I have been doing my pre-student teaching at the Argyle Elementary School in the third grade classroom with Mrs. Treuthardt. Since the first day I arrived, I have worked with Tommy for about an hour a day. Tommy is eight years old. He struggles in school and is below level in all subjects. He reads at a first grade level and has minimal understanding of basic concepts that children his age normally understand. Tommy’s home life is not a welcoming one. His parents are separated and his home is not well taken care of. He has been taken from his home before by social services and his clothes are usually worn and tattered.

Tommy is a small thin child who occasionally complains about headaches. He also has glasses, which are often broken and at home. I believe his headaches are due to not wearing his glasses. When he has glasses he seems to feel better and act more like himself. He does well with handwriting. He can write in cursive as well as print. Some days his cursive is difficult to read, but on other days it legible and well done. I use flash cards and individual whiteboards with Tommy to work on his spelling words. He flips flash cards over and shuffles them to mix them up. He writes on the white board very well. I watched Tommy in gym class; he runs and plays just like the rest of the children. However, his strength is limited because he is so small. He talks a lot about football and basketball and how he loves to play. I have never seen him play, but he says he plays with his dad, brother, and sister. His physical development is going okay at this point of his life. He has told me on several occasions that he eats mostly pizza at home. However, he eats breakfast at school and fairly health lunches are provided.

Tommy has at times shown great awareness in reading and pronouncing his vocabulary words. However, the next week he may not be able to read those same words. His memory seems to vary from week to week. He also has a difficult time differentiating the letters b and d. He will often misuse these two letters when reading and writing. Tommy does understand which letters are vowels and which are consonants. He seems to understand that vowels are in the middle of words. Tommy’s most difficult task is connecting meaning between what he is learning in the school to the real world. His understanding of the days of the week and months of the year is not fully complete. He knows what they are but not the order they occur. He rarely reads fluently and repeats himself often when reading. He also has a very difficult time thinking independently. During writing time I help him write his stories. I try to make him think about what he wants to say and only help him spell the words. His thoughts are usually incomplete with little direction. I help him elaborate on what he is thinking by relating the story to his family or interests. Tommy loves doing word searches, which contain his vocabulary words. He is very good at them and likes racing me to see who will find the word first.

Tommy’s self-concept has been tough to identify because he is so underdeveloped that I’m not sure if he has a realization of who he is. His self-esteem is evident when he reads a book or completes his word search. His smile brightens up my day because it is so real. It is very easy to see that he is happy and proud of himself. When he gets a 100 on his spelling test or math assignments, he runs over to show me with a huge smile on his face. I give him high fives and fist bumps to acknowledge his hard work. I have never seen Tommy cry or show a large amount of anger. He has gotten discouraged before, but is very level headed. He keeps his emotions in tack and is a very happy go lucky child. His situation is very difficult, but I do not think he is aware of that. He just enjoys life and likes being in school around people that care about him. His classmates will help him and talk with him about his stories and projects he has made. He has a difficult time conversing with them on a consistent basis. He gets timid and seems unaware of what to say. He loves showing Mrs. Treuthardt and the special education teacher things he made and homework he completed. He recently could not remember Mrs. Treuthardt’s name, but was still able to talk with her about his project. He really seems to open up with me and share things that he likes. On numerous occasions he has taken me out to his back pack to show me toys or a new hat. I have recently given him the nickname “smiles” because his smile is great to see. Every time I call him “smiles” he laughs and smiles back at me. He likes to watch his classmates learn things that he is not currently learning. I do not think he understands it, but it makes him feel included. His sense of initiative is evident when he is excited about working on a story or doing a word search. He is in a hurry to get materials out and to begin working.

I absolutely loved working with Tommy. I have learned just as much from him as he has from me. His personality is so forgiving. His smile is contagious and gives meaning to why I am becoming a teacher. I think with individual instruction, Tommy will begin to progress. However, I feel he needs to be tested for some form of disability to accurately determine what the school can do to effectively help him learn. I do not think his home life is going to improve, which is why I think it would be wonderful if he could be placed in a foster home that would care for him and love him the way he deserves. Vygotsky believed scaffolding was essential in a child’s education. I feel that the school must now use what we know about Tommy to help him get the proper education. Working with Tommy was an amazing experience that I will learn from to become a teacher who cares about all his students.