacher did; some of these were some of the same things we talked about in class. One was sitting Sam at the front of the class to eliminate distractions. The other was walking by Sam, or up to his desk, when he was misbehaving. I think these are all good things to do with an ADHD student.

There was also a website on one of the modules that had a lot of accommodations and modifications for an ADHD student that I liked as well. It talked more about what to do with testing and homework. You can have another student place carbon paper under his/her paper while he is writing down the homework, and then give the carbon copy to the ADHD student (McIntyre, 2004). This can assure you that the student has his homework assignment. Another thing he said that I also liked was to use oral testing (McIntyre, 2004). This might help keep the student's attention and better assess his/her

knowledge. Some other modifications he talked about that I think are simple and could be very helpful is to provide the student with a “kusch ball” or allow the student to chew gum (McIntyre, 2004). The “kusch ball” will allow the student something to do that will not be distractive to anyone else. He can squeeze on it and release energy and it will not make any noise. The gum will allow him to release energy and give the mouth something to do besides talk out loud or out of turn.

Sam’s other problem with his family and homework is not something that we have dealt with directly in the classroom. We’ve talked about poverty and race and maybe touched a little bit on broken families, but we don’t really have any notes on it. I didn’t really like how the teacher handled this. You have to get to know your students personally, especially if you notice there is something bad going on. This is the reason the program coordinator gave me this student I do believe. She knew he had some problems at home and that he needed some help. I think if you have the opportunity for a tutor two or more times a week, it would definitely help a student having problem such as this one. If you as a teacher know that the student has too much going on at home she can do something to work with you. The teacher can give Sam less homework or make sure he has some time in class to do his homework. She can even grade his homework on what he has. The teacher can also go out to Sam’s house and talk with his mother about what they might be able to do to help Sam get his homework done. This school happens to have students from all over Charlotte, and Sam happens to be from the University Area, so he isn’t very close to school. Sam obviously can’t come before or after school, because after school he has to watch his sister. Plus Sam has told me on numerous occasions his mom couldn’t afford to bring him to and from school because she didn’t

have enough gas. So he had to be able to ride the bus to and from school. But like I said earlier, with the amount homework that they assign in middle school, the teacher should be able to give time to Sam to do some of his homework in class. With Sam being ADHD it probably would be best to have a volunteer that could help him because he really needs that one-on-one. But as teachers we can always make things work for each individual student no matter how many we have. You have got to know that not all students have a perfect home life.

This tutoring and this case study has been a wonderful experience for me as a future teacher. Actually having to put together accommodations and modifications for my student and ADHD students in general has definitely helped me. Now I will have a lot of ideas for what to do with my students who share these same problems. Even if a student is not classified and has some of these same characteristics, I now know some things that will help to better them and my classroom. I already knew how important it was to know your students and there problems but seeing a situation such as this one helps me to realize that you can't let any thing slip by you no matter how busy you are. You have to know why students are performing the way they are and what is making them do poorly, and "I don't care" should never be a sufficient excuse. There were no parts of this case study that will not be useful. This will definitely help make us better teachers by realizing that you can look at the problem then research how you can make them better. Although I am very busy and did not look forward to doing this case study, I think it will be very helpful to me in the future.

### References

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