

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A LEARNING CONTRACT  
AND THE EFFECTS ON THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF  
SEVENTH-GRADE LIFE SCIENCE STUDENTS**

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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May 11, 2001

Blacksburg, Virginia

Key Words: Learning Contract, Life Science, Instructional Strategy, and Mixed-Ability Learner

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(ABSTRACT)

The purposes of this case study were to describe how a learning contract was implemented for a seventh-grade life science class and to discover its effects on the learning experiences of the students. A learning contract was a written agreement between the student and the teacher in which the student agreed to complete a variety of assignments for a particular grade. Learning contracts were issued to the students for three grading periods of six-weeks. A total of 137 students participated in the case study, which began in September 1997 and culminated at the end of the third grading period in January 1998.

The data were collected from three groups: (a) 137 seventh-grade life science students, (b) 48 parents, and (c) the classroom teacher-researcher. In order to guide the collection and analysis of data, twenty-four questions were developed. These questions were then compiled into two surveys. Responses from the student survey indicated that students: (a) signed up for an A more than any other grade, (b) liked working in teams, (c) found it easy to find assignments, (d) set goals to earn high grades, and (e) felt good about their science grades. For the first grading period, eighty-nine percent of parents surveyed responded that they were aware of their children's learning contract grade, and sixty-two percent of the parents surveyed responded that they were satisfied with their children's academic performance using the learning contract. Taped interviews were conducted with former seventh-grade students and the teacher-researcher. In the taped interviews, students told of their positive learning experiences. The teacher-researcher kept a daily journal and used its contents as data.

As a result of this case study, the students and the teacher-researcher supported the continued use of the learning contract for the next school year.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory of my husband and my Dad.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people who have supported my efforts to produce a scholarly product and who have encouraged me throughout the dissertation process:

My children Andy, Tracy, and Catie, who together have kept me focused with hugs, kisses, and copious visits to my computer station. My grandson, Ean, who encouraged me to hurry and finish before he grew tall enough to reach to the top of my computer station. My Dad and Mom, who called and visited to offer support and words of encouragement.

My sister, Joan, for her technical support, and phone calls about computers, as well as the long conversations on her cell phone.

My advisor, whose constant suggestions and positive comments inspired me to want to finish. The VATECH secretary, who sent me all the necessary paperwork to graduate and who communicated with me over the past seven years with such a cheerful attitude.

The former teacher, who gave me permission to use her learning contract as the model for my research.

Archer, my best friend, for encouraging me, and for transcribing the interview tapes.

My Dissertation Committee, for providing support, constructive criticism, and a sense of purpose. The Principal and Superintendent of the school system for granting me permission to conduct my research with my seventh-grade students at the intermediate school during the 1997-1998 school term.

The faculty and staff at the intermediate school for all the support and the helpful suggestions, and the seventh-grade, life science students for the rewarding experience.

My new teaching friends who provided food-for-thought and positive reinforcement.

My friends who prepared my dissertation for electronic transfer.

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