How Can Teachers Implement Multiple Modalities into the Classroom to Assist Struggling Male Readers’?

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How Can Teachers Implement Multiple Modalities into the Classroom to Assist Struggling Male Readers’?

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

M.S. Literacy Education

Supervised by

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School of Arts and Sciences
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Abstract

The purpose of this action research study was to determine the effect of using Animoto software as an instructional tool to assist with the review and reinforcement of reading and writing skills. Specifically, the desire was to see if student engagement and motivation in the learning process is increased while using Animoto. The study consisted of one participant and four meetings. Data was collected in the form of field anecdotal notes, observations and video footage. The results indicate the positive effects of Animoto on reading and writing skills as well as, increased engagement and motivation. Results will be used to suggest future studies regarding technology and student use as well as technology spending in schools.
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How Can Teachers Implement Multiple Modalities into the Classroom to Assist Struggling Male Readers’?

The Definition of Literacy with New Learning and Communication Paradigms

The definition of literacy “continues to be understood as engagement with print text, most often books” (Sanford & Madill, 2007, p. 433). Literacy in the context of this paper is in itself a form of technology; a human-made tool used in order to accomplish an end (Baron, 2001). Walsh (2008) argues that although many debates circulate, the ‘basics’ of literacy will never be the same. With new learning and communication paradigms continuing to change the definition of literacy, this too has begun to affect how reading and writing skills are being acquired by today’s students (Gunter & Kenny, 2008). Now more common than ever, definitions of multimodal literacy are becoming prevalent. According to Walsh (2008), multimodal literacy can be defined as “listening, reading and writing together with processing the modes of written text, image, sound and movement in print and digital text” (p.101). These changes in communication modes, due to technological advances, again are ultimately altering the process of how students learn to read and write (Williams, 2008). For example, students are now often required to submit essays in a word document instead of being hand-written. Students, for instance are also frequently asked to conduct research on databases and websites, instead of from resource books and encyclopedias. Although school-based print texts are still implemented in the classroom, many young readers need more to grab their interest. The research compiled below most likely will indicate the importance and relevance for teachers to incorporate multimodal texts in classrooms for struggling male readers.

Male Academic Underachievement and Technology

“Some boys struggle with reading school-based print text, but are highly literate” (Sanford & Madill, 2007, p.434). According to media headlines, boys are failing to meet reading
and writing standards measured through ‘high stakes testing’ (Sanford & Madill, 2007).

Beginning in the year 1996 and continuing until present day, the Era of Engaged Learning has re-conventionalized students as engaged and motivated learners (Fresch, 2008). Students today engage in the following interactive, participatory and motivating activities: texting, blogging and gaming (Walsh, 2008). These activities strengthen their skill of multitasking, which is often overlooked in the classroom but necessary in the workforce. Due to changing technology, students are more likely to access digital, rather than print-based texts for pleasure (Walsh, 2008). It is often overlooked that students who struggle while reading print-based texts may have compositional skills when in a different medium (Bruce, 2008). For these reasons, alternative texts are needed to engage struggling male readers (Walsh, 2008).

**Academic Success and Book Choice**

A student’s book choice is imperative to academic success. To help students choose the correct books, teachers need to be aware of their interests. Reluctant and struggling readers especially need books with strong interest appeal. Wrong book choices for students can lead to a lack of interest in reading.

**Reading Motivation and Academic Achievement**

Larson (2010) argues that “reading motivation appears higher after children interact with multimodal texts, especially among children with reading difficulties” (p.16). When a student’s interest is strengthened, higher achievement occurs (Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish & Shapiro, 2007). Accommodating a child’s interest fosters a love for reading which allows children to better understand and appreciate how reading pertains to the real world.
Male Text Preferences

Males look for purposeful, meaningful, active, fun and engaging texts (Sanford & Madill, 2007). Often males chose reading material for the following reasons: visual appeal, topic interest, humor, tactile judgment, and connections to experience (Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish & Shapiro, 2007). Along with visual and tactile appeal, male readers also like to read material which allows them to make connections to the world (Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish & Shapiro, 2007). Male readers enjoy engaging and interacting with technology because it encourages imagination and problem-solving skills (Sanford & Madill, 2007). Therefore, it is vital for teachers to be aware of the reasons for choices in books while assisting struggling male readers.

The Importance of Multimodal Exposure

Teachers who do not provide students with multiple opportunities to engage in multimodal texts are unknowingly doing them an injustice. Multimodal texts “expand the concept of literacy to include a random combination of digital practices used with video, audio, interactivity, still images, and so on” (Tyner, 2000, p.17). Digital practices involve the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages in a variety of forms (Aufderheide, 1993, p. 20). Students lacking experience with multimodal texts often lose motivation while reading print-based texts. Multimodal texts provide students with an opportunity to engage with texts containing visuals, audio, hyperlinks, and icons. Without exposure to multimodal texts, students often fail to take advantage of the multitasking, word processing and web navigating skills needed to flourish in today’s workforce.
Theoretical Framework

Literacy and Discourses

Literacy, at the most basic level, is a valuable communication tool used to formulate meaning from oral and written language, depending on varying contexts (Gee, 2001). As a communication tool it allows individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and facts to others (Gee, 2001). Gee (2001) points out that as an individual develops they begin to learn and acquire literacy through Primary and Secondary Discourses. Known as an “identity kit;” costume; or set of instructions, discourses inform individuals on how to speak and function in conjunction with viewpoints, norms, and standpoints (Gee, 2001). Discourses can also relate socially to power and to the hierarchical structure of society (Gee, 2001). Male students who are able to effectively distinguish when to transfer from their Primary to Secondary Discourses often hold higher social status. For instance, a male who understands that his Secondary Discourse is mainly for school and professional work settings often is seen by society as intelligent and competent.

Learning vs. Acquisition of Literacy

Another term, “acquisition”, occurs when an individual unconsciously absorbs his/her surrounding cultural knowledge, adding information to his/her growing bank of background knowledge, or “schema.” Typically, as an individual acquires language within a home setting, he/she converses with his/her Primary Discourse (Gee, 2001). Learning, in contrast, is when an individual consciously takes in knowledge from a formal school setting (Gee, 2001). While in the school setting for instance, an individual is learning socially acceptable behaviors and ways of acting/speaking. These learned behaviors may include manners and tone of speech in various settings. Existing within an individual are varying dialects or linguistic variations which are also
affected by culture, environment, and community. Whether a child learns or acquires the literacy skills through these processes they are essential for success in today’s literacy and technology-driven world.

*Learning and Acquisition through Multimodal Modes*

Both learning and acquisition are enhanced through multimodal modes which support communication and discourse (Wickman & Östman, 2002). Although multimodal modes have the ability to enable or disable what is commonly known as organizational learning; with it comes discourse change as individuals become participants of new practices (Robey, Boudreau, & Rose, 2000).

*New Literacies*

With the advancement of technology, new literacies and meaning-based knowledge is continually being developed (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Using technology as a tool, individuals are beginning to use literacy practices that encourage personal value, emphasis, priority and perspective changes (Hartnell-Young & Vetere, 2008). As a result of this literacy framework, participants are communicating in multiple modes including written, visual, audio and gestural which differs from conventional literacy practices (Hartnell-Young & Vetere, 2008). In other words, a child who is learning through the new literacies framework may be used to working from a class website or with an interactive computer learning software, whereas, a child learning through conventional literacy practices may read books and work with teacher-made worksheets to learn. With this new form of literacy, students are encouraged to participate and be interactive (Walsh, 2008). Outside of the classroom, students are engaging in new interactive activities including texting, blogging and gaming which incorporate rapid reading, viewing, photos, graphics, and icons (Walsh, 2008). This critical framework recognizes that
reading is not just decoding words but that it is the knowledge needed to communicate with the rest of the world. Teachers like Vivian Vasquez who implement this critical perspective in their classroom, strive to “construct spaces where social justice issues could be raised and critical negotiation of the curriculum” (Larson & Marsh, 2005, p.50). In this manner, students are striving to understand how social injustices occur and how they may actively change them.

Students in these types of classrooms are actively seeking explanations and questioning the ways of the world. Through this critical lens, teachers and students are seen as being equal (Larson & Marsh, 2005). As suggested by Larson (2010), “new literacies are persistently evolving and challenging teachers to transform reading instruction in response to emerging technologies” (p.16).

**Cognitive-Constructivist Theory**

In relation to the new literacy theory, the cognitive-constructivist theory recognizes that readers make meaning through their experiences which in turn makes reading more enjoyable (Gunter & Kenny, 2008). Students find more enjoyment when they read material which speaks of their personal experiences because they are then able to formulate related ideas, knowledge and meaning. To illustrate, a male student may enjoy reading books about video games because it may help him understand how they are constructed and possibly give him an idea to make a game of his own. The development of these theories in response to emerging technologies has forever changed literacy definitions and instruction.

**Research Question**

With the development of multiple modalities and given that a student who may struggle with print-based texts may have compositional skills while reading in a different medium, this action research project asks; how can multimodal tools or digital storytelling software
(Animoto.com) be used to assist struggling male readers? To investigate this issue, I will be implementing the use of digital storytelling software (Animoto.com) with a struggling male student. Through my research, methods, data and findings, I expect to further display how multimodal tools such as digital storytelling software (Animoto.com) are beneficial in assisting struggling male readers.

**Review of Related Literature**

*Literacy and Technology in Today’s World*

As discussed previously, the introduction of technology into modern western society has greatly altered our concept of literacy and school learning. Prior to technologies such as the computer, even the simplest technological inventions including the stylus, clay, papyrus and the pencil significantly impacted how we communicate and utilize literacy skills (Baron, 2000). Although the pencil may seem outdated and primitive compared to high speed computers and other communication devices, Baron (2000) argues, that no matter the device it will forever be seen as an “indisputable example of a communications technology” (p.33). Baron (2000) argues, “The development of writing itself illustrates the stages of technological spread” (p. 16). Moreover, the spread of literacy technologies present individuals’ with multiple innovative modes from which to create and alter texts for communication (Baron, 2000).

Young writers still work with writing utensils and paper but now often find more enjoyment from the use of multimodal forms of communication. Moreover, ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) are dramatically shifting the culture of teaching and way of learning through newly required processes of inquiry, reflection, collaboration and experimentation (Kervin, 2009). “Learning spaces and practices are no longer bound to the four walls of the classroom, as technologisation and globalization have advanced the need for
students to design, produce and present multimodal texts as representations of learning” (Edwards-Groves, 2011, p. 49). Based on the review of literature, the following three themes were found- The Benefits of Multimodal Education, Identity Expression & Voice through Multimedia and Digital Media Tools and Affects on Student Media Production.

With the offering of multiple technological modes of communication, reading and writing pedagogies have also advanced. Today’s students are commonly encouraged to interact and be participatory as they multitask in various multimodal literacy activities, including texting, blogging or gaming (Walsh, 2008). Along with multitasking and participating, to effectively communicate one’s ideas individuals are often expected to participate and create their own texts (Walsh, 2008). According to Jenkins et al (2006), students who work with new media literacies gain “a set of cultural competencies and social skills that young people need in the new media literacy” (p. 4). Also through new literacies students begin to gain new skills such as “play, performance, appropriation, collective intelligence, judgment, and networking” (Jenkins et al, 2006, p. 4). Play in the context of this paper refers to when students experiment and problem-solve with technology as a tool (Jenkins et al, 2006). Performance encourages students to adapt their identity to improvise and discover through multimedia tools (Jenkins et al, 2006). For instance, a student working on the collaborative process of online gaming may adjust their persona to imitate the character they are controlling. As a student works with multiple modes of texts they must learn to appropriate or decide which modes are needed to be remixed to make their purpose suitable (Jenkins et al, 2006). For example, a student may remix audio, animation and text to create an interactive digital story. The skill of collective intelligence is employed when students work together to “pool their knowledge and compare notes” while creating an informative website (Jenkins et al, 2006, p.4). As students work with multimedia sources it is
It is very imperative that they learn the skill of judgment to decide material credibility and reliability (Jenkins et al., 2006). Lastly, navigation refers to “the ability to search for, synthesize and disseminate information” (Jenkins et al., 2006, p.4). This skill is extremely important because it allows students to utilize the multimodal text surrounding them. In collection, these new media skills when acquired properly assist students in becoming fully participating society members (Jenkins et al., 2006). Jenkins et al (2006) argues, “We are not moving away from a world in which some produce and many consume media, but toward one in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced” (p.10).

One such way for individuals to communicate their ideas through technological modes is through the utilization of multiliteracies. According to Walsh (2008), multiliteracies involve “talking, listening, reading and writing together while processing the modes of written text, image, sound and movement in print and digital texts” (p. 265). A product of multiliteracies, multimodal texts provide users with access to multiple modes to communicate meaning (Walsh, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2011; Jewitt, 2005 & Bruce, 2008). Users of these multimodal forms of communication are presented with options to communicate their ideas through spoken or written language, with or without images, on paper or electronic screen and with or without music or sounds (Walsh, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2011; Jewitt, 2005 & Bruce, 2008). Along with transforming ways of communication, these Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are altering the culture of teaching and learning processes (Walsh, 2006; Edwards-Groves, 2011; Jewitt, 2005; Bruce, 2008 & Kervin, 2009). The process of reading is now seen as a complex process which includes decoding, responding, comprehending, critiquing and analyzing multiple forms of text (Walsh, 2006, p. 25). Participants of this non-static process constantly are reading and interacting with texts (Walsh, 2006).
In contrast to conventional reading where participants relied mainly on the use of subheadings to predict, guess, imagine and question content; today’s readers interact with multimodal texts which encourage visualization, inferencing, predicting, conceptualizing and imagining through a digital screen with movement and sounds (Walsh, 2006). It is not uncommon for readers to select multimodal texts over print-based texts due to their engaging nature (Jewitt, 2005). These dynamic, multimodal texts have moved way beyond the boundaries presented with linear texts (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Within the two case studies conducted by Edwards-Groves (2011) in five different primary schools, involving seventeen participants, one participant noted that multimodal texts “utilize co-operative learning strategies which forces students to talk about and consult with others about their writing [which is] an important way to foster meaningful talk that is focused on learning and even problem solving…” (p. 57).

Edwards-Groves (2011) project that “It seems feasible, therefore to suggest that the role of interaction plays a significant part in the successful use of technology in classroom learning; it cannot be seen as an isolated activity or ‘digital colouring-in’ (or skills and drills activities)-it must be situated within the context of authentic interactions and authentic learning tasks” (p. 61). Hence, the role of interactivity plays a vital role as children learn with multimodal texts.

Keeping the audience in mind, students who create digital media projects often times become very proud of their products (Kervin, 2009). After all of the labor required to create digital works, students are often eager to share their digital products with others. To illustrate, Tea Drift-the student in the study conducted by Gibbons (2010) notified researchers at the beginning of the project that she did not want her video to be posted online. She did not want anyone outside of her community to view it (Gibbons, 2010). Later on in the study however, researchers noticed that Tea Drift did upload her video onto both Facebook and YouTube. When
asked, Tea Drift stated, ‘It feels super cool to have a video [on YouTube] that I am in and that I helped film and to know that almost anyone and everyone can watch it’ (p.18). Hence, Tea Drift wanted her audience scope and digital space to be dramatically widened (Gibbons, 2010). Tea Drift felt comfortable uploading her work onto the alternative spaces of both Facebook and YouTube (Gibbons, 2008 & McVee, Bailey & Shanahan, 2008). According to McVee, Bailey & Shanahan (2008), alternative spaces are digital spaces where “knowledge can be shared, accessed and where new knowledge can be created” (p.203). For many students who are a part of these spaces outside of school, adding their schoolwork onto this space is second nature and comforting.

To illustrate, in the study conducted by Edwards-Groves (2011), Chelsea, an eleven year old participant was asked to create a presentation demonstrating the effects of deforestation on climate change. To present this information, Chelsea designed through PowerPoint an interactive diagram which incorporated dynamic text and moving components (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Chelsea claimed that these effects helped the audience become engaged and involved while understanding this complex concept (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Along with changes to reading processes, the pedagogy of writing too has been reframed by the introduction of these multimodal texts. Again this is best illustrated through the study conducted by Edwards-Groves (2011). In this study, students-Mikey and Lucas commented on how the writing component of their research project was enhanced through the use of multimodal technologies (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Mikey expressed how much he enjoyed researching on the internet, compiling, analyzing and interpreting data as well as collaborating with his peers as they prepared to create a video ‘tour’ of their local community (Edwards-Groves, 2011). Along with Mikey, Lucas too expressed his enjoyment of this process in that he felt ownership of his product and was able to
implement his imagination (Edwards-Groves, 2011). When interviewed Lucas stated, ‘I like that we, I felt important when others liked my ideas for putting the things together on the show…think about the end at the beginning was like using our imagination and that” (Edward-Groves, 2011, p.58). The students in this study continued to discuss the importance of collaboration. They shared their common belief that working “in teams” ensured better “quality,” allowed them to be more “efficient-getting more work done faster” and also to “share ideas together, which was fun” (Edward-Groves, 2011, p. 57). Throughout this study, the “students learned about visual design (colours of font), gestural design (posing as their created character), linguistic design (sentence writing), spatial design (location of sentence on slide), and auditory design (reading and recording the script onto the Photostory” (Edwards-Groves, 2011, p.60). The overall findings of this study suggest that allowing students to work with multimodal texts fosters engagement in collaboration as students work to produce creative, authentic texts (Edwards-Groves, 2011).

To further suggest that the findings of Edward-Groves (2011) were valid, Ikpeze (2009) conducted a similar study to illustrate how students benefit from infusing technology into literature lessons. In Ikpeze’s (2009) study, students read the book Because of Winn Dixie and The Tiger Rising by Kate DiCamillo and participated in a threaded discussion on Nicenet (www.nicenet.org). Similar to the findings of Edward-Groves (2011), Ikpeze (2009) found that students who participated in this study gained motivation, increased their desire to write, learned how to write for real purpose (their peers), controlled their learning, developed voice, shared their knowledge and showcased their strengths. Moreover, the use of technology with literature lessons greatly assists student reading abilities.
The Benefits of Multimodal Education

New literacies play an important part throughout all content areas. Literacy is easily relatable to all subjects including social studies, math and science (Thompson, 2008). It is imperative that each content area engage in a variety of modes of meaning making, whether it be auditory, visual, kinesthetic or gestural (Thompson, 2008). Thompson (2008), claims that “what students do inside their classroom practices ultimately is tied to the role that literacy plays inside each discipline” (Thompson, 2008, p. 144). Gatzke & LeDrew (2008) asserted that “meaningful learning occurs when educators help their students’ link curriculum areas (p.292). The teaching of literacy needs not be left for the language arts teacher (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). Literacy needs to be seen throughout every learning environment through a variety of texts to prepare students for their future (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). Traditionally, literacy was taught through isolation of phonics, fluency and writing which neglected integration into other areas of the curriculum (Gatzke & LeDew, 2008). The study by Gatzke & LeDrew (2008) “demonstrated that integrating physical education with writing and technology resulted in a high level of engagement during the experience” (p.292). Students in this study utilized nine portable laptop computers to create rules for physical education games by means of an iPhoto software (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). These students were allowed to choose the game they wish to write about via iPhoto (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). Many students in this study expressed a new love for computers and writing beyond what they know as English language arts (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). Ultimately, Gatzke & LeDrew’s (2008) study demonstrated how effective it is to integrate writing and technology to engage students in learning through physical education.

Technology is also used to assist learners in connecting outside classroom literacies to school practices which allows them to experience multiple perspectives and different ways to
experience texts (Thompson, 2008). The creation of non-linear, multimodal texts enables students to make connections between their in and out of school literacy practices (Kervin & Mantei, 2009). In the study conducted by Kervin & Mantei (2009), a collection of primary students’ utilized web pages, search engines and PowerPoint to as they collaboratively created a non-linear text on toys. “The children were empowered to make decisions about their learning by selecting subject matter, text layout and text construction procedures” (Kervin & Mantei, 2009, p.30). Using their out of school knowledge, students in this study navigated their own learning paths and used the technology to “support rather than direct their experience” (Kervin & Matei, 2009, p.29). Students are also learning to become critical evaluators of digital materials through the assessment of validly and reliability of texts (Thompson, 2008). To model this concept Thompson (2008), allowed students to assume multimodal literature roles across multiple content areas. In one study, she allowed students to “Analyze a film by reading each component (e.g., action, semes, talkovers, music, visuals, pacing) to discuss how each component creates meaning” (Thompson, 2008, p.146). As these students analyzed the film, they were learning how to evaluate texts (Thompson, 2008). Thence, as students work with multimodal texts they learn how to connect outside literacy practices with in school practices as well as, become critical evaluators of digital materials.

To further support this idea, the study by Gatzke & LeDrew (2008), illustrates the benefits gained from connecting physical education and technology to provide primary students with authentic literacy experiences. Students in this study were asked to use computers and writing to compose original rules for a variety of physical education games (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008). The outcomes of this study showed that students took risks with technology and writing,
learned higher-order sequencing skills, as well as, engaged in interactive and collaborative discussions were ideas, emotions and perspectives were voiced (Gatzke & LeDrew, 2008).

Along with the multiple benefits of multiple modes across content and special education areas, digital literacies also greatly assist the learning of struggling students. Digital literacies include digital reading or writing with video, audio and images (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Students who struggle with print compositions may have compositional skills when in a different literacy medium (Bruce, 2008). For instance, when working with video production participants often demonstrate complex digital literacy composition skills as they synthesize, organize and present information (Bruce, 2008). Of the four Midwestern suburban high school students, all expressed their frustration with expressing themselves through writing (Bruce, 2008). When the multimodal tool of video composition was introduced, the students indicated their preference for video over writing for expressing their emotions (Bruce, 2008). When asked how writing a paper is different than making a video, one student from the study, Eddie expressed:

“Cause its easier to express your feelings and stuff through like a camera. And like acting it out and putting music…well at least for me then it is to like write it out. Cause it just seems like you can’t write it out. Cause it just seems like you can’t write all your feelings and stuff on a paper sometimes. Sometimes its easier to express it by seeing it” (Bruce, 2008, p.273).

When asked the same question another student-Craig responded with: “Its so much more expressive then what do you want to do cause in a video. Like there’s one little piece of paper-you can’t do everything you want. It doesn’t make sense what you want to do” (Bruce, 2008, p.273). Students in this study learned how to collaborate, refer to their prior knowledge, utilize their ideas and interpretations and edit their footage in sequence (Bruce, 2008). This displayed
how lower-achieving students were able to use non-print modalities, reading and writing to
demonstrate how they gain literacy skills while composing a video project (Bruce, 2008).

Reinforcement of Learning/ Development of Skills through Digital Storytelling & Read Alouds

One form of technology that employs multimodal literacy skills and a variety of valued
learning experiences is digital storytelling. Robin (2008) explains that:

Digital storytelling or video production “allows computer users to become creative
storytellers through the traditional process of selecting a topic, conducting some research,
writing a script, and developing an interesting story. This material is then combined with
various types of multimedia, including computer-based graphics, recorded audio,
computer-generated text, video clips, and music so that it can be played on a computer,
uploaded on a web site or burned on a DVD” (p.222)

In this statement, Robin (2008) explains the process of creating a digital story as well as,
different multimedia materials it can be bound with and ways to present finished products.

Again citing the study conducted by Gatzke & LeDrew (2008), all students in that project
were writing game procedures at their own learning level which also demonstrated the
employment of differentiated instruction along with technology. Hence, this is a perfect example
of how multimodal texts can be utilized throughout various content areas extending beyond
language arts and writing to special education classes such as physical education (PE).

Through the learning experience of digital story creation, students gain multiple literacy
skills. The literacy skills obtained through this multimodal creation are said to be a combination
of Digital, Global, Technological, Visual and Informational Literacy (Robin, 2008). Digital
Literacy is the ability to communicate, discuss issues, gather information and seek assistance
through multiple modes (Robin, 2008). Digital Literacy is the ability to read, interpret,
contextualize and respond with literacy through a global lens (Robin, 2008). The improvement of learning, performance and productivity with multiple forms of technology is known as Technological Literacy (Robin, 2008). Visual Literacy according to Robin (2008) is the “ability to understand, produce and communicate through visual images” (p.224). Lastly, Informational Literacy in accordance with Robin (2008) is “the ability to find, evaluate and synthesize information” (p.224). These 21st century literacy skills are essential for thriving in today’s technological and literacy based world (Robin, 2008).

Sadik (2008) and Gibbons (2010) conducted related studies with a focus on Digital Storytelling. Sadik’s (2008) study consisted of two schools-eight teachers total and one class of 35-45 students who ranged in age from thirteen to fifteen. Through this study, students were shown how to work a camera and were given digital stories (Sadik, 2008). Students were then divided into groups and were asked to find or take pictures, develop scripts, draw storyboards, sequence events, collaborate, improve design skills and finally, present their digital creations (Sadik, 2008 & Gibbons, 2010). Similarly, Gibbons (2010) conducted a story of three primary school children. In this study, Gibbons (2010) fostered student learning through video creation. The findings of both studies found that student participants increased motivation/engagement (Sadik, 2008 & Gibbons, 2010). The integration of digital storytelling enriched classroom learning and acted as an open-ended motivating tool (Sadik, 2008). Student participants expressed that digital storytelling allowed them with multiple opportunities to personalize and they felt through the creation of it that they had a purpose (Sadik, 2008). Digital storytelling also allows students to learn the components of storyboard, develop perspective, convert narrative into a script with a story line and manipulate technology to create a product (Kulla-Abbott & Polman, 2008). These studies suggest that students are learning how to take physical materials...
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(such as images and text) and present them through virtual spaces (like digital video/storytelling) (Sadik, 2008 & Dibbons, 2010).

Another form of assistive digital literacy technology is digital video read alouds. A digital video read aloud is a “dramatic reading of a short story in video form with a combination of text read aloud by an experienced storyteller alongside subtitles and annotations that guide the comprehension of the text” (Malin, 2010, p. 121). This form of multimodal text combines visual, oral and written text to provide aid and additional incentives for readers to join readers and texts (Malin, 2010). To illustrate the positive effects of digital video read alouds Malin (2010) conducted a study with forty-seven high school sophomores and twenty-four high school seniors. In this study, students watched a digital video featuring the short story, “The Story of an Hour” (Malin, 2010). After watching the story, 88 percent of the students felt more prepared for classroom discussions, 58 percent of students expressed that this form of on-screen annotation assisted their ability to critically analyze texts and 88 percent of the students stated that this form of reading was so enjoyable that they would like to continue it with different texts (Malin, 2010). Therefore, digital learning through the forms of storytelling or read alouds significantly reinforce learning.

In comparison to traditional listening centers, digital read alouds provide students with a more interactive and engaging experience. For instance, as a reader listens to an interactive read aloud “the storyteller reads the story and, at appropriate times during the video recording he or she integrates commentary, questions and ideas that help readers notice important details embedded in the text and keep them engaged as they listen to the story” (Malin, 2010, p.122). In a traditional learning center, a reader is only able to listen to a monotone recorded voice read the text. During a traditional read aloud students are encouraged to listen to the whole story before
completing a related worksheet. Readers who use a digital read aloud are instructed via the storyteller to “pause, replay, control the pace and carry out suggested learning tasks” which “models literate thinking, helping readers practice critical thinking and metacognition skills” (Malin, 2010, pp. 122-123) Read alouds and traditional listening centers both allow students access to texts that may be too difficult for them to read independently for “remedial reasons, language differences or lack of motivation” via a personal recorded tutor (Malin, 2010, p. 122). For these reasons, digital read alouds preside over traditional listening centers in their ability to manipulate texts to be more engaging and stimulatory of the natural learning process.

Similar to digital read alouds are E-books. E-books also provide students with a new avenue to access and interact with a variety of texts (Larson, 2010). E-books provide students with a “plethora of tools and features that allow the reader to physically interact with and manipulate the text making the reading experience interactive and engaging (Larson, 2010, p. 16). In a study of seventeen, Midwestern second graders, Larson (2010) found that allowing students to work with e-books “promoted new literacy practices and extends connections between readers and text as engagement with and manipulation of text engagement with and manipulation of text is made possible through electronic tools and texts” (p.17). Similar to digital storytelling, e-books allow readers to freely express themselves through text (Larson, 2010). Again in relation to digital storytelling, e-books allow users to spontaneously and impulsively express their voice/mood and reveal their own understanding of a story (Larson, 2010). Moreover, digital texts “clearly provide new opportunities and extended possibilities for individual engagement with and interpretation of the text” (Larson, 2010, p.21).
Reading and Meaning Making through Multiple Modes

Good readers engage themselves in imagination and exhibit multiple literate behaviors while reading (Malin, 2010). Malin (2010) states, “engaged readers need to first decode, then comprehend, and finally transact with the text to construct meaning” (p. 121). With the interactive nature of technology, reading multimodal texts often result in better understanding. With increased reading comprehension of multimodal texts, students are also beginning to recognize the benefits of adding elements of design in combination with text to further audience understanding of multimodal creations (McVee et al., 2008). An illustration of this concept can be seen through the study conducted through McVee et al. (2008). In this study, a student-Jill created a digital story via iMovie across multiple modes first with only narrative and images (McVee et al., 2008). When Jill noticed her audience was unable to create meaning from her digital creation, she then added text which extended the viewer’s understanding (McVee et al., 2008). “Once students began to understand that literacy/technology integration involves reading and writing with different sign systems made possible through technology, they enlarged their understanding not only of literacy and of technology, but also of effective teaching practices” (McVee et al., 2008, p. 207). As students work with multiple modes they begin to learn the “power of spreading meaning across multiple sign systems” (McVee et al., 2008, p. 206). The combination of multiple design elements has the ability to intensify meaning making and communication (McVee et al., 2008 & Potter, 2010). Potter’s (2010) study which involved two primary school students and the creation of a digital video found that students working with digital texts learn how to utilize different elements and resources to assist in meaning-making and self-representation. Potter (2010) argues that digital creations are a way to use literary
practices to record memory and meaning-making through a “combination, re-combination and representation of the raw materials of everyday life” (p. 34).

As children today interact with visual and sensory multimodal forms of text, they unknowingly activate multiple cognitive processes (Sadik, 2008). Among these cognitive processes is the utilization of multiple intelligences including verbal linguistic, spatial, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalist and body-kinesthetic (Lynch & Fleming, 2007). It is through this active learning with digital modes that students begin to carry out a set of cognitive processes (Kiili, 2006). “According to the active learning assumption, humans actively engage in cognitive processes in order to construct schemata of their experiences” (Kiili, 2006, p. 23). An individual’s schema or prior knowledge assists learning while working with multimodal forms of technology (Kiili, 2006). Poor learning overloads the cognitive system and forces it to struggle through irrelevant cognitive processing (Kiili, 2006). In another words, with multiple multimodal text exposures, students will soon be able to retain information with more ease as they add to their technological schema. For instance, if a child learns how to surf the internet their cognitive processes with navigation processes will not be overloaded as they retain valuable research information. Killi (2006) claims further that “If this learning cycle operates effectively, new insights about subject matter would be continually discovered and improved schemata would be constructed” (p. 27). Consequently, learning through technology can effectively assist students cognitive processing and schemata construction.

The link between a student’s cognitive processes and technology has recently brought about what is known as “digital epistemologies” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). According to Lankshear & Knobel (2003), “digital epistemologies” are the combination of knowledge, understanding, and digital tools. According to Pearson (2005), “Making meaning from digital
video editing can be understood as a process of inventing new epistemologies to capture this rich interaction between artifacts and modes of thinking” (p. 190). Artifacts for the sake of this paper include all student created materials, including print-based and digital texts. These new epistemologies are essential in understanding how students’ thought processes and digital text production create tension between students’ introduction to technologies in school and their understanding of them out of school (Pearson, 2005).

**Identity Expression & Voice through Multimedia**

Through the use of digital tools, students are able to use semiotic resources to connect to identity (Gibbons, 2010). Semiotic resources include any technological tools needed for purpose such as, images, pictures and words (Gibbons, 2010 & Gilje, 2010). A student may for instance create a digital story using a variety of semiotic resources to display for the audience a memory of their childhood. Multimodal spatiality or how a student constructs their digital space also influences how students create different forms of semiotic resources. These digital spaces include social, digital and virtual places where students create digital works. Digital creations allow students to assert their identities and reveal their sense about them as a youth and as a filmmaker (Gibbons, 2010). Students choose signs and symbols to create voice to express their emotions and feelings (Gibbons, 2010). For instance, Tea Drift, the eleven year old participant in Gibbon’s (2010) study displayed her multiple identities of being a fancy show dancer and a culture member through signs and symbols on the digital movie she created. Through digital creations such as digital storytelling one can begin to understand how “youth make choices about which modes to use and which identities to show through these modes as they create their videos within various times and spaces” (Gibbons, 2010, p. 13).
Along with an individual’s identity, their emotions, memories and voice can also be projected through multimodal creations (Kulla-Abbott, 2008 & Potter, 2010). As a student creates a digital piece such as a story, they utilize explicit narrative conventions and forms with sequencing along with creating appearance and development of characters (Kulla-Abbott, 2008). Through these processes illustrate their point of view/perspective and create their voice (Kulla-Abbott, 2008). To illustrate this concept, in the study of Potter (2010), two primary students were asked to create commemorative videos depicting their school experiences, memories and relationships. These videos documented very personal accounts of the time at primary school communicated through their point of view (Potter, 2010). For the girls, this video production “related their identity and their friendship to the environment of the school in both a temporal and locative way” (Potter, 2010, p. 23). This means, instead of portraying comedy their “production focused on spaces and patterns of behavior in those spaces over time” (Potter, 2010, p. 23). This allowed them to explore their memories back in time in a variety of different modes such as, images, audio-recorded speech and text (Potter, 2010). Allowing students to experiment with by representing their emotions and memories through multimodal creations allows them to gain digital identities/voice.

**Digital Media Tools and Effects on Student Media Production**

Learning with technology provides students with authentic learning experiences which reflect real world issues (Kervin, 2009). For instance, students who learn how to create digital stories through programs such as Windows Movie Maker may one day use these skills to create a work presentation for coworkers or even potential clients. Students also learn skills like multitasking, collaboration and following directions which they will encounter in the workforce. Along with providing students with realistic learning opportunities, the use of digital media tools
position the creator with the power to make informed decisions about presentation (Kervin, 2009). The creator must also note the type of audience and ways in which that audience may construct meaning when making digital media products. For instance, the students in the study conducted by Hayes (2006) noted concerns while creating their video production that their audience would ‘tune out their work if it does not gain their interest’ (p. 505). This same student stated that their ‘video is a different way to get their message across’ which is why they must ‘try to make it interesting so that the people will watch’ (Hayes, 2006, p. 505).

A student’s choice of modes for production has a great deal of importance to their project outcome. In the film-making study conducted by Halverson & Gibbons (2009), students learned that the outcome of their film was made more interesting when they learned how to “integrate the content of the film with modes of representation” (p. 72).

Erstad, Gilje & De Lange (2007) argue that “The development of digital tools has fundamentally changed the practice of media production as part of media education” (p. 186). Media production is composed of more than just dialogues to communicate ideas, but “reflections, negotiations of meaning making and practical understanding” (Erstad, Gilje & De Lange, 2007, p. 186). Digital media tools have greatly altered how students interact with texts to compose understanding (Erstad, Gilje & De Lange, 2007).

In summary, through the research read, this literature review compiled information to suggest how the introductions of literacy technologies assist individuals’ in creating and alter texts for communication (Baron, 2000). Based on this review of literature, the following three themes were found- The Benefits of Multimodal Education, Identity Expression & Voice through Multimedia and Digital Media Tools and Affects on Student Media Production. It is important that this knowledge is recognized to provide students with quality education, intended to prepare
them for working within digital society. Based on what the literature says and my question, I will be seeking my answer through the implementation of digital storytelling software (Animoto.com) along with a child’s literacy learning. I hope to suggest how beneficial this technology is to strengthen reading and writing skills as well as develop new skills needed to survive in today’s digital world.

**Methods**

**Context**

Research for this study occurred Saint John Fisher College; a small liberal arts college in western, New York (Rochester). This study was conducted as a component of the Fisher sponsored, literacy tutoring and Capstone program. Malcolm (a pseudonym) lives in a suburb in western, New York in a house with his adoptive mother. Malcolm’s house is located in a housing track in Walus, NY (a pseudonym). The house is located in a small residential neighborhood near the participant’s Elementary School. Malcolm friends live within walking distance so he is able to visit them often. Malcolm was the only participant partaking in this study. The socioeconomic status of the family is middle class.

**Participants**

Malcolm is a ten years and two months old Caucasian male. He is an average, energetic middle school child who enjoys activities such as creating scale building models with legos, working on technology projects with his cousin and learning everything he can about his favorite animals-red-eyed tree frogs and sharks. He is currently in fourth grade and an attendant of Klake Elementary School (a pseudonym) near his home in Webster. His adoptive mother affirms that although Malcolm has recently been experiencing some success in math and science, he continues to struggle with reading. She goes on to affirm that in reading, Malcolm is in need of
overall improvement; he has developed strong strategies but still needs to practice. Malcolm is currently reading two grade levels below his expected fourth grade reading level. To assist with his reading struggles, at school Malcolm receives additional reading support through The Fountas & Pinnell Leveled Literacy Intervention System (LLI). This system provides Malcolm with small printed texts and worksheets for him to complete at home to assist his learning. Malcolm’s adoptive mother is a literacy professional and has advocated for the additional support that he needs.

From a short questionnaire that I created for Malcolm, I learned that he does not often work with technology at home or school. When he does work with technologies such as his iPhone or his computer he is often with his cousin. Malcolm mentioned that he normally learns how to use technology on his own or with the help of his cousin. Also from this questionnaire I learned that Malcolm does not feel that technology assists his learning. Malcolm is eager to work with new technologies as reflected from his reaction to this project/discussions.

**Researcher Stance**

As a researcher, while working one-on-one with Malcolm I am also currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am working on obtaining a Master’s Degree in Literacy. While also working towards my certification in Literacy, I presently have a certification in Childhood Education (Grades 1-6) from the State University of New York at Geneseo (SUNY Geneseo).

I tutor Malcolm as a component of the literacy program at St. John Fisher. For the purpose of this study, I worked with Malcolm a total of four times. The literacy program allows for Malcolm and I to meet for a total of ten visits throughout the Spring semester. Malcolm and I
met one day during the week for approximately an hour and a half. In this literacy program, Malcolm receives additional literacy support based on his assessment results.

Required through this literacy program, Malcolm is assessed in his ability to read, write and spell. Using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment, Malcolm was provided three leveled texts. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment is a compilation of research based assessments components (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011). Components include leveled texts for oral reading and suggested comprehension/writing prompts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011). From the numerical results gathered from the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, the assessor can gain insights into the student’s independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011).

Within this assessment tool I used running records to score Malcolm’s reading abilities. A Running record is a record of the reading behaviors that a child makes which they are reading (Clay, 2005). Running records are used to identify patterns of effective and ineffective reading strategies. From this method of assessment, the recorder obtains information on the child’s self-monitoring, accuracy/error rate and self-correction rate (Clay, 2005). From these assessments, I learned Malcolm’s Fountas & Pinnell independent level -L, instructional-M and frustrational-N.

According to Clay (2000), “The terms independent, instructional and frustration used in Running Records do not describe the characteristics of the text itself. They “describe how a particular child read the text” (Clay, 2000, p.9). A child’s independent reading level is a text that is easy for the child to read with few word-identification problems and high comprehension (Clay, 2000). A child’s instructional reading level is challenging for the child to read and comprehend, but not frustrating and can be read successfully with normal classroom instruction
and support (Clay, 2000). A child’s frustration reading level is too difficult for the child to read and comprehend independently or with classroom instruction (Clay, 2000).

Although Malcolm reads fluently he does constantly reread (even when words are read correctly) and struggle with comprehension. Malcolm has concept of significant story events. He retells in a detailed manner. He comprehends Within the Text questions but lacks Beyond the Text and About the Text understanding, such as author’s message/argument. Malcolm was also tested on his ability to read words from the 4th Grade Dolch sight word list. The Dolch Sight Word List is comprised of a list of commonly used high frequency words (Johns & Lenski, 1997). Johns and Lenski (1997) have comprised this list according to the level the words would most likely been seen in appropriate grade texts. Malcolm read fifty-nine words correctly of the seventy-four listed (missed fifteen words). I analyzed one of Malcolm’s free writing sample. Assessed based on meaning, organization, transitions, vocabulary and grammatical/mechanical errors, Malcolm scored a total of 17/30 points. Malcolm is able to effectively communicate his ideas through writing but does not see the importance of the Writing Process. Lastly, Malcolm’s spelling was assessed through the Primary Spelling Inventory. The Primary Spelling Inventory is used to assess the child’s knowledge of words (Bear, 2004). This inventory is designed for grades K-5. A list of words is recited for the student to spell (Bear, 2004). The words are asked both in (sentence) and out of context (Bear, 2004). The students are asked to spell to the best of their ability. Based on my assessment data for Malcolm I tailor each lesson to support his areas of need and allow him to work with leveled texts to assist his learning. Malcolm and I worked on the following areas each visit: word study, reading and writing.
Methods

During this study, I implemented technology to assist Malcolm in strengthening his reading and writing skills. Along with writing in his “Writer’s Notebook,” Malcolm worked on the digital storytelling website known as Animoto.com. I used this website to suggest how reading and writing skills can be strengthened through the use of technology. To illustrate, Malcolm wrote his own storyboard and read his script while working to complete his personal slideshow on this site. This website is a low cost online web space which provides users with the tools needed to create their own digital slideshows. On this website, students are able to upload pictures and add text/audio to enhance their own digital slideshows. Another form of technology that was used in this study is a flip camera. This camera was used to record Malcolm as he worked on the Animoto software. The footage from this camera was then analyzed and added to my findings. Malcolm also utilized the web to search pictures for uploading from browsers like Google as well as his own files.

As detailed above, the focus of this study is on the use of technology which includes online digital storytelling software known as Animoto. For the purpose of this study, I purchased a one month subscription to Animoto which allowed Malcolm access to create an unlimited amount of full-length videos. Along with the use of technology, Malcolm worked through the steps of the Writing Process. As described by Fountas & Pinnell (2001), the writing process is implemented to “teach students to explore ideas, select topics, create, revise, and edit drafts, and publish writing projects” (p.63). This process is often done naturally as an individual writes (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). The writing process Malcolm used for the purpose of this study includes the following steps: Prewriting (think through ideas), Drafting (write down ideas), Revising (reorganize ideas), Proofreading (correct spelling/grammar), and Publishing (share
ideas with others). By implementing these tools, I observed how Malcolm interacted with this new technology and his ability to read and write to create his own digital story. I observed how these tools provided additional practice with reading and writing and the benefits they provided in learning and acquiring reading and writing skills. Malcolm wrote his own script and storyboard as well as read through and edited each along with the steps of the Writing Process. Malcolm and I had four sessions together which each lasted for about an hour and thirty minutes. There were five different steps of the writing process and during each session Malcolm completed a number of these steps. For instance, during day #1 when Malcolm was brainstorming in list form, drawing and labeling his storyboard and scripting his first narrative draft, he moved his name-labeled clothes pin to indicate that he was currently working between the Prewriting and Drafting stage of the writing process. To ensure that writing is incorporated through this study, Malcolm was introduced and constantly reminded of the steps of the Writing Process. He was asked to keep a log of his work in his “Writer’s Notebook” which was revised each week. Malcolm was also reminded of the reading skills he was using throughout the project each week. It is my intent to use this study to demonstrate how Malcolm will learn to use technology along with reading and writing while creating a digital story.

To introduce the project, I first gained a sense of Malcolm’s reading and writing abilities through a variety of different assessments (discussed previously). I then interviewed Malcolm briefly to gain a sense of his knowledge and use of technology. Following that I gave Malcolm a mini-lesson on the steps of the Writing Process. To assist with this and other lessons, prior to this study in the beginning of the semester I gave Malcolm a composition notebook. This notebook is sectioned off for “Vocabulary”, “My ideas,” “My illustrations” and “My thoughts.” Malcolm was reminded to use this notebook at various times throughout instruction. As
Malcolm used his “Writer’s Notebook” to jot down and organize his storyboard and narrative ideas, he was instructed to move his name-labeled clothes pin to indicate the step he is currently working on. The five stages indicated on Malcolm’s Writing Process chart were as follows: Prewriting, Drafting, Revising, Proofreading and Publishing. This chart was word processed by myself and contains a description of each stage. I implemented this chart to assist Malcolm in monitoring his writing and editing.

Because Malcolm decided to make informative video discussing information on sharks he did use a variety of sources from the classroom. Although the basis of his ideas did stem from his own knowledge, Malcolm also relied on a few non-fiction books about sharks to further extend his knowledge. For Guided Reading, Malcolm and I read a leveled book on Sharks. For this lesson Malcolm was read aloud the Fountas and Pinnell leveled L (Independent) book entitled *Sharks* by Kira Freed (2007). To introduce this book we did a variety of activities related to vocabulary. One such activity included matching words and definitions. Once Malcolm displayed understanding of the Guided Reading shark vocabulary he then added the word and definition to his Writer’s Notebook. Malcolm was reminded of this list as he constructs his digital story to encourage him to incorporate a few of the words. Malcolm independently read a variety of other texts about Sharks to gather information. These books include: *Surprising Sharks* (Davis, 2003), *Sharks* (Gibbons, 1992), *DK Eye Wonder: Ocean* (Gray, 2001), and *Don’t Eat the Teacher* (Ward, 1998).

Only having four days to work on this project does not really leave Malcolm with a lot of free time. During the first meeting Malcolm brainstormed his idea, in list form, and began to draw/label his storyboard and script his first narrative draft. During this time, Malcolm worked on both Prewriting and Drafting. He was reading and writing to complete this step. In between
our first and second meeting Malcolm was off first for his break and then for mine. During this
two weeks Malcolm was instructed to complete the first draft of his storyboard and narrative
script. When Malcolm returned and we met for our second meeting, Malcolm worked on
Revising and Proofreading his project. During our third meeting, Malcolm made all revisions on
his work and began to assemble his project using the Animoto online software. In the interest of
time, Malcolm was asked to complete the remainder of his project at home. Meeting number
four took place after all data for this study was collected but Malcolm was allowed to finalize his
project. It was at this time that I assisted Malcolm with typing to finish the reminder of his
project. To conclude this study, Malcolm presented his final project to his mother during the
Literacy Celebration for Fisher’s literacy program.

As Malcolm completes the necessary components of this study I observed and recorded
field notes daily. Each day we worked together I asked Malcolm questions about his progress
and feelings. Along with annotated field notes and observations I recorded sessions with a
digital flip camera. During each session I observed Malcolm working through the steps of the
Writing Process, reading and utilizing the Animoto software. I observed him for a total of four
visits for about thirty to sixty minutes each session. The final session was observed and added to
my report. As discussed previously, I asked that Malcolm utilize the steps of the Writing
Process along with reading and working with technology. Since Malcolm is the only participant
in this study he worked independently on each component. When issues arose, Malcolm and I
meet one-on-one to conference and handle these issues. Although the majority of the project was
self-led by Malcolm, I was behind him the entire way to scaffold his learning.
Quality and Credibility of Research

In conducting research for this qualitative study, it is imperative that as a researcher I do so with the assistance of the following study components: credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Mills, 2011). Mills (2011) defines credibility as “the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily explained” (p.104). To help ensure credibility in this study, I implemented technology with a struggling male reader to “test biases and perceptions” of how this assistive tool with help with reading and writing (Mills, 2011, p.104). I worked collaboratively with my critical colleague to debrief and collaborate on my findings (Mills, 2011). I also practiced triangulation which Mills (2011) defines as the comparison of “a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to cross-check data” (p.104). To collect data I did so via a variety of techniques; including observing Malcolm actively engaging with technology, writing and reading processes as well as, recording events as they occur while scaffolding his learning/participation. To add, I performed post interviews with Malcolm; asking him questions about the use of Animoto and the incorporation of reading and writing skills. Lastly, I acquired a copy of Malcolm’s storyboard and written script to document his use of reading and writing skills as he worked with Animoto. I collected documents, video recordings, artifacts, questionnaires and other work from Malcolm as he completed it.

Transferability also was ensured throughout my study with Malcolm. Transferability “refers to qualitative researcher’s beliefs that everything they study is context bound” (Mills, 2011, p.104). The data I collected was specific to my study; it was very descriptive, permitting the comparison of it between other possible contexts (Mills, 2011). My data also allowed for detailed descriptions of the context in order for judgments and views to be made with other
contexts (Mills, 2011). Largely, the details of my data allow my readers to “‘see’ [or identify with] the setting [of my study] for themselves” (Mills, 2011, p. 104).

Dependability, which “refers to the stability of the data,” was ensured throughout the duration of my study (Mills, 2011, p. 104). Similar to the triangulation process, to ensure that my research is dependable I implemented the use of the overlap method (Mills, 2011). What this means is I used a couple methods to test the strength of each independently. Throughout my research, my critical colleague also assisted me through a process known as the “audit trail” as they reviewed, analyzed and interpreted my data as an ‘external auditor’ (Mills, 2011, p. 105).

Lastly, I ensured conformability during my research. Conformability as defined by Mills (2011) is “the neutrality or objectivity of the data that has been collected” (p.105). Again through the process of triangulation I was able to use a variety of data sources and different methods to compare and cross check my data (Mills, 2011). I also practiced reflectivity or “reveal[ing] underlying assumptions or biases that cause the researcher to formulate a set of questions in a particular way and to present findings in a particular way” through the use of a journal (Mills, 2011, p.105). In my journal, I added all observations, findings, reflections and musings weekly (Mills, 2011). This journal allowed me to refer back to my research to analyze my current question and to generate new questions for additional research on a normal basis.

**Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants**

Prior to the beginning of my research, I took it upon myself to gather informed consent of both Malcolm and his guardian to protect their rights as a participant and guardian (of an underage child). This is a qualitative study where I worked with Malcolm one-on-one. I verbally asked Malcolm for his permission to partake in this study. I provided his adoptive mother an appropriate form to sign for her permission to allow her son to participate in my study.
In this permission form, Malcolm’s mother was given information on the study, the purpose for the study and the duration. Additionally, this form explained how Malcolm’s identity will be kept confidential through the use of a pseudonym name and the removal of all identifying marks from all used artifacts.

**Data Collection**

As discussed prior, throughout this study I gathered multiple forms of data. While observing Malcolm interacting with Animoto I documented my findings with anecdotal field notes within my journal. This assisted my understanding of how he was able to use technology to assist his reading and writing skills. In addition, along with these observational findings I also took notes that contained information describing how each session was conducted and Malcolm’s reaction as well as my own reflections. As a follow-up after Malcolm completed his digital story I performed a corresponding post interview to complement my pre interview and also to help me see how this technological tool assisted Malcolm in strengthening his reading and writing skills. At the conclusion of this study there was a pre and post interview for Malcolm. I used my video recordings to further analyze the assistive tool that technology provides with reading and writing. Lastly, Malcolm’s finished digital artifact along with his written artifacts allowed me to review and analyze where the use of technology acted as a tool to assist his reading and writing. Interview and questionnaire copies will be included in my appendices at the end of this paper.

**Data Analysis**

The observational period of this study lasted four weeks during the spring of 2011. Anecdotal notes were collected daily and student work examples were collected sporadically throughout the course of the study. Observations were made during the writing time block
allotted each tutoring session. Typically, each block of time lasted between thirty to sixty minutes. Throughout the course of this four week study, the participant was observed a total of four times. Initially, observations were made in the classroom setting as Malcolm brainstormed, wrote and edited his storyboard and script. Malcolm was also interviewed on day one while still in a classroom as part of the literacy tutoring program at St. John Fisher College. After day one, observations and data were collected in the St. John Fisher computer lab. All data collected from these settings was analyzed and added to the findings section of this paper.

**Findings**

This study revealed three specific aspects related to the implementation of multiple modalities with a struggling male reader including- Engagement and Learning, Student Perception of Digital Tools and The Development of Literacy Skills. Engagement and learning investigates the impact of Animoto, with and without guidance on the reinforcement of reading and writing skills that reflect an understanding of the significance of incorporating reading and writing practice with digital tools. Student perceptions of digital tools describe how the participant felt about the digital tool of Animoto. The development of Literacy Skills discusses the reading and writing skills that were obtained. Finally, student and research challenges were observed which included areas of weaknesses and limitations.

**Engagement and Learning**

Digital tools such as, Animoto provide opportunities for student engagement in the learning process while working with this digital tool. The participant is an active member of the learning process, taking responsibility of his own learning both with and without teacher scaffolding and assistance. Animoto is an online website used to create unique slide shows from the compilation of photos, video clips, and text. For the purpose of this study, I purchased a one
month subscription to this site to allow Malcolm with unlimited access and video length.

Observations taken during this study, offer evidence to suggest how digital tools support literacy learning.

Below are a few screenshots to further illustrate the Animoto software discussed above (1: Animoto homepage (Animoto.com), 2: Plans and Pricing, 3: Animoto video log, 4: Animoto workspace, and 5: completed Animoto slide show).
Initial field notes and digital video footage taken while in the computer lab working on Animoto revealed evidence that this digital tool encouraged the participant to become ambitious with a desire to try new things with this technology. For instance, when asked his ideas for his slideshow Malcolm showed an interest in recording himself on video and adding it to his project to enhance the project quality.

As suggested from the data collected from the initial Student Interview, Malcolm recognized the amount of reading and writing practice that he will gain from this project. He also gained understanding quickly regarding this project purpose. For Malcolm, this project was engaging because it was something he was interested in and because he saw it as having an authentic purpose. Field notes recorded Malcolm stating that he “feels this project will be helpful if on the internet and possibly may be a good video for kindergartners.” Malcolm also stated, “I was thinking, this [Animoto slideshow] could be used for kids to go home and learn about sharks. Not teachers. It won’t be a long type of movie.” Malcolm understood that he read
shark reference books and wrote in his Writer’s Notebook. Malcolm commented on the value of his Writer’s Notebook for writing out his ideas and storyboard by stating, “Without the storyboard I would never know what to do or say. It [my project] would just be the introduction and conclusion.”

Throughout this study, Malcolm activated his prior knowledge multiple times. Malcolm activating his prior knowledge illustrated that he was beginning to engage with and take interest in this new project. After briefly viewing a few shark reference books, Malcolm created his brainstormed list, storyboard and script based solely on his own knowledge of sharks. Malcolm really showed an interest in the multiple opportunities that this study provided him to share this knowledge with others. For instance, Malcolm constantly explained the contents of his project to the camera person and me [the teacher].

The following is a short clip recorded during the course of the study to illustrate the above explanation:

*Malcolm:* Hey, that’s totally fake! (Pointing to a picture while surfing Google for images to add to Animoto)

*Teacher:* *Laughed*

*Malcolm:* Unless it was patented in the 1950’s. Cuz, that’s when like, that’s when like Megalodine [Megalodon] sharks were used. You know the whale shark, how it is huge? It um, Megalodines [Megalodons] were like, they’re like, bigger than a whale shark and their like the size as a, as a, they were the size like as a whale shark. They were like the Great White Sharks only bigger.

*Teacher:* Oh wow!

*Malcolm:* *Points to picture of sharks on screen again* Yeah, they were like this size.
It was through the Parent Questionnaire that it was learned that Malcolm is only “somewhat” motivated to read online texts. Malcolm’s motivation with this project however increased greatly throughout the course of this study. For one, Malcolm was very excited to be given the opportunity to work on a computer. According to the initial Student Interview, Malcolm stated that he is not given many opportunities to use digital tools while in the school setting. When asked, prior to any exposure to working with Animoto Malcolm replied with, “I think it [Animoto] is going to be awesome!” After working with Animoto, Malcolm mentioned that he “enjoys working on his project because he looks forward to watching it.”

Along with motivation, Malcolm also became very engaged while working on his Animoto project. As stated on the Parent Questionnaire, Malcolm’s mother noted that Malcolm uses technology “very often” and becomes “very” engaged while doing so. Also according to this Parent Questionnaire, Malcolm’s mother stated her belief that he is most engaged with “video hyperlinks and interaction.” This is proven to be true through the course of this study in multiple ways. Malcolm was very engaged while looking through images in Google. While he searched through the images on Google, his eyes were focused attentively on the screen as he used the mouse to scan. He randomly interjected his prior knowledge with each familiar shark image. For instance while searching Google he stated, “Oh, that’s not real! They [sharks] don’t really look like that!” He was not fidgeting in his chair and he never asked for my assistance. He enjoyed changing the search name and viewing all the pictures available. Malcolm stated, “Finding images on Google was my favorite part of Animoto.” He was also engaged while choosing sound and animation effects for his Animoto slide show. Malcolm enjoyed helping me choose an appropriate song to pair with his project as well as, watching his completed project and commenting on the special effects. While adding a song and watching his slideshow he
declared, “Wow, this is so cool and that song fits perfectly with my show!” Malcolm really enjoys working with technology because of its interactive nature. According to the Parent Questionnaire, Malcolm’s mother stated the features of online texts that assist his reading in the “interactive part” because it “could support him and engage him.” Malcolm’s mother continued on to say in this same Parent Questionnaire that he would rather read a computer based story “IF it had video or hyperlinks.” To further demonstrate this, in the initial Student Interview, Malcolm stated that he “loves playing games on the internet because they are addicting.”

Malcolm becomes engaged with the special effects possible through computers. Throughout the course of the study, Malcolm showed a heightened interest in completing the project, constantly stating, “Are we going to finish this today?” This again shows Malcolm’s engagement with his Animoto project.

Included below are a few shots taken to document Malcolm’s enjoyment while surfing Google for images:

Malcolm’s ability to easily follow directions made this project a success. When simply given the log in information for Animoto with little instruction, Malcolm was able to type in the information and gain access to his project. Also Malcolm’s familiarity with the flip camera (used to collect data/observations) added to the success of this project. Malcolm understood how
to operate the camera (from prior exposure at home), for the most part was not distracted by the filming and even offered to assist with the recording.

Malcolm and I both were learning a great deal together from this study. For example, we both learned together through experimenting how to add texts, pictures, music and even rearrange slides. With assistance, Malcolm learned a variety of ways to use the internet as a tool to check the spelling of his writing. Malcolm used the web, Microsoft Word and Dictionary.com to search the correct spellings to edit his script. Malcolm also noted that he enjoyed learning all the pictures that are available to him online as that was his favorite part of the project. It is also important that Malcolm saw himself as learning throughout the entirety of this project. Malcolm stated that he “learned a little research in his notebook (with his storyboard) but the fun part came from making the video.” Malcolm also vocalized that he even learned how to type. This was an unexpected but important aspect of the study that will be discussed further later on in the challenges section of this paper.

**Student Perception of Digital Tools**

Student perception of digital tools represents the thoughts and reactions the participant has while working with the digital tool, Animoto. Knowing a student’s perception of digital tools is imperative to their success with the technology. A student’s sharing of their feelings about digital tools such as Animoto for instance, can assist teachers in teaching the full benefits of tools/how they are used and clearing up any misconceptions. Malcolm expressed that he did not feel this project would assist him in becoming a better reader. He stated, “I don’t think so because when I think of a computer, I think of all video games, not learning at all.” This of course, is a common misconception of students, possibly due to lack of exposure in the classroom. Toward the end of the project when asked again, Malcolm admitted that he was
reading and writing while working on his Animoto project. When asked if he thought he was reading and writing while working on this project in the final Student Interview Malcolm stated, “Oh yeah, writing definitely (pointed to storyboard). I also read because I was reading the shark book.” Also according to the Student Interview, Malcolm was asked if Animoto should be used to assist students in learning. Malcolm stated, “I recommend my video for teachers to use to teach kids.”

Malcolm took great pride in the completion of his storyboard, constantly stating, “Can we use this to show others?” He enjoyed sharing and showing his progress to others throughout this whole study. He also could not wait to complete the entire project in hopes to share it with his friends and family. Malcolm sensed how valuable his work is for the education and pleasure of others. Hence, as previously discussed Malcolm’s engagement was linked to an authentic audience; this in turn affected his perception of the tool and of himself as an author.

**Development of Literacy Skills**

Malcolm was given multiple opportunities throughout this project to practice his reading and writing skills. To illustrate, Malcolm had to brainstorm/write down his ideas, write/edit his storyboard, read instructions off of the computer screen and read from referenced books. As Malcolm read from his storyboard and typed I noticed a growth in his ability to read with appropriate phrasing and pace (fluency). I noticed that when he began using the internet as a tool, his spelling began to improve slightly. Malcolm also learned about the Writing Process. He used an anchor chart with the stages of the Writing Progress and a clothes pin to monitor his writing progress; he moved the clothes pin as he worked through each stage of the Writing Process.
Below are a few screenshots taken from the video footage to illustrate Malcolm showing his audience his 1) brainstormed list of ideas, 2) illustrated storyboard, 3) written storyboard (with edit marks in red), and 4) his Writing Process anchor chart with his name-labeled paperclip, placed to record his current writing stage:

1)  
2)  
3)  
4)  

According to the Student Interview, Malcolm noted that he asks for help sometimes for special effects or help with spelling when working with digital tools at home. This was again displayed throughout the course of this study with Malcolm’s self-conscious/unsure attitude while working on his Animoto project. To illustrate, Malcolm constantly second guessed his
work and was not willing to experiment himself. Malcolm asked the following questions for example throughout this study, “Can I write about?...” and “How do you spell?...” Malcolm also constantly asked for assistance by saying things like, “Where do I add the text?...Here?” This was particularly problematic because this element of visual design should have been completely his decision. Malcolm experienced a bit of anxiety about his final presentation stating, “Wait, did we fix all of the spelling yet?” He also became a little worried after a while with the flip camera stating, “So, why am I being tapped again?” These setbacks are minuscule compared to the ample benefits gained from this study.

**Student and Research Challenges**

Although the benefits of this study were clear as discussed above, multiple challenges created limitations throughout the course of this study as well. On the initial Student Interview Malcolm indicated that he does not use computers a lot at school but that he does work with technology such as his iPhone and personal computer. Malcolm’s work on his home computer is limited to video games or surfing websites such as YouTube but not actual text production. According to Jenkins et al (2006), “-participation, social capitol, civic culture-these are the activities that serve to network today’s younger generation” (p.7). “Participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from one of individual expression to community involvement” (Jenkins et al, 2006, p.7). Without the skills and competencies needed to create text production which are needed to interact with popular culture, Malcolm has experienced what is known as Participation Gap. Jenkins et al (2006) explain, “The Participation Gap is the unequal access to the opportunities, experiences, skills and knowledge that will prepared youth for full participation in the world of tomorrow” (p.3). Because Malcolm does not have much prior exposure with using a computer for text production, the creation of this slide show was made very difficult. Malcolm
lacked the computer skills necessary to type the necessary information into his slide show. Because the tasking of typing was made so painstaking, Malcolm often became fidgety and unfocused. This deterred him from the enjoyment of the project. To illustrate Malcolm’s disinterest with typing when editing his spelling on the computer he exclaimed, “Do we really have to correct every word?” as he continuously checked his typing progress. The more Malcolm worked with the computer to assist his spelling, he began to use his decoding strategies to sound out these unknown words, chunk words he already knew and break down words into small, spell-able parts. These skills assisted Malcolm greatly while searching for the proper spelling of words with the web (Dictionary.com) and with Microsoft word. For instance, Malcolm was able to sound out the word “shark” by sounding out the “sh” and allowing the web browser to assist him with spelling the “ark.”

The below photographs were taken of Malcolm while working alone on Animoto/the internet:

With Malcolm’s prior struggles and due to time constraints I did decide to assist Malcolm with typing for the remaining day of my study. To still make sure Malcolm was in charge of his slideshow I asked that Malcolm read his script to me while I typed. I often asked Malcolm to spell out words for me (that he has already edited with the use of the computer). I also asked
him where to add grammar marks and punctuation when necessary. For instance, I asked him to spell the word “krill” because it was a word I remember he looked up. I also asked him what I should do to the “s” in his title; he replied with “use a capital.” This was an important change in my study because it allowed Malcolm to enjoy the creative process of creating his slideshow without the stressful, daunting task of typing the text letter-by-letter. I noticed allowing Malcolm this freedom caused him to become more engaged and less fidgety/discouraged. Also as I worked with Malcolm to scaffold his learning he was able to see me model typing and navigating the web.

The snapshots below were added to illustrate how Malcolm and I worked collaboratively to complete the end of his Animoto project:

![Snapshots illustrating collaboration](image)

**Implications**

The results of this study provide support to the notion of using digital tools to support struggling male readers in classrooms. A variety of observations suggest that students become engaged and motivated while working with digital tools such as Animoto. Digital tools such as Animoto also support a student’s reading and writing skills by providing multiple opportunities to practice these skills. Tools such as Animoto encourage students to become creative and expressive.
Czarnecki (2009) argues that “the skill sets needed to succeed in the modern job market are rapidly changing and are much more technological in nature than in the years past” (p. 18). For this reason, digital tools such as Animoto should be implemented into classrooms to assist students in gaining the skills necessary to survive in today’s digital world. Czarnecki (2009) continues by suggesting that digital tools such as story making (Animoto) are helping to develop modern skills such as reading, writing and computation, technical skills (computer), organizational (communication, creative thinking, problem solving analytical and company-specific skills” (p.18). It is imperative for teachers to reinforce these valuable skills early on in their student’s lives.

Teachers thinking of using digital tools such as Animoto in their classroom need to also be aware of its multiple uses. Czarnecki (2009) suggest that “digital storytelling can be adapted to different scenarios-museums, academic libraries, schools and other environments” (p. 18). This is important because the more this tool is used in various settings, the more familiar students will become and the more useful and practical the tool will become. If teachers use these tools in the classroom, they should also be aware that some students may experience frustration if they have little experience with digital technology or typing as Malcolm did. Thus teachers should be sure to build in opportunities for the students to learn those basic skills as they engage in the more interesting aspects of the tool.

Another thing for teachers planning on using this device in their classroom should consider is copyright laws (Fries-Gaither, 2010). Teachers should be aware of current copyright laws before implementing this technology into their classroom. Along with copyright awareness, teachers should also understand and employ the importance of modeling good practice for their students (Fries-Gaither, 2010). Teachers should also be aware of Creative Commons and Fair
Use Laws when allowing students to work with technology. “Creative Commons is an organization that allows people to issue creative words under a license that allows more flexibility than the default ‘all rights reserved’ of copyright law” (Does Creative Commons Free Your Contents?, 2011, p.1). “Fair use allows people to use web posted work in a limited manner-categorized by the nature of the use, the amount of the original work used, the nature of the resulting or derivative work, and the purpose of the use” (Does Creative Commons Free Your Contents?, 2011, p.1) Teachers should be aware of Creative Commons and Fair Use Laws because they help explain how their work or the work of others cannot legally be used without permission or a license which is important when giving credit to an author and monitoring student use. Students always look up to adults and mimic their behavior which is why teachers need to reinforce proper technology behaviors with their students. For instance, teachers should review how to care for technology, what not to search for on the internet and how to detect non-scholarly research.

As shown from this study, it is imperative for teachers to capture the interests of their students to best educate. When students are engaged and motivated they often absorb more information and take more pride/responsibility in their learning. Being an age of technology, students today are growing up with more digital devices intended for pleasure. As teachers, we need to learn what these out of school devices are and do as well as, ways that we can use them in the classroom to capture the bright minds of our students. Students today are more likely to read off of a computer screen than from a printed text due to animations, sounds and images that digital tools provide. Often times, as in the case of Malcolm in the beginning of this study, students are unaware of the learning benefits that some digital tools can provide. By the end of the study with multiple exposures with experimenting with Animoto and after
scaffolding/modeling, Malcolm began to understand and change his attitude with computers and learning. Malcolm noted that he was reading texts, typing on the web and writing in his Writer’s Notebook.

With technology on the rise in the workforce is important for teachers to begin teaching students digital skills early on in their education. Students should learn basic skills such as typing, mouse control, internet surfing/browsing and Microsoft Word work in their early years of learning to best assist them in their future. Students who gain these skills often are able to access the benefits of technology without the hindrance of operator errors. Again with more digital understanding, students become more motivated and engaged.

Supplementary studies should be considered to expand the scale and importance of this research. Unfortunately, with the time constraints that were placed on the observation period of this study the long-term effects or the role of digital tools on literacy skills was not researched in the extent possible. A study that investigates this over months or even an entire school year may better isolate this question and suggest further the benefits of technology and classroom instruction. An investigation on other digital tools and their benefits in the classroom would also provide valuable insight into the benefits of technology on assisting student learning.

The findings propose that digital tools such as Animoto can be used in the classroom to assist with the learning process. Teachers should think about setting up their classroom with computers and other technical devices to support literacy development. Along with providing these materials for students, teachers should also allow students to freely explore these devices at their own paces to fully take advantage of all they have to offer as valuable learning often takes place during these times. Eventually, as students work with these digital tools they will begin to build their schemata, “a process which includes finding frameworks for meaning and recognizing
the often fragmentary nature of texts and the need to fit all the pieces together” (Clancy & Lowrie, 2006, p. 143). Along with exploration, students should also be encouraged to work with others to further their digital learning. Equally as important, teachers should also guide and scaffold students when necessary while working with these digital tools to promote confidence and expertise.

**Conclusion**

This study was intended to present how an observed student can work with digital tools such as Animoto to practice reading and writing skills. The inclusion of this tool into the classroom suggested an increase of motivation and engagement while learning. The results suggest that digital tools (Animoto/storytelling) play an important role in supporting the development of literacy skills among a struggling male reader. The effects of the inclusion of this tool were observed with one struggling male reader over a short period of time. Without tools such as Animoto being implemented into classrooms, more students will begin losing interest in learning as well as, lack the skills necessary to survive in today’s digital world. To conclude, it is valuable that teachers recognize how “present day technologies have changed the ways in which many young learners use their leisure time, the range of literacies they use to make meanings from texts and the sorts of learning they engage with as they access the digital worlds of new media” (Clancy & Lowrie, 2006, p. 141). Rule (2010) stated, “This type of hands-on project-based learning services to engage at-risk students who otherwise find little connection between life and school” (p.2). Everyone has a story to tell and with these tools it is easy to express them (Rule, 2010). With these tools being so easy to access, why not allow your students to give them a try (Rule, 2010)?
References


### Appendices

**Ernie Learns: Level L • Fiction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recording Form</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>School</td>
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### Recording Form

**Part One: Oral Reading**

*Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.*

**Introduction:** Brett was trying to train his puppy Ernie to obey him. Read to find out about the problems Brett had trying to teach Ernie.

---

**Page 1**

Brett patted his puppy on the head, saying, "Today’s the big day, Ernie. Today you’re going to learn how to be a good dog.” Ernie gave a happy bark.

“Okay, let’s get started,” Brett said. He searched his memory for the instructions he had been reading in a book about dog training. He recalled two important things. One—you have to tell your dog what to do. Two—you also have to show your

---

**Summary of Scores:**

- Accuracy
- Self-correction
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Writing

---

_Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 2_
**Part One: Oral Reading continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>dog what to do. He tried to remember more and then decided to start. Maybe that was all. “Sit, Ernie!” Brett said. He nudged the puppy, and the little dog sat. Then Brett made another attempt. But Ernie just looked at him. Then Brett showed the puppy over and over how to sit. Again, Ernie forgot what to do. “Maybe you don’t like sitting,” Brett said. “Let’s try something new.” He backed away from his dog. “Stay!” he said. Ernie didn’t stay. He didn’t lie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part One: Oral Reading continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>down. And he didn't come when he was called. Brett's mom was watching from the porch. Brett yelled, &quot;Mom, why can't I teach Ernie anything?&quot; &quot;I think you forgot an important step,&quot; Mom said. She held out some puppy treats. &quot;You have to make him want to be good! Watch for him to do something right. Then praise him and reward him. That's how Dad and I get you to be good!&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal

End Time ___ min. ___ sec.

Total
Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts as needed to stimulate discussion. It is not necessary to use every prompt for each book. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed—with or without a prompt. Circle the number in the score column that reflects the level of understanding demonstrated.

Key Understandings Prompts | Score
---|---
**Within the Text**
Tells significant events of the story in sequence, such as: Brett was having trouble training Ernie; Mom told him to give Ernie treats for doing the trick; Brett trained Ernie to sit and stay. 

Note any additional understandings:

---

**Beyond the Text**
Both people and dogs have to want to be good.

Giving a person or a dog a reward (treat) helps them want to be good.

Brett was happy at the end of the story because he learned how to teach Ernie.

Note any additional understandings:

---

**About the Text**
The title of this book is good because Ernie did learn to sit.

Brett learned that both people and animals need rewards.

There was a joke at the end of the story when Brett barked a happy bark like Ernie did at the beginning.

Note any additional understandings:

---

Guide to Total Score
9-10 Excellent Comprehension
7-8 Satisfactory Comprehension
5-6 Limited Comprehension
0-4 Unsatisfactory Comprehension

**Comprehension Scoring Key**
0 Reflects unsatisfactory understanding of the text. Either does not respond or talks off the topic.
1 Reflects limited understanding of the text. Mentions a few facts or ideas but does not express the important information or ideas.
2 Reflects satisfactory understanding of the text. Includes important information and ideas but neglects other key understandings.
3 Reflects excellent understanding of the text. Includes almost all important information and main ideas.

Teacher: Talk about what happened in this story.
Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)
Read the writing/drawing prompt below to the student. You can also cut the prompt on the dotted line and give it to the child. Specify the amount of time for the student to complete the task on a separate sheet of paper. (See Assessment Guide for more information.)

Next, Brett wants to teach Ernie to come. Write about how you think he will do it. You can draw a sketch to go with your writing.
**City Hawks • LEVEL M • NONFICTION**

Record Form

Part One: Oral Reading

*Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.*

*Introduction:* Pale Male is a red-tailed hawk. He made a nest on the ledge of an apartment building in New York City. Read to find out what happened.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Start Time</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
<th>Self-correction</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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A Nest in the City

Many people call New York City home. So does a famous bird. He’s a red-tailed hawk called Pale Male. Pale Male has a hooked beak and a red tail. He got his name because his chest is almost white. Red-tailed hawks need to live where they can hunt for food.

At first, Pale Male chose to live in Central Park. It is a big green park right in the middle of New York City.

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Subtotal
Part One: Oral Reading continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The hawk started to make a nest in a tree. But some blue jays flew at him. They would not leave him alone. So Pale Male moved. He found a mate and he made a nest on the ledge of a fancy apartment building across from the park. The ledge had sharp spikes on it. The spikes held up the nest of sticks. Baby Birds Before long, there were eggs in the nest. Many bird watchers came with binoculars to see the hawk family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part One: Oral Reading continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soon the eggs hatched. Baby birds poked their heads up, and the people cheered! Pale Male has now raised about two dozen chicks. He and his families are famous around the world. People have written many news stories and a book about them. Pale Male was even on two TV shows!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have the student finish reading the book silently.
### Recording Form

**City Hawks • Level M • Nonfiction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accuracy Rate</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>11-12</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>6-7</th>
<th>4-5</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>0</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>%</td>
<td>Below 95%</td>
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<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Self-Corrections**

**Fluency Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Fluency Scoring Key**

0. Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate.

1. Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four-word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress, with slow rate most of the time.

2. Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns.

3. Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.

**Reading Rate (Optional)**

- End Time  ____ min. ____ sec.
- Start Time  ____ min. ____ sec.
- Total Time  ____ min. ____ sec.
- Total Seconds  ____

\[(RW \times 60) \div \text{Total Seconds} = \text{Words Per Minute (WPM)}\]

12,840 \div ________ = ________ WPM
**City Hawks** • Level M • Nonfiction

**Part Two: Comprehension Conversation**

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts as needed to stimulate discussion of understandings the student does not express. It is not necessary to use every prompt for each book. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed—with or without a prompt. Circle the number in the score column that reflects the level of understanding demonstrated.

_**Teacher:** Talk about what you learned in this book._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Understandings</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within the Text</strong></td>
<td>Explain what happened in this story.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarizes the story, including 3–4 important facts in sequence, such as: A hawk built a nest on a building in New York; he raised baby birds; people liked to watch them; some people didn’t like so many people watching the building; they took the nest down; people made them put the nest back.</td>
<td>What was the problem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drawing on page 4 shows that the tall buildings are just across from the park.</td>
<td>What else happened?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note any additional understandings:</td>
<td>What happened at the end?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beyond the Text</strong></td>
<td>Text Feature Probe: Tell what you learned from the drawing on page 4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawks usually live in the country, but Pale Male built his nest in the city.</td>
<td>What was unusual about Pale Male’s nest in this true story?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pale Male built his nest on the building because it was near the park but safe.</td>
<td>Why did Pale Male build his nest on the building?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People liked to watch Pale Male and his babies because they do not get to see hawks in the city (or other reason consistent with the text).</td>
<td>Why did people like to watch the hawks so much?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nest was removed because people in the building didn’t like being watched all the time with binoculars.</td>
<td>Why did some people want the nest taken down?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some people liked Pale Male and his nest and some people did not like him.</td>
<td>What was the disagreement different people had about Pale Male?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note any additional understandings:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part Two: Comprehension Conversation continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Understandings</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>About the Text</strong></td>
<td>Look at the three sections and read the headings. Do you think this was a good way to organize the information? Why (not)?</td>
<td>0-1-2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The story was divided into three parts to show three different times.</td>
<td>How did the author help you understand two different points of view about the hawks?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The author told each side of the argument and gave reasons for what the people wanted.</td>
<td>What side do you think the author is on? Why?</td>
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<tr>
<td>It sounds like the author thinks it's a good idea for Pale Male to have his nest on the building.</td>
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</table>

Note any additional understandings:

Guide to Total Score
9-10 Excellent Comprehension
7-8 Satisfactory Comprehension
5-6 Limited Comprehension
0-4 Unsatisfactory Comprehension

Subtotal Score: __ /9
Add 1 for any additional understandings: __ /1
Total Score: __ /10

Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)

Read the writing/drawing prompt below to the student. You can also cut the prompt on the dotted line and give it to the child. Specify the amount of time for the student to complete the task on a separate sheet of paper. (See Assessment Guide for more information.)

Write what you think about Pale Male. Explain why you think he should or should not be allowed to keep his nest on the building. You can draw a sketch to go with your writing.
**Dogs at Work • LEVEL N • NONFICTION**

**Recording Form**

| Student ____________________________ | Grade ____ | Date ____________________________ |
| Teacher ____________________________ | School ____________________________ |

**Recording Form**

**Part One: Oral Reading**

*Place the book in front of the student. Read the title and introduction.*

*Introduction:* Guide dogs help blind people in many different ways. Read to find out how they are trained and how they do many important jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Start Time ____ min. ____ sec.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Who is your best friend? A best friend can be a classmate, a neighbor, or even a relative. But for some people, their best friend walks on four legs, is covered with fur, and takes them anywhere they need to go. It's a dog! But it's not just any dog—their best friend is a guide dog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What Are Guide Dogs? Guide dogs help blind people get from place to place and lead</td>
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</table>

**Sources of Information Used**

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</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of Scores:**

- Accuracy
- Self-correction
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Writing
Part One: Oral Reading continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 cont.</td>
<td>independent lives. With a guide dog, blind people can go to the grocery store, ride the bus, or take a trip on a plane. Guide dogs are allowed in places where most other dogs are not. Not just any dog can be a guide dog. A guide dog needs many months of training at a special school. At school they learn to behave quietly, especially in public. Guide dogs have to focus on helping their owners. They are taught to ignore other things, such as interesting smells and other animals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
They also learn to keep still and quiet in busy places, such as shopping malls or offices. Most dogs would have a very hard time doing that!

Dogs at Work

If you see a guide dog doing its job, remember not to pet or talk to it. Guiding is very hard to do. It requires a dog's full attention.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accuracy Rate</th>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>11-12</th>
<th>8-10</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>4-6</th>
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**Self-Corrections**

**Fluency Score**

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<tr>
<th>Fluency Score</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Fluency Scoring Key**

0. Reads primarily word-by-word with occasional but infrequent or inappropriate phrasing; no smooth or expressive interpretation, irregular pausing, and no attention to author's meaning or punctuation; no stress or inappropriate stress, and slow rate.

1. Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- and four-word groups and some word-by-word reading; almost no smooth, expressive interpretation or pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; almost no stress or inappropriate stress, with slow rate most of the time.

2. Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups; some smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; mostly appropriate stress and rate with some slowdowns.

3. Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrases or word groups; mostly smooth, expressive interpretation and pausing guided by author's meaning and punctuation; appropriate stress and rate with only a few slowdowns.

**Reading Rate**

- **End Time**
- **Start Time**
- **Total Time**
- **Total Seconds**

(RW × 60) ÷ Total Seconds = Words Per Minute (WPM)

13,320 ÷ ________ = ________ WPM
**Part Two: Comprehension Conversation**

Have a conversation with the student, noting the key understandings the student expresses. Use prompts as needed to stimulate discussion of understandings the student does not express. It is not necessary to use every prompt for each book. Score for evidence of all understandings expressed—with or without a prompt. Circle the number in the score column that reflects the level of understanding demonstrated.

**Teacher:** Talk about what you learned in this book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Understandings</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Within the Text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prompts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tells 3–4 facts about guide dogs, such as: Guide dogs help blind people; they need special training; they help people go many places (gives an example); you should not pet a guide dog; guide dogs wear special harnesses.</td>
<td>Tell what you learned about guide dogs from this book.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>The glossary helps you know what some of the words in the story mean. For example, independent means needing no help from others.</td>
<td>What else did you learn?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note any additional understandings:</td>
<td>Anything else?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beyond the Text</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prompts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Score</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The most important thing about guide dogs is how they help people.</td>
<td>What is the most important thing about guide dogs?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide dogs do important work because they help blind people be independent.</td>
<td>Do you think guide dogs do important work? Why (not)? What does the author say that makes you think that?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dogs probably like to help their owners and the owners love their dogs.</td>
<td>How do you think guide dogs and their owners probably feel about each other?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note any additional understandings:</td>
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</table>

**Comprehension Scoring Key**

0 Reflects unsatisfactory understanding of the text. Either does not respond or talks off the topic.

1 Reflects limited understanding of the text. Mentions a few facts or ideas but does not express the important information or ideas.

2 Reflects satisfactory understanding of the text. Includes important information and ideas but neglects other key understandings.

3 Reflects excellent understanding of the text. Includes almost all important information and main ideas.

*Continued on next page.*
Part Two: Comprehension Conversation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Understandings</th>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>About the Text</strong></td>
<td>How did the author make this book interesting?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The author made the book interesting by (choosing an interesting subject, telling details about guide dogs).</td>
<td>Text Feature Probe: Look at the sections and the headings in this book. How do they help you read it?</td>
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<td>The sections and the headings help you know what information you will be reading about.</td>
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<td>Note any additional understandings:</td>
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</table>

Guide to Total Score
9-10 Excellent Comprehension
7-8 Satisfactory Comprehension
5-6 Limited Comprehension
0-4 Unsatisfactory Comprehension

Subtotal Score: __/9
Add 1 for any additional understandings: __/1
Total Score: __/10

Part Three: Writing About Reading (optional)

Read the writing/drawing prompt below to the student. You can also cut the prompt on the dotted line and give it to the child. Specify the amount of time for the student to complete the task on a separate sheet of paper. (See Assessment Guide for more information.)

Writing About Reading
0 Reflects no understanding of the text.
1 Reflects very limited understanding of the text.
2 Reflects partial understanding of the text.
3 Reflects excellent understanding of the text.

Write a summary of what you learned about guide dogs from reading this book. You can draw a sketch to go with your writing.
Primary Spelling Inventory (PSI)

The Primary Spelling Inventory (PSI) is used in kindergarten through third grade. The 26 words are ordered by difficulty to sample features of the letter name-alphabetic to within word pattern stages. Call out enough words so that you have at least five or six misspelled words to analyze. For kindergarten or other emergent readers, you may only need to call out the first five words. In late kindergarten and early first grade classrooms, call out at least 15 words so that you sample digraphs and blends; use the entire list for late first, second, and third grades. If any students spell more than 20 words correctly, you may want to use the Elementary Spelling Inventory.

1. fan
   I could use a fan on a hot day.  

2. pet
   I have a pet cat who likes to play.  

3. dig
   He will dig a hole in the sand.  

4. rob
   A raccoon will rob a bird's nest for eggs.  

5. hope
   I hope you will do well on this test.  

6. wait
   You will need to wait for the letter.  

7. gum
   I stepped on some bubble gum.  

8. sled
   The dog sled was pulled by huskies.  

9. stick
   I used a stick to poke in the hole.  

10. shine
    He rubbed the coin to make it shine.  

11. dream
    I had a funny dream last night.  

12. blade
    The blade of the knife was very sharp.  

13. coach
    The coach called the team off the field.  

14. fright
    She was a fright in her Halloween costume.  

15. chewed
    The dog chewed on the bone until it was gone.  

16. crawl
    You will get dirty if you crawl under the bed.  

17. wishes
    In fairy tales wishes often come true.  

18. thorn
    The thorn from the rosebush stuck me.  

19. shouted
    They shouted at the barking dog.  

20. spoil
    The food will spoil if it sits out too long.  

21. growl
    The dog will growl if you bother him.  

22. third
    I was the third person in line.  

23. camped
    We camped down by the river last weekend.  

24. tries
    He tries hard every day to finish his work.  

25. clapping
    The audience was clapping after the program.  

26. riding
    They are riding their bikes to the park today.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features →</th>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Short Vowels</th>
<th>Digraphs</th>
<th>Blends</th>
<th>Long Vowel Patterns</th>
<th>Other Vowels</th>
<th>Indicated Endings</th>
<th>Spelling Stage</th>
<th>Words Spelled Correctly</th>
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Parent Questionnaire

Please check the appropriate box for each answer or answer on the lines below accordingly.

Data from answers will be compiled into a report. Your child’s name and the location of the research will be changed in order to protect your child’s anonymity. All data will be kept in a locked location and accessible only to the researcher. The findings from this study will be shared with other professionals at the St. John Fisher College Capstone Presentation conference. The benefits are the opportunity for improved teaching.

Parent: ____________________________ Student: _____________________ Date: __________

#1: How often does your child work with technology at home (e.g., computer, Kindle/Nook, iPod, iPad, etc.)?

Very often ___ Often ___ Sometimes ___ Rarely ___ Never ___

#2: When your child works with technology how engaged does he become?

Very ___ A little ___ Somewhat ___ Not really ___ Not at all ___

#3: How motivated is your child to read digital texts (e.g., websites, digital stories, etc.)?

Very ___ A little ___ Somewhat ___ Not really ___ Not at all ___

#4: How often do you need to assist your child with technology?

Very often ___ Often ___ Sometimes ___ Rarely ___ Never ___

#5: Would your child rather read a paper and ink book or read a computer based story with audio, video, text, and hyperlinks? Why do you believe this is true? Please explain below.

#6: How helpful do you believe technology is in assisting your child’s reading?

Very ___ A little ___ Somewhat ___ Not really ___ Not at all ___

#7: In your opinion, what features of online texts assist your young reader (e.g., animations, sounds, etc.)? Why do you believe these features are assistive of his learning? Please explain below.
Student Interview

Interviewer: __________________________ Interviewee: _____________________ Date: _________

#1: How often do you work with technology at home (e.g., computer, Kindle/Nook, iPod, iPad, etc.)?

Very often ___   Often ___   Sometimes ___   Rarely ___   Never ___

What types of technology do you use?

#2: How often do you work with technology at school (e.g., computer, Kindle/Nook, iPod, iPad, etc.)?

Very often ___   Often ___   Sometimes ___   Rarely ___   Never ___

What types of technology do you use?

#3: When you work with technology how focused do you become?

Very ___   A little ___   Somewhat ___   Not really ___   Not at all ___

Why do you think this happens?

#4: Would you rather read a paper and ink book or read a computer based story with audio, video, text, and hyperlinks? (e.g., websites, digital stories, etc.)? Why/why not?

#5: When you work with technology do you normally need an adult to help you? How do you learn to use it?

#6: What is it about technology that makes you want to use it (e.g., animations, sounds, etc.)?

#7: Do you think using technology helps you become a better reader? Why/why not?
Sharks

1. food
2. Shark attacks
3. Cans of sharks
4. babies
5. human use
6. home
Multiple modalities and struggling male readers.

- Title: "Learn about every thing"
- 1. Ocean back reward
- 2. Attacks
- 3. Kinds of sharks
- 4. Human use
- 5. End of theme
- 6. Weird
- 7. On line pitch

- Drawing: Shark in water, fish, human, arrows.
1. First, let's learn about food. Did you know that some sharks eat sea lions, the great white shark will eat almost anything you give it! Other sharks will only eat fish or other sharks.

2. Next, let's learn about people attacks. Sharks will only attack people if the person is in a weird fashion, like this one. Never go far into the ocean or you will most likely get eaten by a shark.

3. Now, let's learn about three different kinds of sharks. Shark #1 is the whale shark, the most biggest creature in the sea, but do not get frightened because...
Shark #1: The Tiger Shark

Shark #2: The Angel Shark

Shark #3: The Goblin Shark is a killer. However, they are very rare. They live in the darkest spot of the night zone.

Because they are bottom dwellers.

Importantly and most importantly, we will learn about human use. People are killing sharks. Finally, they use shark's spine, gills, and other stuff to make medicines and other things.

You can help the sharks. Spets by going to the beach, not by putting up singles to tell people to kill sharks. See you.
Editing Marks

Mark Example

Insert a word, letter, or phrase
Shark see in poor light.

Delete
Some sharks look very very strange.

Capitalize
many people eat shark meat.

Change to lower case
The Hammerhead Shark has a flat head.

Insert period
Sharks are fish

Insert Comma
Fins help sharks steer turn & keep their balance.

Insert an apostrophe
A dorsal fin is located on a sharks back.

Insert quotation marks
Malcolm said, This project is cool!

Insert space
Sharkshave a very good sense of smell.

Close up space
There are more than 350 kinds of sharks.

Check spelling
Shark’s skeletons are made of cartilage.

*Marks were made on the original copy in red pen.
**The Writing Process**

**Prewriting**
- **Think About It**
  - Get your ideas down on paper!
  - Don’t worry about spelling and grammar!

**Drafting**
- **Write It Down**
  - Start thinking about how you want to organize your ideas!

**Revising**
- **Make It Better**
  - Move your ideas around to make the best sense!

**Proofreading**
- **Make it correct**
  - Check for spelling and grammar mistakes!
  - Add descriptive words and vocabulary!

**Publishing**
- **Share It with Others**
  - Show off your hard work to others! 😊
Student Interview

Interviewer: ______________________ Interviewee: _______________ Date: ____________

#1: Do you look forward to working on your Animoto project every week? Why/why not?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

a. From 1-5 (5= highest), how do you rate your experience with Animoto?
   1  2  3  4  5

#2: What did you learn while working on your Animoto project?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

#3: Do you think you were reading and writing while working on your Animoto project?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

#4: What was your favorite part of this Animoto project?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

#5: Do you think Animoto should be used in classrooms? Why/why not?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

#6: How do you think students can use Animoto to learn?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

#7: Did your Writer’s Notebook help you complete this project? How/How not?

________________________________________________________________________________