An Exploratory Study on how Adolescent Girls with Learning Disabilities Use Reflective Journals in an Afterschool Tutoring Program

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Abstract

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Adolescents with learning disabilities struggle with various academic tasks in school, especially due to deficits in executive functioning, but also because of difficulties linked directly to their specific disability, such as with reading, math and other domain specific issues (Brown, 2008; Jong, 1998). Gender can have an impact on how adolescents cope with their difficulties. Feelings of low self-esteem, psychological distress, and academic difficulties are often more pronounced in teenage girls (Quinn, 2005). In general, there is limited research on how adolescents students with learning disabilities reflect on themselves as learners when they are engaged in academics, and in particular how they may view their sense of autonomy, relatedness, as well as their own competence in learning, in general. The aim of this study was to better understand how adolescent students with learning disabilities perceive their learning through the use of a meaningful, personal, and relevant form of reflective journaling. Four adolescent girls with learning disabilities engaged in reflective journaling using various artistic tools over five and a half weeks. Journals were coded for themes and analyzed. Results showed that students chose to use the journals to express and reflect on feelings and emotions, rather than reflecting on the tutoring sessions or academic progress. All four girls responded positively to being given the freedom of choice on how to use their reflective journals, and showed increased positive

affect and relatedness to peers and tutors. Implications for the use of reflective journals in academic settings and limitations are discussed.

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A participant in Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, and Herman (2003) stated:

> I will always think of myself as a child with a learning disability. That doesn't change, it is a part of my life forever. It affects you in different ways. You have the problems of the mental attitude about yourself and you have the physical problems of being able to read like everybody else does or being normal like everyone else is or considering yourself to be normal like everybody else is . . but I can tell you it does have a long-term effect on your life, for the rest of your life (p. 230).

Learning disabilities (LDs) can affect individuals in many different ways and in different academic areas. In general, students with LDs have been described as experiencing processing difficulties in all or some of the following: "perceiving, thinking, remembering [and/] or learning" (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2002) . These difficulties may affect different content areas (oral, reading, written language and mathematics) or different tasks (planning, decision making, and problem-solving) (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, 2002). In addition, learning disabilities may or may not be associated with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Brown, 2008).

Most adolescents with LDs will struggle with executive functioning deficits. Some of these difficulties are closely linked to one's ability to initiate tasks, set goals, plan and follow-through on tasks. Brown (2008) refers to this more specifically as difficulty "organizing, prioritizing and activating for tasks" (p. 13). An adolescent with a LD is therefore likely to find school assignments difficult to complete, primarily because they struggle to get started at all.

One of the core areas of executive functioning that is affected is working memory. Working memory allows information to be held in the moment while working on a task, so that this information can be used for other parts of the task in the near future (Brown, 2008). Goal-setting becomes all the more difficult for adolescents with LD if they are unable to retain

information in the moment. Deciding what the goal is, while thinking about a time-frame for that goal and deciding how it will be measured can be overwhelming if these different components are not retained using working memory. The task of planning ahead and organizing steps for a school assignment can feel almost impossible in this case. In addition, verbal auditory memory difficulties affect children's phonological processing and their ability to store information on multiple and different reading tasks (Jong, 1998) whereas difficulties in visual-spatial working memory can affect arithmetic tasks (Maehler & Schuchardt, 2009). In many school assignments, both auditory and visual-spatial abilities are needed and therefore, students with LD not only face executive function difficulties related to working memory, but also face set-backs linked directly to their specific disability, such as with reading, math and other domain specific issues (Jong, 1998). All of these difficulties have serious negative impacts on planning and organization.

Executive functioning also helps individuals self-regulate their emotions. Being able to "[manage] frustration and [modulate] emotions" is a key part of successfully completing academic tasks and reaching school related goals (Brown, 2008, p. 15). As students engage in a task, they must not only keep their emotional state in check but must also be able to bring themselves back on task and manage each action they take. Self-regulation is therefore an important part of academic work, especially when it comes to staying on task, evaluating failure to achieve a goal, and pursuing goals. For students with LDs, keeping emotional arousal at a level that allows them to work effectively is challenging. This is true not only because they sometimes deal with impulsivity and attention deficits, causing them to become excited, anxious or frustrated, but also because of their inability to complete a task to the expected standards, or at all. It can feel discouraging and frustrating to continuously attempt success in school without the

desired end result. Their inability to reflect and self-monitor through the entire academic process and their past experiences with failure contribute to "inconsistencies in the perceptions,…and the possible tendency [they have] toward self-protection" (Meltzer, 2004, 106).

In many cases, continuous failure in the many domains of life, such as school, social relationships and daily tasks, can lead to a sense of learned helplessness, where an individual feels powerless to affect outcomes, and becomes convinced that nothing they do can change the end result. Learned helplessness is a result of attributing failure to one's own abilities rather than accurately assessing all the factors that contributed to the failure. If failure is attributed to personal abilities, it "suggests that [this] will continue under similar circumstances in the future" (Yailagh, Lloyd, & Walsh, 2007, p. 96). It can lead to low self-confidence, hopelessness and a lack of effort. It can also cause students with LDs to think, 'what's the point of even trying?' or 'I'm bad at this and always fail at it, anyway'. Therefore, it is important to understand how students with learning disabilities perceive their own academics and personal experiences and how they come to view themselves as independent learners that are self-motivated and can impact their performance and effectiveness as learners. Gender can have an impact on how adolescents cope with their difficulties. Feelings of inadequacy, psychological distress, and academic difficulties are often more pronounced in teenage girls (Quinn, 2005). Specifically, for adolescents with ADHD, "girls are more likely to internalize symptoms and become anxious, depressed, and socially withdrawn" (Quinn, 2005, p. 580). Though adolescent girls with an LD tend to struggle more with their needs than boys, they also work much harder to appear "normal", and their true emotions, thoughts, and struggles can therefore go unnoticed for years. These struggles of inadequacy and psychological distress are clearly important in adolescent girls with learning difficulties and it is important to find ways for them to express these feelings.

The purpose of this study was to explore adolescent girls' perceptions of their academic and personal experiences through the use of reflective journaling. More particularly, we were interested in understanding if and how adolescent girls expressed issues of self-efficacy, relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The following literature review begins with a discussion of self-determination theory, followed by goal-setting and self-determination, the role of the educator and how students can express their perceptions of themselves as learners using reflective journaling.

Review of the Literature

Self-Determination Theory

Past research has shown that students with LDs have needs and deficits that hinder their ability to be effective and 'independent learners' (Steele, 2010; Vaidya, 1999). Students with learning disabilities at the university and secondary school levels are less effective note-takers, work at a slower pace, take incomplete notes and struggle to pick out important information (Boyle, 2010; Hughes & Suritsky, 1994).

Self-determination theory (SDT) proposes that students' psychological innate needs lead to self-motivation and self-determination (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Hui & Tsang, 2012; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Niemiec and Ryan (2009) stated that "students tend to learn better and are more creative when intrinsically motivated" (p. 136). Being intrinsically motivated and engaged is highly based on whether or not an academic setting provides space and opportunity for a student to have their three basic needs met: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci et al., 1991; Hui & Tsang, 2012; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Deci and Ryan (2000) wrote that humans pursue goals because they are driven to meet these three innate needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy

is defined as having a choice. It is the sense that one is able to "self-organize behavior" and have decisions fit into "one's integrated sense of self" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). Competence was described by White in 1959 as an innate desire to "have an effect on the environment as well as to attain valued outcomes within it" (as cited in Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). This is the way in which Deci and Ryan approach the need for competence; a need to feel as though actions matter, and have consequences. Relatedness is defined as a sense of connection to those around us. More specifically, humans have a need to love and care for others and feel loved and cared for in return (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 231). An important point in Deci and Ryan's discussion is that as humans we pursue these needs because we have learned from our past experiences and we set goals "by observing that positive psychological consequences results from conditions that allow [goal] satisfaction and negative consequences accrue in situations that thwart [goal attainment]" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 229). As humans, we set goals and pursue these goals because we have learnt which environments help us reach our goals and which environments slow or hinder goal attainment. Feelings of self-efficacy, which can be defined briefly as how competent an individual feels, are therefore affected by past experiences with a specific environment or situation. When discussing self-efficacy and SDT, "an individual's own performances offer the most reliable guides for assessing efficacy (Yailagh et al., 2009, p. 96). Their findings suggest that the ways that students see and understand their own learning environments in turn affect their SRL abilities. How students feel about and perceive themselves, mainly through their sense of self-efficacy, can be important in developing successful academic strategies.

Self-Determination and Goal-Setting

One way to support self-determination may be to teach students about goal-setting. Some of the available literature on goal-setting is based on the S.M.A.R.T acronym. SMART stands for

specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (O'Neil 2004). SMART goals are commonly used in many settings to help teams and individuals set goals, such as in business settings, schools, and medical setting (Lewis, 2000; O'Neil, 2004; Rehman, Berry, & Siddiqui, 2014). O'Neil discusses how SMART goals were implemented in an elementary school by teachers, to help their students become more involved and active in the academic process. They list what each letter of the S.M.A.R.T acronym stands for and then explain how they modified these to work with younger student populations. The "S" usually stands for "specific" goals, and at times, is also linked to "strategic". The strategic part of the "S" step is important because it reminds the goal setter to approach the goal in a calculated way, rather than approaching it without a plan. The "M" stands for "measurable". The "A" stands for "attainable". If a goal is not attainable, it will not be reached successfully. This is problematic for students with LDs because of issues of learned helplessness, lack of a sense of autonomy and low self-efficacy. If unattainable goals are set, it may exacerbate these negative consequences experienced by adolescents with LDs. Adding to the problem is the fact that LDs often limit the potential to set attainable goals at all because it can be hard to accurately judge one's own abilities. The "R" stands for "realistic". For any academic task, assessing the realism of a goal includes all these factors, and is not an easy task for those with LDs, as it requires a lot of self-reflection and self-regulation, two things that are hard to do when executive functions are affected. Finally, the "T" stands for "time-bound", implying that goals must have a set time-limit for expected achievement. This not only helps the goal be measurable, but it can also help an individual determine how attainable the goal is and whether it needs to be revised to be as realistic as possible. The SMART goals design is thorough as it requires individuals to make links between the steps and go back as needed. For example, in order to determine if a goal is realistic, they

need to review the previous steps. They need to ask themselves again if the goal is attainable and specific.

In some of the literature involving goal-setting in academic settings, it has been suggested that SMART goals can become too directive and students may not be an active enough participant in the process, thus limiting their sense of self-efficacy (Day & Tosey, 2011). Therefore, this criticism brings to the surface the importance of the role of the educator in facilitating this goal-setting process.

There is limited information on gender and self-determination theory specifically related to learning disabilities and students. Some research does show that adolescent girls can be motivated to engage in specific tasks in school, if they are given control over the task and if their participation in the task is self-determined. For example, in a study on young girls' engagement in physical education (PE) in school, the authors concluded that teachers should focus on promoting feelings of intrinsic motivation and autonomy in regards to physical exercises and activities. "When students were more self-determined or intrinsically motivated, they enjoyed their PE experience more" (Wang & Liu, 2007, p. 159). It would therefore seem that it is important for female students to be given the space to make their own choices and be given more control over tasks that take place in an academic setting, in order for them to not only be engaged but also for their own enjoyment with those tasks.

The Role of the Educator

Day and Tosey (2011) criticized SMART goals, proposing that "SMART targets can be employed in an instrumental manner, and divorced from students' active engagement and reflection on their practice" (517). This is a valid concern, especially with students with LDs, because the aim is to increase their feelings of competence and autonomy, and not crush them.

As an alternative to SMART goals, Day and Tosey (2011) suggested POWER goals (522-523). POWER goals are similar to SMART goals in multiple ways, with some differences aimed at increasing student involvement and awareness of their own role. The authors argue that the educator-student relationship is fostered more strongly through the POWER goals structure than the SMART goals structure. They present an interesting analysis, but did not provide evidence of research that would support it. There is some research, on the other hand, that would suggest that there is a large and important role for the educator within the SMART goals structure (O'Neil, 2004). Furthermore, it would seem that this evidence proposes there is a great active student component to SMART goals, and this depends highly on the educator's ability to involve the students and use the structure as a scaffolding situation. This finding is extremely important for potential application in academic contexts where educators must work with children and adolescents with LDs.

An important cautionary note is that students with LDs may not be willing to discuss their needs or to acknowledge them openly, initially, making goal-setting, and consequently, the reflection process, challenging. The presence of a significant figure, such as a tutor that can monitor and facilitate how student's reflect may help them feel more autonomous and *be* more autonomous as they learn to do this without help from the tutor (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991; Lee, Palmer, & Wehmeyer, 2009; Thanasoulas, 2000). Any mentor/educator/tutor can play this role, but will usually need to be trained or shown how to do this effectively to match the student's needs and to be aware of when to remove support or provide more support. Properly handling this delicate balance is crucial (O'Neil, 2004).

In Schunk's 1985 goal-setting study with 6th graders, children given the freedom to set their own goals believed they could successfully reach their goal while children whose goals

were set for them by others perceived the goals as unattainable. Tasks must therefore belong to the students and not be imposed by their mentors. Deci and Ryan (2000) also contend that SDT emphasizes self-generated goals as most impactful because they are likely to yield a higher level of commitment than when goals are set by other people. This is consistent with the idea that the tutor must scaffold the process (e.g., helping the student brainstorm through their priorities, explaining the purpose of reflection, showing students how they can reflect on their own). This could foster a sense of autonomy in the student. Unfortunately, the research also points to the fact that "many educators often create their own learning goals for the student" (Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012, p. 155). It is not uncommon for academic tasks within the classroom to also be directed by the teacher, leaving little room for students to explore and decide how to approach tasks and self-reflect.

The relational/mentoring role of the teacher was also emphasized in Swain's (2005) study where goal-setting was used with one group of students without a teacher modeling to them, and a group where students were shown how the process worked. Students in the training group were able to set more specific goals than students who did not get the goal-setting training. It is important to note that students in the training group still had difficulty setting realistic goals and may have needed further support to help develop realistic goals. Despite that, there is something to be said about the fact with some proper modeling from their tutors, these students were able to set more specific goals on their own after the seven week intervention (Swain, 2005, p. 262). Therefore, the process of reflecting on goal-setting is of interest, rather than the actual goals that are set.

Harford (2008) also discussed a goal-setting activity she set-up with her students in her high school classroom to get them to reflect on their work. Harford reflected on how she

scaffolded the students through the process by asking them questions such as “what do you think we could do…?” In her case, teacher and student spent time reflecting on how their goals were achieved or if they felt it needed more work, so there was opportunity to modify their goals. She also asked students to consider their strengths before starting the activity to build a sense of self-efficacy (i.e., competence) (p. 64). By building their confidence before the goal-setting process, Harford was thus able to start on a positive note, helping the student to see what they are good at and what they need more support with. Reflecting on these goals allowed students to become more in tune with their own learning style and needs, assisting them in setting goals more closely tailored to their specific desired outcomes.

The tutor’s role is also considered in Schunk’s (1990) original model. He warned that it can be ineffective if students attribute their success to their teachers (or educators) presence. In these situations, students “may hold low self-efficacy for good performance if they believe they cannot succeed on their own” (p. 73). If this happens, instead of being motivated to continue with the task and pursuing success, students will shut down and may develop a ‘what is the point?’ attitude.

Children and adolescents living with LDs often struggle with academic tasks due to deficits in executive functions and as a result, find school challenging. Academic demands become more challenging as students’ progress through elementary school into high school, and the assumption is that as they mature, they will become increasingly more independent and are better able to reflect on themselves as learners. Being an ‘independent learner’ though, is not an intuitive skill for students who live with LDs, and the effects of learning needs on academic success in secondary school are evident. Within the field of education, being an independent or autonomous learner involves specific skills (Thanasoulas, 2000). For example, an autonomous

learner must understand their own learning abilities and capacities and "take an active approach to the task at hand" (Thanasoulas, 2000, para. 5). These 'independent learner' skills are crucial for the attainment of long-term goals, life goals, and self-reflection. The need for interventions with adolescents "is as great as, if not greater than, the need for interventions for younger children because of all the emotional overlays that generally emerge as individuals mature and continue to encounter significant failure" (Deshler, 2005, p. 122). In other words, with or without interventions at a young age, students with LD will continue to encounter challenges in secondary school, probably in larger numbers, and will have encountered challenges and failures for a long period of time, exacerbating many of their difficulties and feelings of learned helplessness. As such, addressing ways that adolescents with LDs can be supported in reflecting on themselves and their experiences, in a realistic and specific way, is as important as helping young children develop learning strategies and goal-setting skills. This could change an adolescent's academic experience dramatically and help build on self-regulation and a sense of competence. Therefore, adolescence is an ideal time to study how students self-reflect when given an opportunity to reflect on their learning.

There are some important gaps in the available literature, especially in regards to understanding student perceptions of their academic experiences. Much of the research on goal-setting with LD populations uses quantitative measures to assess student outcomes, but there is very little research on how reflective processes, with the guidance of a tutor/mentor, can impact a student's perceptions with respect to their feelings of competence, autonomy and relatedness. There is limited research on tutors working in strategic rather than content-oriented ways. For example, it remains unclear how students reflect on their own learning process when they are working on an academic task. The focus of previous research has been on how interventions

improve skills in content areas such as reading or writing. Although academic skills are important as well, students' self-reflection of their own innate psychological needs continue to receive less attention. Therefore, more research is needed to explore how students perceive their sense of autonomy, competence and relatedness during reflection activities facilitated by tutors.

Self-Reflection Using Journals

The promotion of student self-reflection through journaling has appeared multiple times in the literature and is described as a way to facilitate self-expression with respect to different academic areas (i.e., writing, math). Baxter, Woodward and Olson (2005) described this process in a seventh-grade math class, where a teacher implemented the use of journals using specific prompts with her students to inspire their writing about their feelings regarding math She also used other prompts, such as "explain to a fifth grader how to place a decimal in a multiplication problem" (p. 121). The four students in this study were described as "turned off from math", rarely completing their homework (p. 126). The use of journals allowed this teacher to learn about what her students did know and where they were struggling. Students were less reluctant to express themselves about where they felt they needed support and were able to use pictures and diagrams to show their understanding, rather than only words. One student wrote, "Mrs. Carter I really don't know what you are talking about on this. Also I really need help with the things we are doing right now […] I really like this class and I don't want to get an F." (p. 129). The researchers concluded that the journals gave students a means to communicate their private thoughts to the teacher, as well as giving the teacher important information in order to plan her teaching accordingly. Most importantly, the four students in question did not regularly communicate with the teacher prior to implementing the use of journals. Students who never spoke in class before were now able to use the journals as a way to communicate their

frustrations and confusions about math. In this case, the authors referred to the journals simply as "math journals" (p. 120). Others, such as Dyment and O'Connell (2010) in their review of literature on student journals, and Shek (2009) in his qualitative look at youth development programs in Hong Kong, referred to them as "reflective journals". In work with undergraduate nursing students, Richardson and Maltby (1995) used what they called "reflective diaries". Some authors have preferred to refer to the act of "journaling", specifically involving reading and writing with students who have learning disabilities (Fahsl & McAndrew, 2012).

The use of methods other than writing while journaling, such as drawing, pasting and other artistic methods, have also been explored in the literature. Cummings (2011) wrote about the positive aspects of using what she termed "visual journaling" with adolescents. Some materials that can be provided for students when using visual journaling are: tissue paper, magazines and newspaper, paints, pastels, liquid ink, string and yarn, glue, scissors, etc. She discusses the impact that journaling had on her students and mentions positive outcomes of visual journaling such as students being more in control of their own learning, and engaging in self-inquiry. Furthermore, these journals "illustrated any changes that occurred in the students thinking" (p. 29). The use of visual methods of reflection is important for students with learning disabilities because it can be difficult for them to express themselves using words. Research shows that asking adolescents with learning disabilities to draw a self-portrait can help them "share their views of themselves and their world" (Thomas, Butler, Hare, & Green, 2011, p. 231). The use of drawings has also been shown to help students brainstorm, be inventive, and create a means to transfer ideas from a drawing to written form (Leigh, 2012). Sanders-Bustle (2008) also described how visual journals provided students with the opportunity to describe their feelings and reflections of their art class, while also increasing their vocabulary.

The Present Study

In general, there is limited research on how students reflect on themselves as learners when they are engaged in academics, and in particular how they may view their sense of autonomy, relatedness, as well as their own competence in learning, in general. This is especially true with populations of children and adolescents with learning disabilities. In order to better understand how adolescent students with learning disabilities perceive their learning, a meaningful, personal, and relevant form of reflective journaling may be useful. These journals could help uncover students' feelings and thoughts about their own learning in a setting that promotes effective goal-setting, learning strategies, and student autonomy.

Consequently, the purpose of the current study is to explore the use of reflective journals with adolescent girls in an afterschool tutoring program for students with learning disabilities. Another aim of this study is to discover how students perceive their own academics and personal experiences through the emerging themes derived from the girls' discussions during the journaling activity. Finally, of interest is how themes of self-efficacy, relatedness, competence, and autonomy emerge in the student journals. More specifically, the project is based on the following questions:

1. How do adolescent girls in an afterschool tutoring program for students with learning disabilities choose to use reflective journals?
    a. How do students reflect about their academic and personal experiences?
    b. If students display their sense competence and autonomy during the journaling activity, how do they do this?
    c. If students discuss their feelings and share their experiences with others (tutors, peers) during this experience, how do they do this?

Method

Research Design

The design of this study was a case study to explore in an in depth way how adolescent girls in an after-school tutoring program reflect on their learning and personal experiences through the use of reflective journals. The limited research thus far has not addressed the use of artistic journals in this type of tutoring program. Consequently, the flexibility of an exploratory case study design was appropriate due to the unpredictability of findings. The students' feelings and perceptions of their own reflective journals were explored during the coding process and with the use of follow-up student questionnaires. Data from the four participating students was analysed in an in-depth manner. Specifically, the themes that emerged from their reflective journals were studied to better understand their self-perceptions and reflections of their academics, their emotions, and their personal experiences.

Setting and Recruitment

The participants were recruited using convenience sampling at an all-girls private secondary school in the Montreal area. The researcher was very familiar with the afterschool tutoring program that runs there, had been a tutor-intern there in the past and is now a co-coordinator of the main program and is working on a different site. This program was also selected because the investigator is not working with any of the students individually this year and therefore, it would not present any conflict of interest. However, the familiarity with the philosophical approach of the tutoring program as well as knowledge of how the program runs were both important factors in selecting this particular site and will provide an opportunity for this case study to be a collaborative project that will actively involve the participants. The recruited participants were high-school adolescents, all female, attending the school. They were

members of the program and were between the ages of 14 and 17. As members of the program, they all had completed a psycho-educational assessment and were paired with a tutor for the entire school year. The tutors were involved in the tutoring session with their students but only the reflection journal data from the students were analysed for the project. The tutors were university undergraduate students participating in a tutoring internship that provided them with on-site training and support.

After obtaining Concordia University Ethics approval, the researcher approached the program coordinator and school principal and described the project to them. Once approval was received cover letters (see Appendix A) containing information about the project were handed out to all students, tutors, team members as well as the school principal and copies were sent home to parents. Consent forms (see Appendix B) were handed out to all ten students in the tutoring program. Consent forms were also sent home with their parents to ensure that all parents were comfortable and informed about what this project involved (see Appendix C). Interested students handed their own completed consent forms, as well as those from their parents, to their tutors directly, who then handed the forms to the researcher. Tutors were also provided with consent forms (see Appendix D), as were the participating team-leaders (see Appendix E) and the program coordinator (see Appendix F). A consent form (see Appendix G) was also provided to the school principal. The team-leader, coordinator and school principal consent forms were handed back to the researcher directly. Confidentiality was a priority for the duration of the entire project and all data was kept confidential free of identifying information. Each participating student was assigned a code number no names were used at any point in the study. No sensitive information, including information related to psycho-educational assessments was released.

The tutoring program is an afterschool strategic tutoring program for adolescents with diagnosed moderate to severe learning disabilities. The program runs twice a week after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 pm to 6:30 pm for almost the entire academic calendar, starting in mid-October until late June. This program follows the same schedule for every session. The first half hour of the program is dedicated to "social time", where students are provided with snacks and have an opportunity to socialize with all members of the program. The tutors and students often play games together, such as "Jenga" and "Apples to Apples". Following "social time" from 4:00pm to 5:30 pm, tutors and students move to their designated areas in the classrooms and have a tutoring session. The program follows a cognitive apprenticeship model (Collins et al., 1991), where the tutor takes the role of the expert and the student is the apprentice. This model emphasizes that thinking should be made visible, such that the educator or expert make their own thinking process visible as they are teaching to the apprentice. Secondly, the focus of the teaching must rely on what is contextually relevant to the student, supporting the important of relevance in the S.M.A.R.T. goals setting process. Finally, cognitive apprenticeship encourages students to reflect on their own learning and the strategies they have learned (Collins et al., 1991). At the afterschool program, the focus of sessions is on helping students build autonomy through goal-setting, discussing and applying strategies, and reflecting on their work. Students begin their sessions setting goals with their tutors. They use a sheet that requires them to think about how long each goal will take, and what materials will be necessary (see Appendix H). During the last five to ten minutes of every session, tutors help their student reflect on the session, assessing how much time each goal actually took, thinking about what worked and what did not work, and making a small plan for the next session. The completion of the homework is not the focus of sessions. Rather, the homework is used as a tool

to help students become more strategic learners. Once the students leave for home at 5:30, the tutors stay for another hour to reflect on their sessions and discuss their observations and struggles with senior members during what are called "feedback meetings". These senior members are team-leaders who have tutored in the program for at least two years prior to becoming team-leaders. They are in charge of training the tutor-interns and supervising them throughout the year.

Participants

Consent from both parent and student was obtained from four students in the program. All four students were returning students and had been in the program for at least two years. The recruitment process was challenging because we required both parent and student consent and the parents in this program are not actively involved with the program. Therefore, it was difficult to have direct contact with parents and to remind them to return the consent forms.

Elsa. Elsa is a 14-year-old student. She was completing her second year at the program during the period that the project took place. She was also currently in grade nine, and described her experience so far as being a "helpful", "encouraging", and "supportive" one. Her tutor pointed out that this student regularly had positive sessions. Most often, she was able to use her time very efficiently and was open to new suggestions from her tutor. She seemed aware of her learning needs and style, and she was an organized student, preferring to use a calendar rather than her agenda. In addition, her tutor described her as "hyper and off-task" on only one specific occasion, and explained that this was unusual for this student.

Kyra. Kyra is a 14-year-old student. Kyra began attending the program half-way through her first year and had therefore been in the program for two and a half years at the start of the project. She was currently in grade 9. She described her experience as making her feeling

"efficient", and that it has helped her procrastinate less. Kyra was comfortable verbally and discussed her frustrations with her tutor and was most comfortable working on her schoolwork with few people in the room. When she felt stressed, it became difficult for her to be engaged in her work or stay on task.

Daisy. Daisy is a 17-year-old student. She was completing her fourth year at the program and was nearing the end of her fourth year of high school. She described her experience so far as "good". Her tutor discussed her student's progress this year as improvements in planning and an increased confidence in her own problem solving skills. She was a student who is comfortable bringing in material that she struggles with. She also tended to verbalize her stress, although she appeared to know that she was a capable student.

Pearl. Pearl is a 15-year-old student. She was completing her second year in the program during the journaling project and was completing grade nine as well. She also described her experience as "good", adding that she "learned to study better" and "met new people". Her tutor explained that her student had shown increased confidence in expressing herself and communicating over the course of the year.

Procedure

Prior to the coaching and reflective journals. During the month of March, prior to data collection, students who gave their own consent and received parental consent to participate in the study were given a brief questionnaire to fill out to gather demographic information related to their experience in the tutoring program and this project specifically (see Appendix I). They were instructed by the researcher to only answer the first four questions that were related to their age, how long they have been in the program and in what grade they were completing at the time of the project. The questionnaires were collected and stored safely.

Coaching. In mid-April, participating students were coached, along with their tutors, on effective S.M.A.R.T goal setting. A short 30-minute coaching session was held, where each point of the S.M.A.R.T. goals approach was addressed and practiced with the tutor-student pairs to help them become comfortable with setting specific, measurable, attainable, realistic/relevant and time-bound goals (Day & Tosey, 2011; O'Neil, 2004). The purpose of helping teams set more effective goals was to help students build their sense of autonomy, competence by setting them up for success and developing their self-reflection skills when evaluating their session. The tutor acted as the mentor/expert in the relationship, helping the student not only assess situations and self-reflect in a way that promotes independence, but also by acting as the expert, modeling strategies and thinking processes to their apprentice student. The tutors were provided with all contact information for the researcher, and were reminded to contact her with any questions or concerns at any time. It was important for the tutors to feel well supported throughout the project. As such, they were also provided with reflection journals to use alongside the students. Although these journals were not to be coded for themes for this project, they were considered an important part of the scaffolding process and were expected to allow for open dialogue during journaling.

Reflective journals. The reflective journals were used at the end of every tutoring session for a period of five and a half weeks (11 tutoring sessions). For the last ten minutes of each tutoring session, the researcher circulated to each classroom where students were given their journals in order to reflect on their session. They were provided with bins containing various art and craft materials such as markers, pens, stickers, pipe-cleaners, glitter glue, glue sticks, scissors, etc. These bins were updated bi-weekly with new materials and refills. Three bins were shared among the five classrooms.

Because the students had been using the program reflection sheets since September, they were reminded that the reflection journals would replace the current reflection sheet for the duration of the project. There were no guiding questions and prompts for the students to answer in their journals. Rather, the journals were left open to the students to be used as they wished. The only instructions the students and tutors received were to use the journals as a tool for reflection at the end of their session. The researcher instructed students to "use the journals to reflect on your session". While journaling, some tutors chose to use verbal prompts to encourage their students to reflect, such as "what do you feel right now?" or "what do you want to draw?". These journals were open to all medium, such as writing, pasting, coloring, etc. Structured prompts were omitted with the goal of providing adolescent girls with a self-reflection tool that was less structured and open to individualism and freedom of expression. The exploratory nature of this study called for the use of the journals as a tool for the development of self-reflection through various types of materials and no specific guiding questions or prompts, although the tutors encouraged them informally as explained above. Once the tutoring sessions ended and the reflection time expired, journals were picked up by the researcher and stored safely until the next tutoring session.

Recordings and notes from feedback. Throughout the eight weeks of data collection, randomly selected student-tutor journaling sessions were recorded. Two recordings were obtained for Team 4: sessions 3 and 6. Two recordings were obtained for Team 5: sessions 3 and 5. One recording was obtained for Team 9: session 4. Three recordings were obtained for Team 10: sessions 5, 8, and 11. All feedback meetings were recorded, but only eight recordings were obtained as feedback meetings were cancelled on three occasions due to attendance issues, parent

meetings, or time constraints. Team feedbacks for sessions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 11 were all recorded.

Post reflective journals. After all reflection journaling sessions ended, students were given the short questionnaires once again, and were instructed to complete all remaining questions. These questions were designed to briefly get a sense of what the student enjoyed and disliked about the journals.

Once journaling sessions ended, photos were taken of all journals belonging to students who gave consent (see Appendix J for additional photos not included in the text). These photos were then analyzed along with the matching recordings and based on tutor feedback as well. These were coded and reoccurring themes were noted. Out of respect for the personal attachment and thoughts students may have expressed in their journals, it was important to allow students to keep the journals at the end of the project.

The Role of the Researcher

As co-coordinator of the tutoring program, and having been a member of the program for over five years, the researcher is extremely familiar with their philosophy. Although she is not a member of the team at the secondary school site, she is a known member of the team. In order to have the students and tutors become accustomed to her presence and to observe tutoring sessions in action, the researcher visited the site of the project bi-weekly for three months in the fall and winter, taking context notes and making observations. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the rapport that each student-tutor pair has built and the types of relationship dynamics that have developed.

Findings

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the use of reflective journals with adolescent girls in an afterschool tutoring program for students with learning disabilities in order to discover how the girls reflected on themselves as learners. Furthermore, the study also aimed to discover how the students reflected on academics and personal experiences, their feelings of relatedness, competence, and autonomy. The research questions were explored by analyzing the transcripts of both the reflective journaling sessions between tutor and student, and the tutor feedback meetings. Both the journaling sessions and feedback meetings were recorded and then transcribed using Microsoft Word. Photos were taken of each journal entry for all four participating students and matched accordingly during data analysis. Microsoft Word was also used to code the data using methods proposed by Corbin and Strauss (2008). These methods involve initially coding the data in a manner that allows it to remain open "to all potential and possibilities", through open-coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 190). Then, axial coding is used to make larger links between initial codes and help create sub-categories. Finally, in order to capture the emerging themes, sub-categories were refined to broader themes through focused-coding (Saldana, 2009). This was useful in order to make comparisons and find similarities between emergent themes across the four participants, and in order to maintain the authenticity of the students' journaling experience (p. 158). Another round of focused-coding was conducted specifically with the transcripts of the student-tutor journaling sessions with the intent of classifying themes that fit into pre-determined categories of interest for the project: relatedness, self-efficacy, competence, and autonomy. The findings regarding each student's journaling experience are presented in Table 1 according to the research goals and broad themes

of interest: method of reflection, academic reflection, personal reflection, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Tutors and team-members' perceptions of the project are also presented here. A discussion will follow.

Elsa. Elsa chose to use the reflection journals in an explicit fashion, using various materials to write out key words during journaling sessions. Pages in her journal included mostly words that described emotions or feelings. Themes that emerged from these selected words were unhappiness, happiness, and ideas of summer. The theme of unhappiness was common, appearing in five out of six journal entries. Words used to express unhappiness were "tired", "sick", "unhappy", "ill", "nervous", "stressed", "annoyed", "crazy" and "gnarly". During her first reflection session (Figure 1), Elsa explained to her tutor that she was feeling stressed because "lots of stuff been due this week. I'm not really loving it." In her fourth journal entry (Figure 2), the student reflected with three words, "annoyed", "nervous", and "exam", giving an indication of what was on her mind at the end of her tutoring session. During the feedback meeting following this, the tutor reported that they discussed the exams together during their session and that her student often over-estimated or under-estimated how long studying may take, leading to feelings of "panic". During one session (Figure 3) the student expressed feeling "nervous, stressed, but happy" in her journal. After her tutor asked her why she was feeling nervous and stressed, the student said that she has caught up on all her work and things were good. This discrepancy in action and feeling may have left her tutor wondering why she did not express her stress during the tutoring session. It is possible that the journaling process provided the students with an opportunity to express both positive and negative emotions. It could also be that the journaling process acted as a release for her negative thoughts and emotions, allowing her to then experience her positive emotions as well. In both these scenarios, it would appear that

Table 1

Data Summary of the Student Experience

Student	Method of Reflection	Type of Reflection	Displays of Autonomy and Competence	Relatedness
Elsa	Explicit; written expression; many words; few pictures	Academic → stress; unhappiness; feelings Personal → summer; happiness ; feelings	Autonomy → reflected independently; selected method and type of reflection independently; autonomous decision to use journal Competence → discussions about stress; written expression of stress; verbal confidence	Connected with peers, shared resources; did not journal in parallel; positive affect
Kyra	Fairly abstract; drawing pictures early on; using stickers later on	Personal → artistic, feelings	Autonomy → reflected independently; selected method and type of reflection independently; autonomous decision to use journal Competence → discussions about academic progress, discussions about artwork	Connected strongly with peers and tutor; shared personal experiences with tutor; invited peers to share resources; used journal in parallel to other peers; positive affect
Daisy	No writing; no drawing; lots of stickers	Personal → self-identity	Autonomy → reflected independently; selected method and type of reflection independently; autonomous decision to use journal Competence → uncertainty about usefulness of journal; required support to make decisions, needed confirmation from peers or tutor when uncertain	Connected strongly with tutor; shared resources; did not journal in parallel
Pearl	Varied; abstract; some drawing; some sticker use	Personal → self-reflection, self-identity; feelings	Autonomy → reflected independently; selected method and type of reflection independently; autonomous decision to use journal Competence → self-confidence in the process and its meaning; referring to journal as “masterpiece”; discussions about journal content	Connected strongly with peers and tutor; shared personal experiences with tutor; invited peers to share resources; used journal in parallel to other peers; positive affect

the journaling experience allowed her to capture two very different emotions, and gave the student an opportunity to explore those in some shape or form. In half of her entries, Elsa made at least one reference to being happy using words like “hyper”, “excited”, “smiling” and “happy”. In her third journal entry (Figure 4), she used the word “yay”.

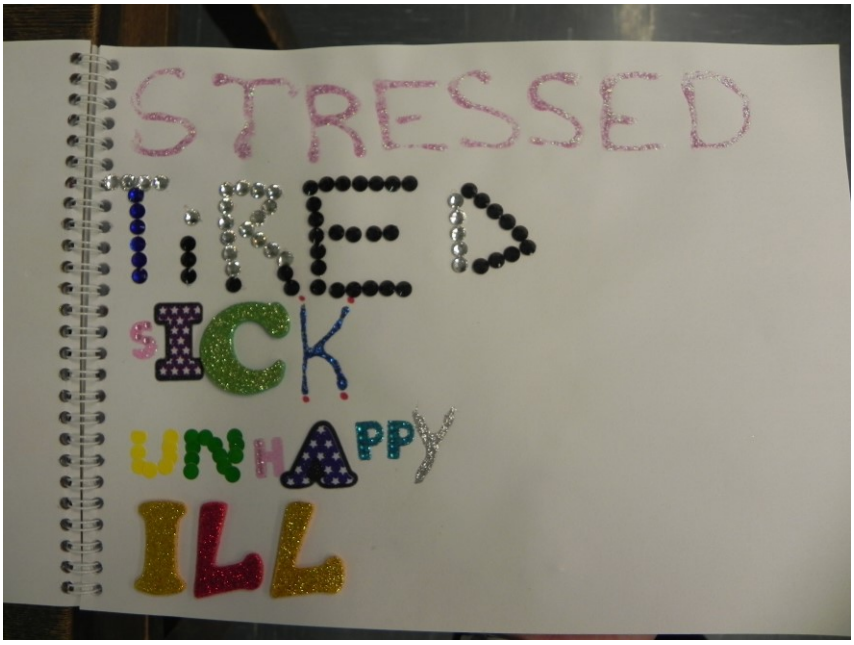

Figure 1. Elsa’s first journal entry.

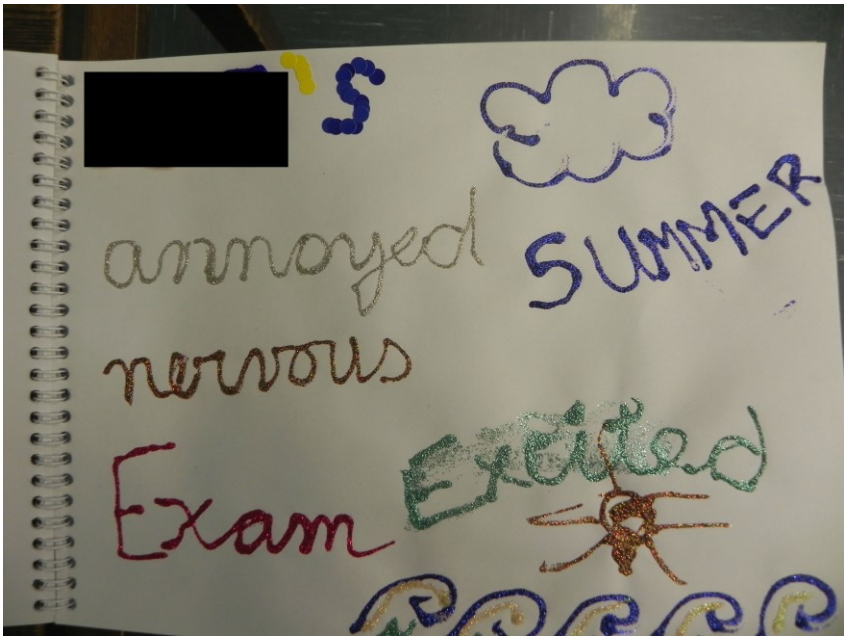

Figure 2. Elsa’s fourth journal entry.

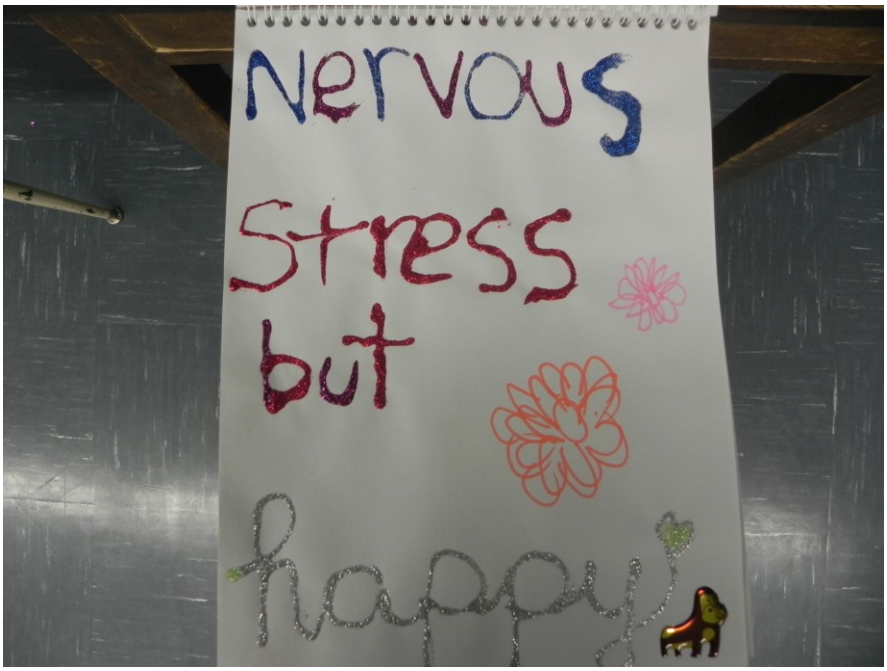

Figure 3. Elsa's second journal entry.

Figure 4. Elsa's third journal entry.

Positive affect was also present in Elsa's journal and was most often linked to summer. During one of the last journaling sessions, the student used words like "summer", "camp", and

the short phrase, “1 week of school” (Figure 5). In this entry, she also represented an ice cream sundae using a glittering sticker, and she drew a sailboat. The student sometimes drew other pictures to represent summer, like a sun, a cloud and a swimsuit which can be seen in Figure J5. Throughout the course of the project, she appeared to be excited about summer, drawing swimsuits and referencing “camp” (Figure 5 & 6). It seems that she was happy about the summer coming along and was looking forward to it. It is possible that she was looking forward to school ending or it may be that she was looking forward to the activities that she engages in during the summer. It is important to note that the project ran just before the summer, and this may have influenced the content of her journal entries.

Figure 5. Elsa’s sixth journal entry.

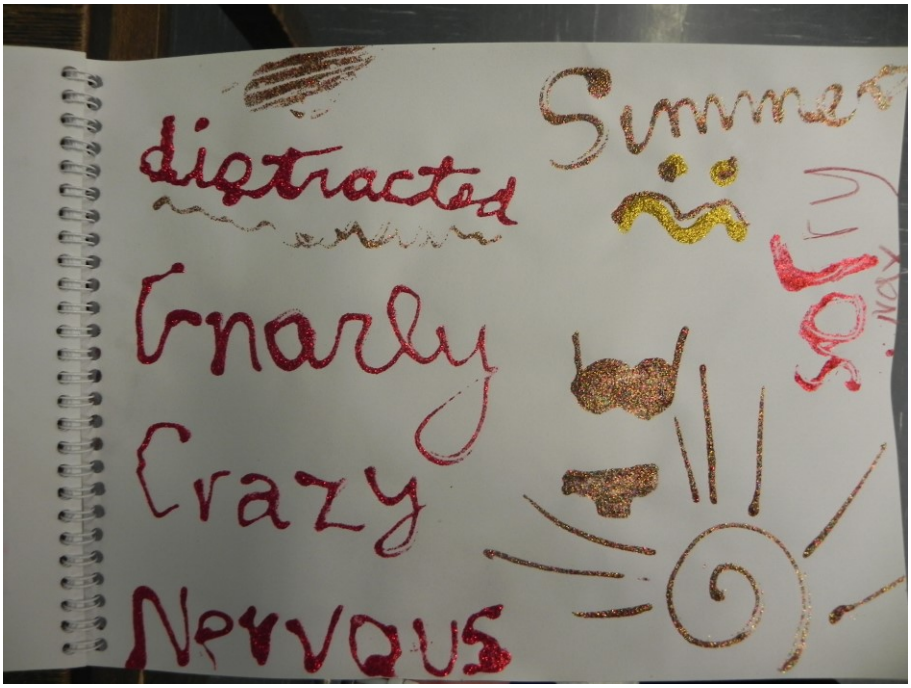

Figure 6. Elsa's fifth journal entry.

Kyra. Kyra's journal was primarily focused on themes of artwork, and reflection. The theme of reflection appeared in two important ways: more specifically through themes of self-reflection regarding her feelings or state of mind during session and reflection of the content of the artwork itself. The student referred specifically to the act of journaling by making specific reference to her artistic choices. In the first four entries of her journal, the student chose to draw, while choosing to use stickers in the last three entries. While journaling in the earlier portions of the project the student verbalized that she was engaging in the act of drawing. While working, she verbalized what she was doing, by saying "I'm drawing a flower" (see Figure 7). The student engaged in self-reflection multiple times during the project. For example in Figure 8, the student reflected specifically on her current state while using the entry as a springboard. She drew a moon, which she referred to as a "sleeping moon". Later in the session, she said that she was very tired that day. Self-reflection also manifested itself in references that were more personal. While having an interesting discussion with her tutor about what therapists do to help their

clients, Kyra said that she could never see herself as a therapist because she would just want people to “suck it up!” (Figure 7). The tutor also reported in one of the feedback meetings that her student stated that she was neither sensitive nor emotional. It is unclear whether this self-reflection occurred on a purely conscious level, since the student did not make an explicit link between the two. Her tutor on the other hand, verbally linked the two during her explanation of the drawing to a team-leader in the room. This tutor was the most involved in prompting her student to reflect on the journaling process during the project, as shown in this example. There is no evidence to show that the student internalized these prompts, as she tended to be artistic in her journaling without linking it explicitly to written or verbal reflection. When she described herself as “not sensitive nor emotional”, her artwork appeared to be unrelated to this very personal reflection. It is possible that she was using the journal to simply do art for the sake of artistic expression and that she did not feel the need to use these pages to further explain her thoughts or feelings at the time. Overall, it would appear that the journal was a purely artistic tool for this student while helping her relax enough to verbally express herself personally.

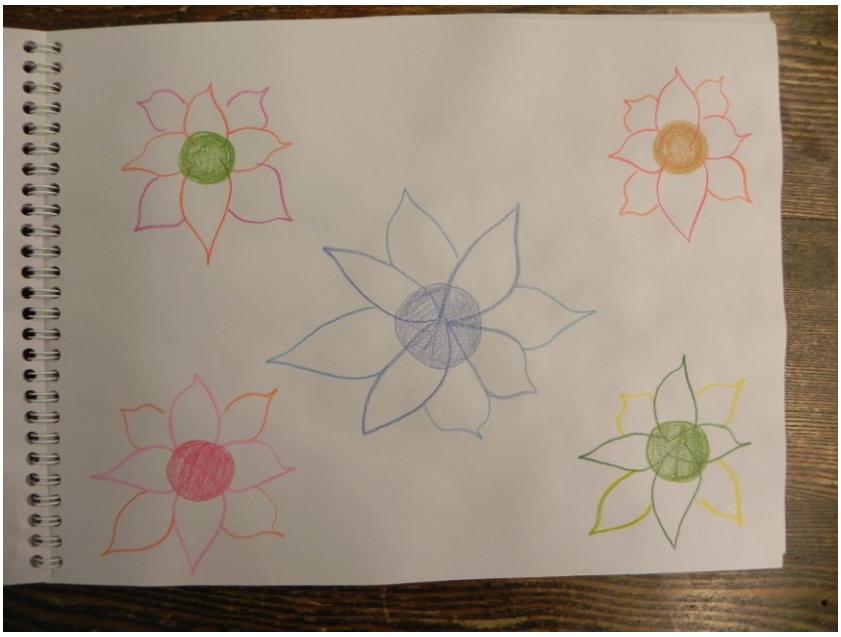

Figure 7. Kyra’s third journal entry.

Figure 8. Kyra's second journal entry.

The theme of reflection through the artwork emerged only once but was of significance to the program coordinator. Kyra's concern for the reader's experience manifested itself when she worked. Figure 9 indicates her awareness of the reader's presence within the context of the project. During the first entry, Kyra used glitter pens to create an abstract piece, using many colors and making various lines on the page (Figure 9). Here, she explicitly expressed concerns about the reader of her journal by discussing with her tutor the ways in which someone might interpret her entry, or if they would be able to understand it at all. She spent time brainstorming about ways to rectify this in the future, such as building a personalized legend. Though students were reminded at the start of the project that the journals belonged to them and they could be used however they wished, it appears that Kyra initially began using the journal with a concern for the readers' understanding of her artwork. Despite this, she did not follow through with clarifying her future entries, nor did she create any legends to match her work. Interestingly, the student did not express this type of concern at any point during the rest of the projects duration.

The fact that the initial concern for the reader's experience happened during her first reflection may be indicative of her confusion or insecurity regarding the purpose of the project or that she showed willingness for others to have her work understood. It may also mean that she was unsure of how she wanted to approach her own journal. Perhaps it was important to her to use it to send a message of some kind to the reader initially, and that this evolved to a more personally relevant approach by the end of the project.

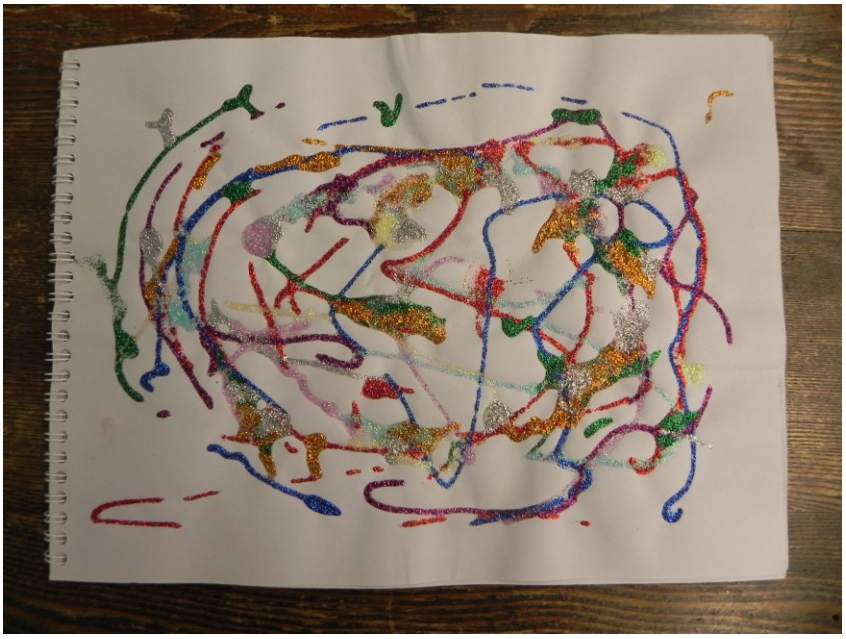

Figure 9. Kyra's first journal entry.

Daisy. Daisy was the eldest of all four participating students and the theme of self-identity re-occurred in many of her entries. In five out of seven journal entries, this student referred to her name in some way, making reference to her self-identity (see Appendix J). At times, she would spell out her whole name with stickers, while on other occasions she would only represent her initials on the page. It seems that self-identity was important to her. Her name or initials repeatedly appeared in her entries. It appears that the reflective process was much

more about her as an individual, rather than about academics. In this way, the student appeared to take ownership of her journal by labeling multiple pages with references to her name.

Daisy also described her feelings of hesitation and uncertainty throughout the journaling process, in a multitude of ways. Embedded in the theme of uncertainty were ideas that related both to this students self-confidence and sense of competency. The theme of uncertainty first appeared in the student's reflection regarding her participation in the project. Though she had agreed to participate in the project, she expressed being unsure of how long the journaling would take and how this would affect her time to work on academics during sessions. She repeatedly used the words "I don't know" while discussing this with her tutor. "Because last time, [student x] and I, we did this, and I remember it was almost towards the end and we had a lot of homework to do and we really didn't have a lot of time" (Daisy). Here she was describing her experience on another research project that she taken part in, a few years ago. The student was confused when discussing academics within her journaling session, even though she was not actively using the journal in that moment. While reviewing the final exam schedule, Daisy expressed her confusion on four occasions about interpreting the schedule. "I'm so confused, when do we start? It's so confusing, oh my God" (Daisy). Later, when her tutor suggested a study method referred to as Jeopardy, the student had difficulty being able to identify if this would be helpful saying things like, "maybe" and "I don't know". Daisy described her sense of competence during academics by verbally evaluating her journal. "Because I started to like my book even though it wasn't amazing…but…" (Daisy). This comment was not prompted by the tutor, but rather emerged organically during the journaling session. Her strong focus on spending time working on academics instead of journaling during her sessions may be related to this. It could also be that she did not feel comfortable yet engaging in the reflective task, and may have

developed her interest over time, had the project continued for a longer period of time. The lack of academic or self-reflection present in Daisy's journals may be linked to her sense of confusion regarding the project. Perhaps she was not use to engaging in reflective journaling, and felt unable or unsure on how to select images or words with which to describe her experiences.

Pearl. Pearl used the journals in an artistic fashion while verbally expressing a reflective approach during the activity, making reference to themes of self-identity and nature. Her journal was diverse and was highly focused on nature, animals and colors. It seems that she identified herself in her artwork and felt close to the process on a personal level. This student described her experience journaling as closely matching her life. The self-identity she described in the project was detailed and clear. She explained that her favorite entries were those where she used any stickers she wanted because it was an accurate description of who she is. To explain this further she stated: "It describes my life; messy and interesting" (Pearl). In Figure 10, she described placing random animals everywhere because "that's how my life feels right now". She mentioned, while laughing with her tutor, "It's a good representation of my life though. I don't know what I'm doing half the time". In Figure 11, the student seemed focused on her self-identity by leaving the page blank except for letters spelling out her name.

Figure 10. Pearl's sixth journal entry.

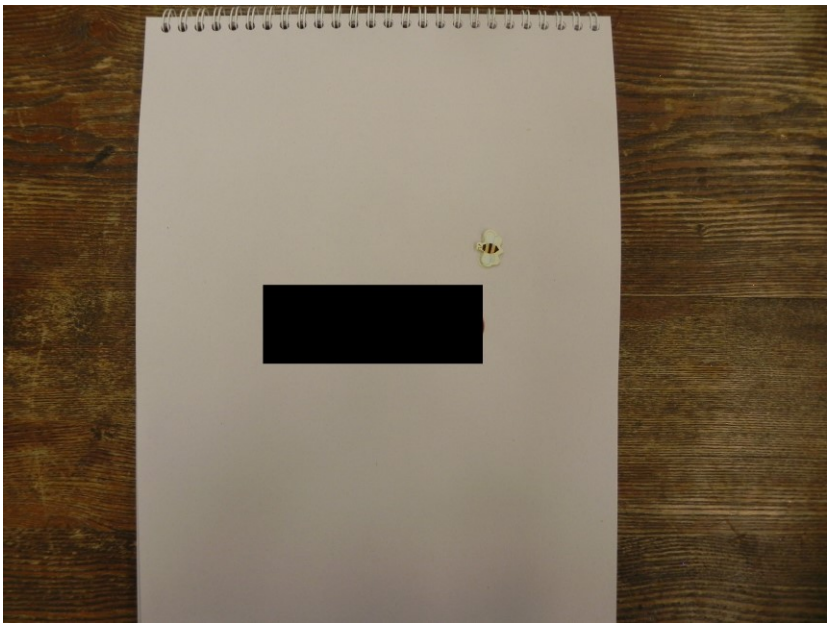

Figure 11. Pearl's seventh journal entry.

Nature was another theme that re-appeared throughout her entries. On more than one occasion, the student related to herself as an animal or referred to the animals she was displaying in her entries. For example, in Figure 12, the student used turtle stickers throughout her entry and said, "I feel like turtles today". In Figure 13, she made reference to dolphins, mountain goats, and whales. She expressed that the whale was her "spirit animal". Pearl also described her sense

of competence in her artwork as she worked on Figure 13. She stated that she should be an artist and expressed pride in her work.

Figure 12. Pearl's fifth journal entry.

Figure 13. Pearl's eighth journal entry.

She repeatedly advocated for her time while journaling and did not want to be rushed. This is significant, as it may point to a need for this activity to be used in a setting that allows for

more time. This is a student who was particularly involved in the reflection process, verbalizing her thoughts about her entries, while being active in using various materials throughout the project. She may have connected to the activity in a different way than the other students, and may have personally wanted to spend more time engaging in the activity. In Figure 13, she identified herself as a whale and later described the whale as "happy" which would seem to indicate that she herself was also happy. In this way, the journal was something that the student described as very relevant to her life and therefore quite meaningful.

Similarly to Kyra, Pearl showed that she reflected on the reader's experience, or in this case, the researcher's experience. While working on Figure 12, she said to her tutor that she felt "bad" for the researcher in regards to the recording. This appears to indicate an awareness that someone is on the other end of the reflection journals, and that they may or may not be able to interpret what is in the journals or recordings easily or accurately. She may be indicating that it was important for her to be understood.

This student's journaling experience seemed to demonstrate a strong sense of autonomy. She was able to select materials, themes, and colors confidently and independently. Her tutor also described her as displaying autonomy in her academics, as well as an increase in self-confidence throughout the year. Pearl's tutor was the tutor most involved in prompting her student through the journaling in a creative manner, asking her why she was drawing what she was drawing and asking for clarification regarding what was on the page. This may have impacted the student's involvement in the project and her ability to truly relate to the activity. There is also a possibility that this student is naturally autonomous and self-aware, allowing her to reflect more deeply and on a more personal level.

Reflective journals as a tool for reflection. One of the goals of the study was to utilize the reflective journals in ways to support students to uncover their feelings and thoughts about their own learning in a setting that promotes effective goal-setting, learning strategies, and student autonomy. The use of reflective journals to facilitate the expression of feelings and thoughts will be described using each student's perceptions followed by an analysis of the reflective journal process.

The four students were asked to discuss how they felt about using the journals as well as their likes and dislikes about the process. Overall, the four students enjoyed the fact that they could write or do "anything" they wanted because having choices and taking the initiative to make decisions was increasingly important to them. The concept of having control over the project was mentioned by all four students as being a favorite part of the journals. For example, Kyra especially liked the fact that "no writing" was involved as this was not an area of strength for her. Elsa enjoyed being "free" and "less guided".

The students mentioned the importance of relationships and therefore the concept of relatedness seemed to be directly linked to their tutoring sessions. For example, they described how they felt during the sessions with their tutors. This issue of relatedness emerged as a theme for all four students. Relatedness between student and tutor was expressed in telling jokes and with open laughter. This was a prominent theme during all sessions that were recorded. In some cases, the laughter was related to an exchange between tutor and student. During session three, both Elsa and Kyra engaged in a playful discussion about their favorite television shows with their tutors, poking fun at certain preferences and reminiscing. Other times, the laughter was directly related to the art or content in the journals. For example, during session 8, Pearl and her tutor discussed a funny video the tutor had seen about a person saying they like turtles at a

zombie festival. The student and tutor laughed about the randomness of turtles in this video. The student's journals appeared to be the focus of the start of conversations, which was sometimes initiated by the tutor, but other times by the students themselves. For Elsa, the journal contained explicitly expressed content, which prompted the tutor to probe about this content. During session six, the tutor asked her student about her feelings of anxiety and stress because she noticed her student's use of the words in her journal. Kyra's tutor occasionally asked her about her art work and commented on it, prompting the student to respond and explore her drawings. During session three, Kyra's tutor commented, "I think it's pretty. I think the sleeping man….your flower will beat mine actually. So you should feel happy about that…sleeping flower man. How about that?". A sense of community also emerged among the entire group of students. Students often traveled from room to room to borrow and share materials in their bins. They sometimes discussed academics. Other times, they discussed materials and invited each other to stick around and write in their journal in the same room. Pearl and her tutor spent a lot of their reflection time searching for specific materials in the bins and verbally expressing what they were looking for and commenting on the strangeness or usefulness of certain stickers. Kyra and Pearl both invited a fellow student to come join them on one occasion. Kyra said, "You can join us here if you want", and Pearl followed this up while humming with, "Sharing is caring".

Tutors. The tutors were asked to give their feedback about the use of the reflective journals and the process they observed with their students They described their discussions with their students and they reflected on their concerns about the use of the tools as a reflective experience. The following general themes emerged as being relevant to tutors. When the tutors engaged in discussions about the reflective journals, the following general themes emerged: de-stressing, feelings, and lack of reflection. Firstly, two of the tutors specifically mentioned that

they felt the journals were a good way for students to "de-stress". For example, Pearl's tutor described her student's journal as an indicator of her student's stress level, based on the fact that it was "really messy and all over the place" on specific days. The students seemed to use the journals to discuss their feelings and the tutors felt that this was the main focus of the journals. Tutors felt that the journals mostly captured what the students were feeling. For example, Elsa's tutor explained that her student would write down words that represented her feelings, rather than journaling about the academic content they had worked on; it seemed that this tutor expected more discussion about the content of the academic sessions and this was considered to be more reflective. Another tutor explained that she felt that drawing was inherently an activity that allowed students to express feelings rather than more concrete things, such as strategies and academics. Their perception of what was involved in the reflective experience was clearly different than that of the students.

Since the tutors perceived this reflection experience to be about concrete strategies and academics, a main concern that emerged for the tutors was described as a lack of reflection. At least five of the tutors raised this concern that the journals were not truly a reflective tool in terms of academic strategies and session content. One possible explanation put forth by the tutors is that students were not given specific prompts or instructions. One tutor said, "…there's not really an opportunity to identify strategies…like, it's not really a reflective tool for what worked for me today, what didn't work". Another tutor explained that the journals did not represent the strategies she used with her student during session and specific questions to help her student reflect were lacking. Overall, it appeared tutors felt that there was a lack of reflection about academic strategies in their student's journals. Elsa's tutor made the suggestion that the reflective journals might be a better tool to use with the students during social time when they are first

arriving and given time to settle into their session. A fellow tutor agreed, adding to the suggestion that breaks during sessions may also be a good time to use them to express their feelings. Interestingly, reflection about feelings during the session or about school life in general were considered less of a priority for the session, despite the fact that when left to their own devices, the students had the need to reflect on these feelings in general and about academics in particular. There seemed to be a divide between how the tutors perceived the journaling activity and how the student preferred to spend their time during the journaling sessions.

Core-Team Questionnaire. Both the coordinator and a senior team-leader of the program answered the core-team questionnaire to give feedback about the perceived benefits and concerns of the reflective journals. They were asked questions about how students previously reflected in the program, their own observations of the project, and what they learned about the tutors' experiences as well. Their answers helped raise important points. The program's reflection process before the start of the project was described as challenging, and a process with which students struggled. In particular, self-assessing their own productivity and progress was difficult for them and the students were described as resistant, with the tutor playing an important role in scaffolding the process. Allowing the students to have more control over the content therefore seemed important. Also, allowing them to express their views in a way that was comfortable to them in a spontaneous manner also seemed noteworthy. Interestingly, when the reflection journals were introduced, students began asking for their journals earlier than usual and appeared more engaged in the activity. It evolved into a more meaningful experience for them and the coordinator noticed a significant positive effect in the students' demeanour during this reflective process. Students seemed to approach the journals as less of a task and more of a personal activity. A communal atmosphere was also noticeable, with students talking about their

entries and sometimes sharing anecdotes with each other. It became a group task in some instances. It was also described as a tool for creative expression. The journals allowed students to use skills not used with the previous self-assessment tools. For example, this tool was open to exploration using art and self-expression. The coordinator also described the activity as helping students develop their group conversational skills and storytelling abilities while exploring their perceptions of various topics they chose to draw or write about. These features perhaps made the task intrinsically motivating and required less prompting and scaffolding from the tutors. These reflections from the coordinator and senior team-leader highlighted the importance for students to feel connected to the process and to make reflection a personally meaningful experience for them despite the fact that they focused more on feelings and less on cognitions.

The core-team members also made some suggestions. In particular, they suggested that the journals could be incorporated during social time rather than after the sessions. In addition, it was suggested that students could use these journals to relax and develop self-awareness before starting to work on academic tasks. If they were used to reflect on academic strategies, they expected that there could be more structured prompting with additional scaffolding from tutors. Another suggestion was to develop a way in which these journals can complement the standard reflection sheets that were already in use at the afterschool program.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of reflective journals with adolescent girls in an afterschool tutoring program for students with learning disabilities to understand their perceptions regarding their own learning. More specifically, I was interested in exploring (a) how adolescent girls in an afterschool tutoring program for students with learning disabilities choose to use reflective journals, (b) how students reflect about their academic and personal

experiences, (c) if and how they display their sense of autonomy and competence, and (d) if and how students discuss their feelings and share their experiences with others (tutors, peers) during these experiences (relatedness).

The Student Experience

Overall, the journals contained some writing interspersed with drawing, using stickers or, creating abstract art. The pages were colorful and varied in style both across students and within each student's journal. Each student was creative in their entries, often using multiple materials and ways of expressing themselves in single entries.

The journals were primarily used by students to express their feelings related to personal reflection, such as reflection on self-identity, feelings, and emotions. One student did reflect on her academic progress and work during tasks. It would appear that the journals provided a means for students to express their feelings. Generally, **t**he students seemed enthusiastic about the task, through their eagerness to get started on the task early and by exploring the bins of materials thoroughly at the start of each journaling sessions. It is possible that this was related to the variety of materials available, the nature of the task itself, or both. Students often asked the researcher when new materials would be available. The artistic aspect of the task may have therefore been appealing to students. In the literature, there are visual journaling experiences that have shown to lead students to feel more control of their own learning, and have pushed them to engage in self-reflection (Cummings, 2011). Students in this study were able to make links between what they were drawing and the meaning behind it at various moments in this project. This is consistent with Sanders-Bustle's (2008) findings in support of student's expression of feelings and opinions about specific school work through visual journaling; this work not only revealed students' emotions, but also described important aspects of students' lives. The

provision of open-ended artistic tools and the variety of materials available during these sessions may have specifically promoted the exploration of feelings and emotions by students, as well as helped students make links between what was on the page and comparisons to the self.

The four participating students stated that their favorite part of the journaling experience was that they could essentially use them whichever way they chose. This option of choice and flexibility to express themselves was highly valued by the students. This is consistent with Niemic and Ryan (2009), who suggest that the removal of coercion, the reduction of stress related to evaluation of the task, and providing a voice and choice for students promotes a sense of autonomy. Students were told and reminded throughout that these journals were theirs and that none of what they wrote or drew would be assessed as being right or wrong. The students were encouraged to reflect but they were not given any prompts, and they were not instructed on how to use their journals, allowing them to choose their own method and approach to the task. They enjoyed the lack of rigid structure which was displayed through enthusiasm, eagerness to engage in the task and the personal and independent ways in which they chose to express themselves. Each student used the journals differently and employed different artistic tools. Autonomy was most evident in the students' most important choice: whether or not to use the journals at all. This autonomous choice was not obvious for all students, but was contemplated and weighed by each of them. Ultimately, their sense of autonomy was displayed through all decisions they made over the duration of the project. In their review on the literature on motivation and education, Deci et al. (1991) described findings that pointed to autonomy as a catalyst to increased intrinsic motivation, increased sense of competence and an increased self-esteem. These positive outcomes are bound to increase positive affect and create a positive

experience for students. It would therefore make sense for students to have found freedom of choice to be their favorite part of the journaling project.

Students appeared to show a heightened sense of relatedness to their fellow peers in the program during the project. Whereas the reflection process was previously a tutor-student independent process, the reflective journaling sessions seemed to prompt students to circulate more often from room to room, looking for new materials and conversing with their peers. A communal atmosphere was a significant part of the experience, with students sharing materials with each other and inviting their peers to stay and journal in their own rooms. This may indicate that by giving students the opportunity to make choices and express themselves they felt freer in their tutoring space, as well as in their journal reflections. Some students connected more closely with their tutor, displaying vulnerability or uncertainty. Others connected strongly with their peers, displaying friendliness and a general gregariousness. It appears that their social behaviors were also affected in a positive manner by the process. They were encouraged to share with others, show interest in others, and to converse more often. Students displayed more positive affect, perhaps because they felt less constrained and more connected with the process. In this situation, they were not told what to do, what to say, or what to feel. This may have contributed to the positivity associated with the task, as well as the increased relatedness students displayed in connecting with their peers. The safety of the tutoring program setting and the activity itself may have also prompted an increase sense of comfort, leading to a more relaxed atmosphere and an increased connection to peers. For example, Baxter et al. (2005), reported that students found comfort in the process of communicating with their teacher through journaling. They did not feel pressured by others around them, and the privacy the journals provided thwarted the fear of being judged by their peers. As such, students who were typically shy in

class became much more comfortable expressing vulnerabilities and asking content questions in their journals. Similarly, it is possible that students felt more comfortable with the process of reflective journaling during this project, and were therefore more comfortable being around their peers and connecting with them in a non-academic way.

It would be expected that an increased sense of relatedness would increase comfort levels since relatedness is considered to be one of the essential needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Also, the comfort that students experience could be viewed as positive feedback for their engagement in the journaling. Deci et al. (1991) described that research has shown that "positive feedback has generally been found to increase intrinsic motivation because it enhances perceived competence" but that this only applies when autonomy can also be developed within that same setting (p. 333). These suggestions match well with how students reacted to the journaling task in this project. Autonomy was provided and supported, and this seems to have impacted how well they responded to the activity and how invested they were in continuing to use their journals.

Limitations and Future Directions

Though this study provided information on how reflective journals may be used by adolescent students with learning disabilities, there are some limitations worth discussing.

An important limitation is the small number of participants. Though the cases were analyzed closely and in depth, the small sample size limited any generalizability of findings, although this is not the goal of a qualitative case study. Furthermore, the participating students were all girls, calling for a similar investigation with boys. Nonetheless, the analysis of how the girls used journals in this case, sheds some light on the potential for visual or artistic journaling to be useful within a tutoring program, such as this one. Specifically, it would appear that

adolescent girls with learning disabilities do enjoy using the journals, and are able to personally reflect on feelings during the process.

Another limitation is the length of time of the implementation of the project . A longitudinal approach to a similar reflective journaling intervention would be interesting in future research. A long-term use of reflective journals would allow students to become more immersed in the project and would give a more in-depth picture of the ways in which students use their journals and the progress, change, and evolution their journals may display. This research project showed that most of the adolescent girls became quickly comfortable with the journal process and began using it personally and independently from the very beginning. It would be interesting to see the long-term effect of the use of reflective journals might have on adolescent reflection processes and if students would continue to reflect in a personal way, or if academic strategies would become a more regular part of the reflection process, as well.

It is noteworthy that all four participating girls were diagnosed with a learning disability, which may have had an impact on the results of the study. Specifically, the diagnosis and coping related to having a learning disability can have serious impacts on one's life and the outcomes (Goldberg et al., 2003). It is possible that the situation these students were in within the school setting affected results in ways that are important yet unknown. Furthermore, these students were also participating in a program specifically designed to help them with their learning disabilities. This may have further exacerbated their need to reflect on their feelings regarding their learning needs as part of this reflection process.

Practical Implications

Despite the limitations, this research project revealed some interesting findings about adolescent girls with learning disabilities who engage in reflective journaling. Though there is

visual journaling research with students, there is very little research addressing reflection journals with populations with learning disabilities, Nonetheless, there are still some similarities and comparisons to be made with findings in the existing literature. Similar to Baxter et al.'s (2005) findings that children's use of math journals communicated vulnerabilities and areas of need to their teacher for the first time, in this study the reflective journals revealed that student were able to express and reflect on their emotional states with their tutors at the end of their tutoring sessions. This was significant in that they tended to use the previous process of completing a reflection sheet by referring to their academic strategies and rarely revealed feelings and thoughts about school, friends, or themselves. Baxter et al. (2005) also concluded that students felt comfortable expressing private thoughts in their math journals, even though they knew their teachers would see them. This was also true for the adolescent girls journaling alongside their tutors. Though they were reminded that the process was their own, they appeared to use the journals to express feelings they had not expressed before and were comfortable doing so in the presence of their tutors. Cummings (2011), who also provided her student with various artistic materials, found that students using creative journals felt more in control of their learning and engaged in self-inquiry. For this project, it is unclear whether students felt more in control of their learning, but they did feel in control of their own reflection process in choosing their own materials, choosing their own designs and in being given choice. They were also able to engage in emotional and individual self-inquiry repeatedly. This has important implications for future implementations of similar reflection journals in academic settings. Allowing students to use journals in an artistic and personal way can give them a means of expressing and reflecting on their emotions and allow them to be vulnerable in a safe and non-judgemental setting. It can also

increase their sense of control and help them develop self-reflection methods that are specifically tailored to their learning style, personality, and preferences.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Cover Letter

My name is Sophia Biondi. I am a Master's student at Concordia University in the Child Studies program in the Education Department I am being supervised by Dr. Hariclia Petrakos (514-8482424, ext. 2013).

I am deeply interested in the how adolescent students self-reflect. More importantly, I would like to explore how adolescents reflect on their own abilities and progress academically within the context of the [redacted] Program. I am interested in working with students to discover new and exciting ways for them to use materials and tools to make self-reflection personal, meaningful, and relevant. To do so, I would like to introduce students to reflective journals that allow them space and freedom to reflect openly about their learning within the program.

If you would like your child to participate in this project which involves:

- **Coaching on setting effective session goals with their tutor**
- **Reflecting on their tutoring sessions using journals, to promote both self-reflection and self-confidence**
- **Participating in a sharing group with their peers, sharing ideas in a safe and familiar environment**

Please read the attached consent form for more information.

Please note that all information gathered for this project will remain **CONFIDENTIAL** at all times and will not be shared or revealed at any point during this project and in the final thesis write-up.

I hope that your child will participate in this project.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 514-839-8832 or sophia.biondi@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sophia Biondi

Appendix B

Student Consent Form

Student Consent Form

This is to state that I _____ member of the [redacted] Program to participate in a research project being conducted by Sophia Biondi of the Education Department of Concordia University, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos.

(Telephone: (514) 839-8832; e-mail: sophia.biondi@hotmail.)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research project is to explore the use of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

B. PROCEDURE

a. I understand that the research will be conducted in the after school program at xxxx School for Girls. The study will begin in March 2014 and the participants will be high-school students and members of the [redacted] Program.

b. I understand that I will be asked to complete a questionnaire to gather demographic information for the analysis and reporting of the findings.

c. I understand that the goal-setting coaching session and reflective journals will begin on April 15th, 2014 and end by June 5th, 2014. Reflective journals will be used for 16 consecutive sessions. The researcher will hand out the journals at 5:20 pm and collect them at 5:30 pm, every session. Students and tutors will each have their own journals.

d. I understand that the journaling sessions will be audio-recorded to record the thinking out loud process of tutor-student pairs as they reflect.

e. I understand that once I have completed the 8 weeks of journaling, a short (45-minute) sharing group will be organized to allow us to share with my peers any thoughts, feelings or private issues. This session will also be audio-recorded to keep a record of important themes.

f. I understand that at the end of 8 weeks, my tutor and I will be allowed to keep my journal for our own personal use, or any purpose.

g. I understand that the study will end in early June.

Participant's confidentiality and well-being is very important in this study, and as such, participant's information and identity will be secured. This is a voluntary project and you will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time; however, your participation is crucial to assess the usefulness of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The afterschool program already provides the student with an opportunity to reflect along with their tutors using discussion and prompts. Because we are simply modifying the tool with which students self-reflect (reflective journals), this study does not foresee any risks to the adolescents as they will be supervised at all times.

There may be benefits to this study, as it gives member of the [redacted] Program a chance to self-reflect in a personal, relevant and meaningful way. The main objective is to assess the usefulness of reflective journals in the program. There is no guarantee that the program will benefit students.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published (my identity will remain confidential).
- I understand that the data from this study will be used to give a brief report of the general group findings without identifying particular children or school staff in summary of the report.
- I understand that I will be audio-recorded during the collection of data for this project.
- I understand that I will be asked permission to be quoted anonymously in the final write up of the thesis.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR BY APRIL 10TH, 2014

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY,

MY NAME (Please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

**If you require to obtain a copy of the report on the findings from this study, please contact the sophia.biondi@hotmail or call 514-839-8832*

**In case of decision to withdraw from the study, you can contact:*

Sophia Biondi on (514) 839-8832 or at sophia.biondi@hotmail.com

Harriet Petrakos on (514) 848-2424, ext. 2013 or at hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca

**If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 ext. 7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca*

Appendix C

Parent Consent Form

Parent Consent Form

This is to state that I _____ parent/guardian of _____agree for my child and to participate in a research project being conducted by Sophia Biondi of the Education Department of Concordia University, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos.

(Telephone: (514) 839-8832; e-mail: sophia.biondi@hotmail.)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research project is to explore the use of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

B. PROCEDURE

a. I understand that the research will be conducted in the after school program at Xxxx School for Girls. The study will begin in March 2014 and the participants will be high-school students and members of the [redacted] Program.

b. I understand that a questionnaire will be completed by the students to gather demographic information for the analysis and reporting of the findings.

c. I understand that the goal-setting coaching session and reflective journals will begin on April 15th, 2014 and end by June 5th, 2014. Reflective journals will be used for 16 consecutive sessions. The researcher will hand out the journals at 5:20 pm and collect them at 5:30 pm, every session. Students and tutors will each have their own journals.

d. I understand that the journaling sessions will be audio-recorded to record the thinking out loud process of tutor-student pairs as they reflect.

e. I understand that once all participating students have completed the 8 weeks of journaling, a short (45-minute) sharing group will be organized to allow students to share with their peers any thoughts, feelings or private issues. This session will also be audio-recorded to keep a record of important themes.

f. I understand that at the end of 8 weeks, the participating students and tutors will be allowed to keep their journals for their own personal use, or any purpose.

g. I understand that the study will end in early June.

Participant's confidentiality and well-being is very important in this study, and as such, participant's information and identity will be secured. This is a voluntary project and you will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time; however, your participation is crucial to assess the usefulness of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The afterschool program already provides the student with an opportunity to reflect along with their tutors using discussion and prompts. Because we are simply modifying the tool with which students self-reflect (reflective journals), this study does not foresee any risks to the adolescents as they will be supervised at all times.

There may be benefits to this study, as it gives member of the [redacted] Program a chance to self-reflect in a personal, relevant and meaningful way. The main objective is to assess the usefulness of reflective journals in the program. There is no guarantee that the program will benefit students.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my and my child's consent and discontinue our participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my child's participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL
- I understand that the data from this study may be published (participant's identity will remain confidential).
- I understand that the data from this study will be used to give a brief report of the general group findings without identifying particular children or school staff in summary of the report.
- I understand that my child will be audio-recorded during the collection of data for this project.
- I understand that my child will be asked permission to be quoted anonymously in the final write up of the thesis.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR BY APRIL 10TH, 2014

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE THAT MY CHILD PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE FOR MY CHILD TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY,

CHILD'S NAME (Please print):_____

GUARDIAN'S NAME (please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

**If you require to obtain a copy of the report on the findings from this study, please contact the sophia.biondi@hotmail or call 514-839-8832*

**In case of decision to withdraw from the study, you can contact:*

Sophia Biondi on (514) 839-8832 or at sophia.biondi@hotmail.com

Harriet Petrakos on (514) 848-2424, ext. 2013 or at hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca

**If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 ext. 7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca*

Appendix D

Tutor Consent Form

Tutor Consent Form

This is to state that I _____ tutor at the [redacted] Program agree to participate in a research project being conducted by Sophia Biondi of the Education Department of Concordia University, under the supervision of Dr. Harriet Petrakos.

(Telephone: (514) 839-8832; e-mail: sophia.biondi@hotmail.)

A. PURPOSE

I have been informed that the purpose of the research project is to explore the use of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

B. PROCEDURE

A. I understand that the research will be conducted in the after school program at Xxxx School for Girls. The study will begin in March 2014 and the participants will be high-school students and members of the [redacted] Program.

b. I understand that a questionnaire will be completed by the students to gather demographic information for the analysis and reporting of the findings.

c. I understand that the goal-setting coaching session and reflective journals will begin on April 15th, 2014 and end by June 5th, 2014. Reflective journals will be used for 16 consecutive sessions. The researcher will hand out the journals at 5:20 pm and collect them at 5:30 pm, every session. Students and tutors will each have their own journals.

d. I understand that the journaling sessions will be audio-recorded to record the thinking out loud process of tutor-student pairs as they reflect.

e. I understand that once all participating students have completed the 8 weeks of journaling, a short (45-minute) sharing group will be organized to allow students to share with their peers any thoughts, feelings or private issues. This session will also be audio-recorded to keep a record of important themes.

f. I understand that at the end of 8 weeks, the participating students and tutors will be allowed to keep their journals for their own personal use, or any purpose.

g. I understand that the study will end in early June.

Participant's confidentiality and well-being is very important in this study, and as such, participant's information and identity will be secured. This is a voluntary project and you will have the option to withdraw from the study at any time; however, your participation is crucial to assess the usefulness of reflective journals at the [redacted] Program.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

The afterschool program already provides the student with an opportunity to reflect along with their tutors using discussion and prompts. Because we are simply modifying the tool with which students self-reflect (reflective journals), this study does not foresee any risks to the adolescents as they will be supervised at all times.

There may be benefits to this study, as it gives member of the [redacted] Program a chance to self-reflect in a personal, relevant and meaningful way. The main objective is to assess the usefulness of reflective journals in the program. There is no guarantee that the program will benefit students.

D. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue our participation at any time without negative consequences.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL
- I understand that the data from this study may be published (participant's identity will remain confidential).
- I understand that the data from this study will be used to give a brief report of the general group findings without identifying particular children or school staff in summary of the report.
- I understand that I be audio-recorded during the collection of data for this project.
- I understand that I will be asked permission to be quoted anonymously in the final write up of the thesis.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO THE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM COORDINATOR BY APRIL 10TH , 2014

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY,

MY NAME (Please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

**If you require to obtain a copy of the report on the findings from this study, please contact the sophia.biondi@hotmail or call 514-839-8832*

**In case of decision to withdraw from the study, you can contact:*

Sophia Biondi on (514) 839-8832 or at sophia.biondi@hotmail.com

Harriet Petrakos on (514) 848-2424, ext. 2013 or at hpetrakos@education.concordia.ca

**If at any time you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Adela Reid, Research Ethics and Compliance Officer, Concordia University, at (514) 848-2424 ext. 7481 or by email at areid@alcor.concordia.ca*

Appendix E

Team-Leader Consent Form

Team-Leader Consent Form

My name is Sophia Biondi. I am a Master's student at Concordia University in the Child Studies program in the Education Department I am being supervised by Dr. Hariclia Petrakos (514-8482424, ext. 2013).

I am deeply interested in the how adolescent students self-reflect. More importantly, I would like to explore how adolescents reflect on their own abilities and progress academically within the context of the [redacted] Program. I am interested in working with students to discover new and exciting ways for them to use materials and tools to make self-reflection personal, meaningful, and relevant. To do so, I would like to introduce students to reflective journals that allow them space and freedom to reflect openly about their learning within the program.

This project which involves:

- **Coaching students on setting effective session goals with their tutor**
- **Students reflecting on their sessions using journals, to promote both self-reflection and self-confidence**
- **Students participating in a sharing group with their peers, sharing ideas in a safe and familiar environment**

As a team-leader in the [redacted] Program I understand that:

- I will be audio-recorded during the collection of data for this project but that all transcripts and recordings in which I am directly involved will be destroyed and will not be used for the project or for any other purpose.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY.
I UNDERSTAND THAT NONE OF THE RECORDINGS IN WHICH I AM DIRECTLY INVOLVED WILL BE USED FR THE PROJECT AND THAT THESE WILL BE DESTROYED.

MY NAME (Please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 514-839-8832 or sophia.biondi@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Sophia Biondi

Appendix F

Consent (Cover) Letter for Program Coordinator

Consent (Cover) Letter for Program Coordinator

My name is Sophia Biondi. I am a Master's student at Concordia University in the Child Studies program in the Education Department I am being supervised by Dr. Hariclia Petrakos (514-8482424, ext. 2013). I am currently co-coordinating the [redacted] Program at the Montreal Fluency Center with Dr. Marlene Desjardins.

I am deeply interested in the how adolescent students self-reflect. More importantly, I would like to explore how adolescents reflect on their own abilities and progress academically within the context of the [redacted] Program. I am interested in working with students to discover new and exciting ways for them to use materials and tools to make self-reflection personal, meaningful, and relevant. To do so, I would like to introduce students to reflective journals that allow them space and freedom to reflect openly about their learning within the program.

Because students in the [redacted] Program already use reflection tools to think about their learning, the implementation of reflection journals will be introduced in a substitutive manner and will not alter the program in any way. For the purpose of better understanding the ways in which students reflect, students and tutors will be audio-recorded during the reflection process.

This project will involve:

- **A coaching session on setting effective session goals for students and tutors**
- **Students and tutors reflecting on sessions using journals, to promote both self-reflection and self-confidence**
- **Student participation in a sharing group with their peers, sharing ideas in a safe and familiar environment**

Please note that all information gathered for this project will remain **CONFIDENTIAL** at all times and will not be shared or revealed at any point during this project and in the final thesis write-up.

I am interested in running this project at Xxxx School for Girls to work with students who are in the [redacted] Program. I hope to have your consent in running my project in your afterschool tutoring program.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 514-839-8832 or sophia.biondi@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sophia Biondi

PLEASE SIGN THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE FORM SHOULD YOU CONSENT TO THE PROJECT

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I AGREE TO HAVE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE [redacted] PROGRAM AT XXXX SCHOOL FOR GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

I AGREE TO HAVE STUDENTS BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY.

MY NAME (Please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

TITLE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

Appendix G

Consent (Cover) Letter for School Principal

Consent (Cover) Letter for School Principal

My name is Sophia Biondi. I am a Master's student at Concordia University in the Child Studies program in the Education Department I am being supervised by Dr. Hariclia Petrakos (514-8482424, ext. 2013). I am currently co-coordinating the [redacted] Program at the Montreal Fluency Center with Dr. Marlene Desjardins.

I am deeply interested in the how adolescent students self-reflect. More importantly, I would like to explore how adolescents reflect on their own abilities and progress academically within the context of the [redacted] Program. I am interested in working with students to discover new and exciting ways for them to use materials and tools to make self-reflection personal, meaningful, and relevant. To do so, I would like to introduce students to reflective journals that allow them space and freedom to reflect openly about their learning within the program.

Because students in the [redacted] Program already use reflection tools to think about their learning, the implementation of reflection journals will be introduced in a substitutive manner and will not alter the program in any way. For the purpose of better understanding the ways in which students reflect, students and tutors will be audio-recorded during the reflection process.

This project will involve:

- **A coaching session on setting effective session goals for students and tutors**
- **Students and tutors reflecting on sessions using journals, to promote both self-reflection and self-confidence**
- **Student participation in a sharing group with their peers, sharing ideas in a safe and familiar environment**

Please note that all information gathered for this project will remain **CONFIDENTIAL** at all times and will not be shared or revealed at any point during this project and in the final thesis write-up.

I am interested in running this project at Xxxx School for Girls to work with students who are in the [redacted] Program. I hope to have your consent in running my project in your school.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at 514-839-8832 or sophia.biondi@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sophia Biondi

PLEASE SIGN THE FOLLOWING SECTION OF THE FORM SHOULD YOU CONSENT TO THE PROJECT

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I AGREE TO HAVE STUDENTS AT XXXX SCHOOL FOR GIRLS PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

I AGREE TO HAVE STUDENTS BE AUDIO-RECORDED DURING THE COLLECTION OF DATA FOR THIS STUDY.

MY NAME (Please print):_____

SIGNATURE: _____

TITLE: _____

CONTACT NUMBER: _____

Appendix H

Tutoring Program Goal-Setting/Reflection Sheet for Students

Tutoring Program Goal-Setting/Reflection Sheet for Students

Student Reflection Sheet

Student/Tutor: _____ Date: _____

Goal #1	What tools will we use?	Time needed?	Time taken?
What strategies did we use? Would you use them again?			

Goal #2	What tools will we use?	Time needed?	Time taken?
What strategies did we use? Would you use them again?			

Goal #3	What tools will we use?	Time needed?	Time taken?
What strategies did we use? Would you use them again?			

Today my work was (circle one)
Great Good So-so Not great Not good

What was the best thing about the session? What could have made it better?

How will you continue your work at home?
□ I've used my agenda.
□ I've made a schedule.
□ Other: _____

What would you like to work on next time?

Appendix I

Short Student Questionnaire

Short Student Questionnaire

Short Student Questionnaire ****** Team # _____**

1) Age: _____

2) Years in the [redacted] Program: _____

3) Which year of high-school are you currently completing? : _____

4) Since you first joined the program, how would you describe your experience at the program so far?

_____
_____
_____

5) Write about your two favorite entries in your journal.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6) What was the best thing about using these reflection journals during your sessions?

_____
_____
_____

7) What was your least favorite part about using the reflection journals during your sessions?

_____
_____
_____

Thank you or taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. ☺

Appendix J

Additional Photos of Student Journal Entries

Additional Photos of Student Journal Entries

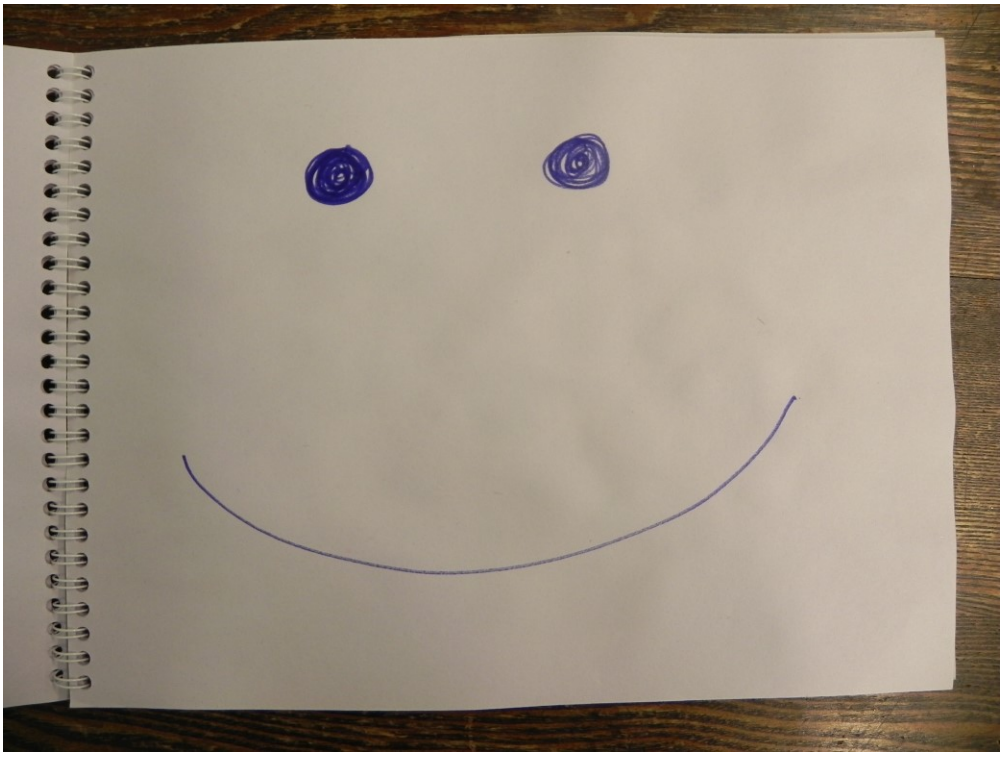

Figure J1. Kyra's fourth journal entry.

Figure J2. Kyra's fifth journal entry.

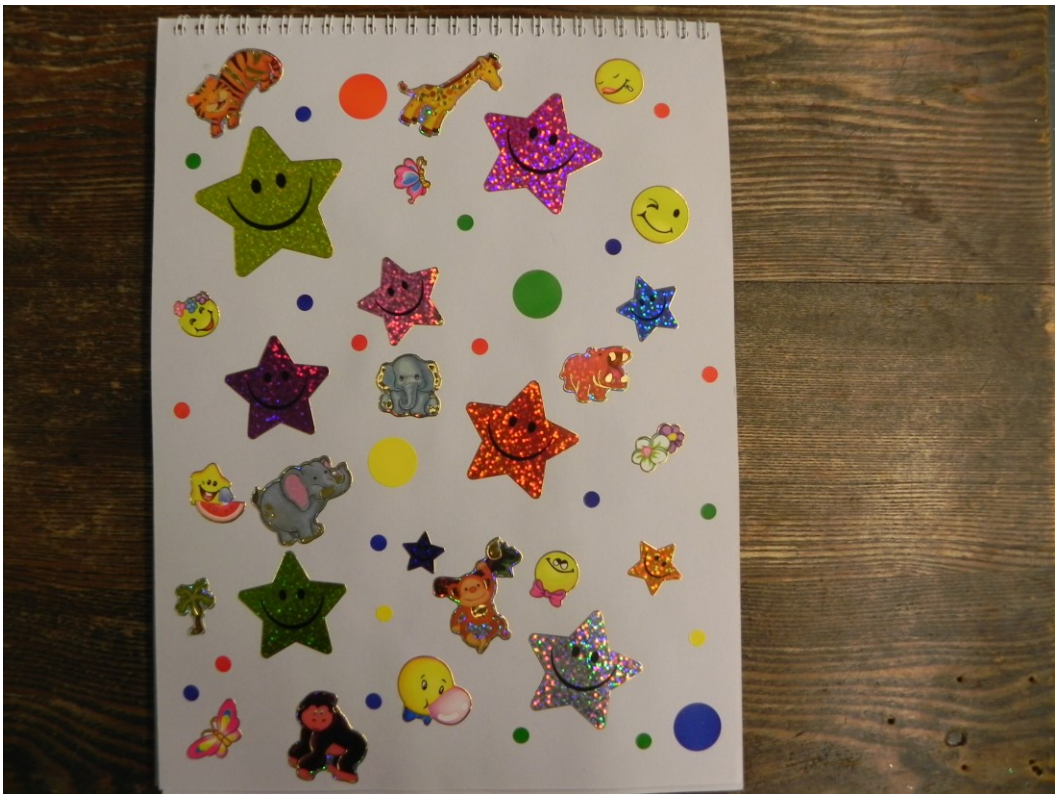

Figure J3. Kyra's sixth journal entry.

Figure J4. Kyra's seventh journal entry.

Figure J5. Daisy's first journal entry.

Figure J6. Daisy's second journal entry.

Figure J7. Daisy's third journal entry.

Figure J8. Daisy's fourth journal entry.

Figure J9. Daisy's fifth journal entry.

Figure J10. Daisy sixth journal entry.

Figure J11. Daisy's seventh journal entry.

Figure J12. Pearl's first journal entry.

Figure J13. Pearl's second journal entry.

Figure J14. Pearl's third journal entry.

Figure J15. Pearl's fourth journal entry.