Using Online Content Creation Technology with Struggling Readers

Alexandra Schenk
St. John Fisher College

Recommended Citation

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/23 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at St. John Fisher College. For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjfc.edu.
Using Online Content Creation Technology with Struggling Readers

Abstract
This study examined how online content creation technology improved literacy skills of eight struggling readers in a suburban middle school. All students showed improvement in comprehension as a result of using this technology. Data was collected through observations, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires. The findings showed the importance of student choice and the use of technology as an intrinsic motivator in the classroom. The data also showed the students need for peer collaborations and discussion in order to confidently comprehend a text. Teachers must incorporate these strategies in order to foster self-confidence in students’ literacy skills.

Document Type
Thesis

Degree Name
MS in Literacy Education

Department
Education

First Supervisor
Joellen Maples

Subject Categories
Education

This thesis is available at Fisher Digital Publications: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/23
Using Online Content Creation Technology with Struggling Readers

By

Alexandra Schenk

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

M.S. Literacy Education

Supervised by

Dr. Joellen Maples

School of Arts and Sciences
St. John Fisher College

August 2010
Abstract

This study examined how online content creation technology improved literacy skills of eight struggling readers in a suburban middle school. All students showed improvement in comprehension as a result of using this technology. Data was collected through observations, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires. The findings showed the importance of student choice and the use of technology as an intrinsic motivator in the classroom. The data also showed the students need for peer collaborations and discussion in order to confidently comprehend a text. Teachers must incorporate these strategies in order to foster self-confidence in students’ literacy skills.
Motivating Struggling Readers Through The Use of Content Creation Technology

Introduction

Middle school often shows an increase of teacher control and a decrease in student freedom in comparison to elementary school. Many times, students are cut off from teacher support and are expected to compete with peers rather than cooperating with each other. Guthrie and Davis (2003) state that by using real world and personal interaction to connect students to reading, providing students with a large quantity of interesting books, allowing them choice and freedom, and encouraging peer collaboration, engagement in literacy learning will occur. Through research and investigation, I obtained information on how struggling readers use technology to comprehend literary elements of a story. Incorporating technology into the classroom has the potential to motivate a wired generation of students. However, beyond providing a way to engage the tech-savvy students in front of you, classroom technology can improve. Helping teachers to create interventions for all types of learners at many different levels will enhance traditional classroom experiences (Berque, 2010). The use of content creation technology benefits all students especially those students who are disenchanted with reading. Not all students connect to content through traditional styles of teaching. All students have different learning styles. Content creation technology is allowing the students the opportunity to express the skills they have acquired using forms of technology. These technologies may include but are not limited to the following: videos, PowerPoint, blogs, and websites, etc. The use of technology is about initiating higher levels of engagement and making the learning more self-directed and self-motivated for a group of students who may not be otherwise motivated to participate in reading activities (Kearsley & Shneiderman, 1999)
This current study involved eighth grade struggling readers using content creation technology and showed its affects on the comprehension of story elements. The findings suggested that students who struggle with the comprehension of a text were able to successfully create a story trailer based on a book of their choice. Findings also suggested that students are intrinsically motivated. In addition, instructional strategies such as peer collaborations, making connections, visual aids, and the use of technology helped to improve comprehension.

**Theoretical Framework**

Literacy can be defined as a set of skills obtained through a combination of learning, social interactions, and meaningful acquisition in natural settings (Gee, 2000; Larson & Marsh, 2005). Students spend most of their days interacting with teachers and peers. One way technology is used is to socially interact. By engaging in literacy through technology students acquire skills to be successful (Larsh & Marsh, 2005). These literacy skills may include writing, reading, fluency, and comprehension, as well as student confidence. Gee (2001) claims that literacy is mastered through acquisition and not learning, and that it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful, and functional settings. Gee argues that acquisition is stronger than learning because one is able to perform better. Many students in this generation have acquired the skills to create technology; therefore, they are able to be successful having been immersed in these skills. Larson and Marsh (2005) agree that literacy acquisition is shaped by social interactions and is not just about learning a rote set of skills; however, they also believe that some direct instruction should be incorporated into literacy learning. They claim that there should be some structured teaching of literacy skills because there may be specific lessons that may require direct instruction. Barton and Hamilton (1998) also argue that literacy is social and is found in the interactions between people. They encourage classrooms to become more
acquisition oriented in which the students subconsciously acquire literacy (Larson & Marsh, 2005). Through the use of content creation technology students are becoming investigators while improving their literacy skills. Teachers directly instruct students but allow them the option to create a project using technology to show what they know, instead of confining them to traditional literacy activities. The combination of learning and acquisition will result in a successful outcome of becoming literate.

Larson and Marsh (2005) view literacy as a social practice. They share similar views on Gee’s (2001) talk of discourse. Gee argues that the concept of discourse applies to classrooms when we begin to think about how language is used in everyday classroom interactions and consider the benefits of literacy learning. Larson and Marsh (2005) suggest that the sociocultural-historical learning theory defines the children as “active members of a constantly changing community of learners in which knowledge constructs and is constructed by larger cultural systems” (pg. 4). Larson and Marsh (2005) conclude that there is a shift from a readiness perspective that emphasized the mastery of discrete skills to the understanding that children develop a set of behaviors and concepts about literacy that precede the development of conventional literacy skills. There has been a shift from traditional instruction to a more modern approach. Students no longer learn conventional literacy skills by taking notes from a chalkboard, writing essays, and participating in round robin reading. They have become a group of socially active learners, engaging in a variety of different multimedia experiences to enhance their literacy skills.

It is important for teachers to become aware of the shift in literacy. The new literacy studies have been introduced to include a wide range of literacy skills that bring together today’s changing society of learners. Baron (2001) claims that in today’s society people view word
processing and other technological advances as second nature; it has not always been this way. Baron (2001) states, “each new literacy technology begins with a restricted communication function and is available only to a small number or initiates” (pg. 75). Baron argues that the computer is the latest step in a long line of writing technologies. In many ways, Baron continues, the computer parallels that of the pencil. Larson and Marsh (2005) argue that New Literacy Studies (NLS) help us understand that “Literacy learning does not simply occur in formal or informal settings, or in or out of school, but also occur in-between in everyday interactions as tools for building and maintaining social relations” (pg.20). Larson and Marsh go on to say that literacy is tied to what people do with literacy in formal and informal settings, both inside and outside school. Larson and Marsh (2005) argue that teachers need to be aware of their own literacy practices and also be aware of how students are using literacy in their communities.

**Research Question**

Given that literacy is a social practice and needs to be actively engaged in this action research project asks the following question: how does the use of online content creation improve comprehension of literary elements in struggling middle school readers?

**Literature Review**

Many struggling readers in middle school are disengaged from reading. Many factors contribute to disengagement in middle school. Reading is often an overwhelming task for students making reading instruction detached from other content areas. With the use of many textbooks, middle school students are expected to analyze and outline text rather than reflect on personal experiences. There are four central practices that will encourage literacy learning: using real world and personal interaction, providing students with a large quantity of interesting books, allowing student choice of texts, and engaging in peer collaborations (Guthrie & Davis, 2003).
Through research and investigation, I hope to obtain information on how struggling readers use technology to comprehend literary elements in a story. This investigation of the literature review is made up of three subheadings to find further answers on the topic: struggling readers, comprehension, and online content creation.

**Struggling Readers**

Struggling readers tend to be particularly unmotivated. They are especially likely to have low confidence in their reading. Guthrie and Davis (2003) suggest that struggling students are likely to lack confidence in their ability to read or even to improve their reading skills. Struggling readers in middle school are more likely to be extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated. These students report being motivated to read due to the emphasis on grades and requirements made by the teacher (Guthrie and Davis, 2003).

The success of many students is based on how they view themselves as readers. In a 2005 study, Hall investigated the techniques that 3 middle school struggling readers in a sixth grade social studies class, a seventh grade mathematics class, and an eighth grade science class used to make decisions about the texts that they were expected to read and the reading instruction that received in their content area classes. The results suggest that each student attempted to be engaged with a text as much as possible and was interested in learning course content (Hall, 2005). Middle school students are extrinsically motivated by content that interests them. The approach the students take in exploring the content depends on their self-image as readers (Hall, 2005). Students who believed they could comprehend a text were more willing to engage with it than those who believed it was too difficult. These readers are struggling because they don’t believe in themselves. In order for these students to become successful, they need to be engaged. Students are motivated when instruction is interesting. The students’ knowledge and fascination
in technology needs to be incorporated into the classroom to promote confidence and increase skills.

Many struggling readers are in fact, motivated to improve their status as readers. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) conducted a survey to understand the features of middle school reading instruction that promote their successful interaction with reading. Middle school students are known for negative attitudes and often times show reluctance towards reading. The findings in this study suggested that although middle school puts an emphasis on students as individuals, the students state that teachers rarely differentiate instruction to meet students’ needs (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Students are assigned to read difficult materials, but teachers are spending little time showing them specific strategies to become successful (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Incorporating technology and into the classroom can differentiate instruction. Differentiated instruction through technology will allow students to explore their own learning and promote positive engagement toward content. Students are expected to know how to read a wide range of texts; yet in school they are mostly limited to teacher-selected class novels and textbooks. Participants in this study commented that their teachers want them to become independent readers, but they don’t get many opportunities to explore their own interests in reading, to read at their own pace, or to make their own choices on what books to read. Another problem, as students saw it, was they could not further develop in school because curriculum and instruction were not designed to meet their particular needs (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Many students are reluctant readers because what they want to read and what the school requires are not in alignment. Students in the middle grades and beyond are not only still developing as readers and writers, but also beginning to explore possible identities and a range of personal interests about the world (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Content that is uninteresting, and/or difficult to understand
may complicate the struggle for students to become proficient and engaged readers and writers, without appropriate instruction. The use of technology is one way to differentiate struggling readers further developing their ability to comprehend content that may be difficult.

Similarly, Hoffman & Nadelson (2010) also argue that engagement is related to achievement, motivation, and persistence in a task. In order to be engaged in a task, there needs to be a mixture of interest, value, and influence. If students aren’t interested and do not see the value in reading, they will continue being notably unmotivated (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). Struggling readers in middle school are more likely to be extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated. Investing time in technologies and multimedia resources shows students’ intrinsic motivation. These students are motivated to spend many hours a day participating in these technologies; therefore, they hold interest and value. Competent readers maintain a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, whereas struggling readers show a sudden decline in intrinsic motivation and become engaged only with extrinsic factors such as grades and recognition. In order to intrinsically motivate students, teachers need to capitalize on the positive outcomes the use of technology can bring to the classroom.

Struggling middle school readers are also motivated when they are interacting with peers. One study investigated the reading behaviors of three adolescents over five months (Ivey, 1999). When struggling readers had a text that was appropriately matched to their abilities and personal interests; their persistence, investment, and use of cognitive skills increased. The findings suggested that while one student was classified as a struggling reader and the others were not, all the students were motivated to read when they achieved a purpose such as social interaction and learning material that they found to be important. Guthrie and Davis (2003) argue that although struggling middle school readers tend to be disengaged from literacy practices, these adolescent
readers are highly sensitive to context. The use of technology is not only of interest to students but it also allows these struggling readers a way to interact with peers. By creating content on computers, the students are building literacy skills and working together for a purpose. In the right situation, with an engaging text and peer or teacher support, students who are considered struggling can be seen to read successfully.

When students are given opportunities to choose text at their ability levels, they display an increase in motivation. The shift from an elementary to a middle school classroom often times moves from student-centered to teacher-centered. In a study conducted by Hammon (2004) there is question of whether the structure of the reading class promoted failure or met the needs of the students. Hammon (2004) concludes that a teacher must have some understanding of the needs of middle school students when making decisions about instructional practices. Hammon (2004) goes on to argue that middle school reading teachers must not let independence become identical to isolation. This means that although the students are becoming independent, the teacher should continue to be an active participant in the students learning. Through technology teachers can allow the students the freedom to create and investigate, while also providing them instruction to improve their abilities. The use of technology will further provide success to struggling readers by bolstering confidence and establishing ownership of the learning.

Comprehension

There are many reasons that indicate why middle school students may have problems comprehending the texts that they are expected to read in school. Primarily, struggling readers likely have cognitive difficulties that can influence the extent to which they can understand a
given text. For example, some struggling readers may have problems decoding words (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1995). Other readers may perceive comprehension as a word-calling activity. The students may be able to say the words, but they do not recognize that they must make meaning from them in order to understand a text (Kim & Goetz, 1994). Finally, some struggling readers may not know how to set goals for reading, understand the structure of a text, identify main ideas or apply strategies to understand the text when they are unable to comprehend. In addition, many struggling readers are simply word callers. Word callers have mastered decoding and also choose to read, but they don’t understand that reading involves thinking. Tovani (2000) argues that the students go through the motions of reading by assuming that all they have to do is pronounce words. Tovani (2000) argues that when many struggling readers don’t understand or remember what they read they quit. These readers feel powerless because the only strategy they have for gaining meaning is sounding out words. Furthermore, the material that students encounter in secondary school is more complicated. In order to be successful, students must go beyond merely reading the words to creating meaning from the text (Tovani, 2000).

Not only can students have reading comprehension problems, but they are also influenced by the way they view themselves as readers. Struggling readers are likely to experience at least some difficulty comprehending the texts required in their content area subjects. One study suggests how each student attempted to be engaged with a text as much as possible and was interested in learning course content (Hall, 2005). However, the ways in which students read and comprehended text was very much influenced by how they saw themselves as readers. Students who believed they could comprehend text were more willing to engage with it than those who thought it was too difficult. This study also suggested that while struggling readers may have been taught comprehension strategies that could help them in these difficult
situations, they are unlikely to use the strategies they’ve learned across content areas and apply them to the texts they read (Hall, 2005).

There are many strategies teachers use to aid struggling readers comprehension and confidence. A study was completed that investigated the impact of Readers Theatre on eighth-grade students, the majority of whom were reading below grade level (Keehn, Harmon & Shoho, 2008). There were two classes, one of which was the control class that did not participate in Readers Theatre and the other who did. The study showed that when compared with students in the control class, students in the Readers Theatre class made statistically significant growth in reading level, as well as significant gains in comprehension. Another finding in this study was the connection between fluency and comprehension. Students who struggle to read words often do not understand what they read (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). The Readers Theater students demonstrated the ability to comprehension at higher levels than the control group as measured by the Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory (Keehn, Harmon, & Shoho, 2008). The students participating in the Readers Theater group showed growth in confidence as they learned that they could perform successfully. Given the negative attitudes that many struggling middle school students have about reading, the positive student responses in the intervention group to Readers Theater prove that the potential for engagement is similar to previous findings about motivating struggling readers (Baker, 2002; Ivey & Broaddus, 1999)

Although these strategies can aid in reading comprehension, many studies have shown that teachers are not utilizing them. Less-skilled readers often find themselves reading texts that are too difficult for them (Allington, 2001). These struggling readers do not read at grade level and encounter significant challenges with comprehension. One study suggests evidence that reading comprehension instruction can be highly beneficial for students of all levels (Ness,
The purpose of the study was to understand the instructional strategies that middle and high school teachers used to support struggling readers. The findings indicate that explicit reading comprehension instruction was not a significant way in which teachers assisted struggling readers. Ness (2008) found when discussing how they help struggling readers, none of the eight participants mentioned coaching students on the reading comprehension strategies that may have helped them to access text. It was also found that as a substitute for comprehension instruction, teachers relied on variety of ways to compensate for struggling readers’ inability to read the textbook. As a means to provide students with the content necessary for the state standardized test, teachers presented information in multiple contexts and multiple forms (Ness, 2008). Teacher-directed instruction was a common trend in these eight classrooms. In hopes of increasing students’ comprehension and retention of material, teachers relied on multiple presentations of information. When middle school science teacher realized that many of her students struggled to access the district-adopted Earth Science text, she supported these students by ensuring multiple presentations of the same material. Teachers then reinforced the material through multiple review activities, including worksheets, quizzes, question answering, and verbal reviews. In rare occurrences when teachers relied on textbooks, they did so only to review previously presented information. Therefore, teachers in this study recognized that a single presentation of material, particularly when done through difficult-to-comprehend text, might not be sufficient for struggling readers (Ness, 2008). Technology can assist students in comprehension skills by providing visuals aids, and connections between text – world. Technology can also improve comprehension skills by allowing the students to think critically. Students’ technology abilities provide them with the confidence to further investigate
information in their text. Since students are interested in technology; therefore, they are naturally researching information which helps to improve comprehension.

Using multiple modes of instruction leads to a study completed by (Nielsen Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). This study discusses instructional tools appropriate for middle level students that use external visual images to build comprehension. Nielsen Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson (2003) found that many students have difficulty with comprehension because they struggling with decoding. It was also found that some students read the words fluently by still lack the ability to create mental images related to text. When students are taught to use mental imagery, comprehension of text increases (Nielsen Hibbing & Rankin-Erickson, 2003). For example, learners who were instructed to create mental images of events in sentences learned two or three times as much as learners who read aloud the sentences continually (Anderson, 1971). It was also found that some students experienced confusion due to a lack of understanding of critical features in the setting or relationships between characters or events discussed in the text. It was found that a drawing or a quick sketch made by the teacher was a helpful tool to support understanding (Nielsen Hibbing & Rankin–Erickson, 2003). The use of technology will also aid in providing visual learners ways to comprehend text. The teacher can allow these types of learners the opportunity to create content related to their texts online.

**Online Content Creation**

Integrating technology into classroom instruction helps to motivate and engage struggling readers. These struggling readers who lack confidence and competent reading abilities need to be provided with opportunities to engage in multimodal resources. Technology has impacted literacy through the internet. The Internet has quickly become this generation’s defining
technology for reading. With the growing number of interactive and social networking sites, students have many opportunities to access information through the interest. This reliance on the Internet as a dominant text has also been shown in the habits of adolescents; students report spending 48 minutes a day reading online compared to 43 minutes offline (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Similarly, American adolescents read online at a rate far greater than other parts of the world’s population, indicating an important shift in this generation’s advances in texts (Lenhart, Madden, & Hitlin, 2005). When integrated with New Literacies, students operate as “designers” and “apply critiqued knowledge of the subject/topic synthesized from multimodal sources” (Kimber & Wyatt-Smith, 2006, p. 26). These tech-savy students demonstrate their abilities to transfer knowledge from the screen to create multimedia. In multimeiating, students construct a “representation of new knowledge” (Kimber & Wyatt-Smith, 2006, p. 26) and communicate by engaging their audience. Many literacy skills develop from the use of online content creation. Students work towards “process and product” (New London Group, 2000). Development of online content creation allows students to consider how literacy practices are formed (Alvermann and Hagood, 2000).

Students’ knowledge and creativity with technology needs to be encouraged in the classroom as an instructional strategy to engage diverse learners. All teaching and learning in the school classroom has involved a range of modes including speech, writing, gesture, movement, and so on—in other words, teaching and learning are multimodal. Since all teaching and learning is multimodal, the use of computers in the classroom serves to stress a multimodal curriculum (Jewitt, 2003). Computer applications introduce new kinds of texts into the classroom. These new practices are allowing students the opportunity to learn in many different ways and stress the importance for teachers to move beyond the narrow definition of literacy to a
broader idea that incorporates the connections between literacy and the social practices in this current multimodal digital era (Jewitt, 2003). Lippincott (2007) states that ‘those who are truly literate in the twenty-first century, will be those who learn to both read and write the multimedia language of the screen” (pg. 16).

To emphasis this multimedia, a study was conducted to understand the literacy strategies used by low achieving writers while creating and interpreting music video pieces (Bruce, 2008). In this study focused on the literacy strategies that four low-achieving writers used while creating and interpreting music video compositions. The results showed that the students demonstrated many complex composition strategies through their reading and composing of video-text (Bruce, 2008). The findings also show students’ understanding of the conventions of the music video genre. The students used the tools of video composition to visualize the expression of their ideas. The students also emphasized that their ability to express their ideas with video was much easier than doing so in print. The students also demonstrated the ability to engage in a peer-led text discussion (Bruce, 2008). Through social interaction and the engagement in literacy practices that are motivating to students, struggling readers and writers are able to find an identity as learners. Similarly, Schmakel (2008) researched perspectives, beliefs, and recommendations of seventh grade students on instructional practices and environments that affected their academic motivation, engagement, and achievement. The students in this study emphasized the value of having fun while learning. Schmakel (2008) concluded that fun in instruction meant making schoolwork and instruction more enjoyable for both teachers and students. These enjoyable elements of instruction would include the use of games and technology for learning. Both high and low achieving students wrote and talked about the benefits of working in groups with friends to increase understanding or interest in a particular
book or topic. By incorporating technology and allowing students the use of multimodal activities, teachers can help to engage and allow students to be in control of their own learning (Schmakel, 2008).

A similar study was done to investigate the ways in which digital literacy influenced young adolescents’ literacy learning (Courtland & Paddington, 2008). The participants in this study were an eighth grade class of eighteen students. A WebQuest was selected for the e-zines and the students were assigned to response groups of three to read and analyze the e-zines. They were then responsible to collaborate and design a section of the e-zine. The findings suggest that through the WebQuest project done for an e-zine, the students were able to make connections between visual images and their reading. In addition, the students showed an ability to work together in a group and the awareness that each student displays abilities that contributed to the creation the e-zines. It was also important to stress the creativity and expression that was evident in completing the e-zine. The WebQuest developed the students understanding of e-zines and using digital media. The students were making connections between the literacies they were experiencing both in and out of school. These students were engaged in their learning and had ownership of the project.

In addition to e-zines and WebQuests, weblogs are another mode in promoting literacy in the classroom. In a study that centered around blog conversations on novels that middle school students were reading in literature circles, the students were able to make text-to-world and text to self connections (Witte, 2007). After the blogs were created, students next scheduled face to face visits between the two classrooms and integrated more technology with the project by designing a collaborative culminating activity involving student-made videos on a book they each read (Witte, 2007). It was also noted that by participating in the Talkback Project Blog, the
teacher noted students’ improvement in literacy skills as well as a strong emphasis on voice. The students found this to be a means for expression and social interaction between two communities (Witte, 2007).

Another example of interacting with multi-literacies and the development and creation of multimodal texts within the classroom is a study by Kervin (2009). This study investigated a group of middle school students who were creating and filming a 30 second television commercial on a social justice issue. The findings in this study indicated students’ ability to use technology to think critically. The students told a story to communicate to others the meaning of the text. Their selection of words, images, camera angles and editing of the visual text allowed the students to construct their own interpretation of social issues (Kervin, 2009).

Through this research, it can be concluded that struggling middle school readers are successful when they are intrinsically motivated and able to collaborate in social groups. These students also possess a level of confidence in their abilities as readers and are allowed to explore the multimodal opportunities that are ever changing in our society. Only when teachers begin to shift toward a more student centered learning environment that is rich with technological opportunities will these students again be engaged with learning.

Method

Context

As the researcher in this study, I investigated an 8th grade AIS Reading Lab at the middle school of the Brown Central School District. For the purpose of this study, this district was given a pseudonym. The Brown Central School District is a small suburb located in upstate New York. With a population of approximately 11,200 people, this is a pleasant, tight knit community in which many families reside. The district is average sized with an enrollment of approximately
4,000 students. The average socioeconomic status of the district is middle class. Twenty six percent of the student body currently qualifies for the Free & Reduced Lunch Program. Historically, this percentage declines slightly as the year progresses. It is also usually significantly lower among older students. The district has an annual attendance rate of 96% with a suspension rate of 6%.

Participants

The participants in this study were students in an 8th grade AIS Reading Lab. The Reading Lab was made up of four girls and four boys. Of these eight students, four of them participated in this study. These students came from low to middle school families. Most of these students participated in the free and reduced lunch program. Many of these students had all been on in or out of school suspension throughout the course of the year. The students enrolled in this class received AIS services based on the outcome of the NYS ELA assessment. On a one to four scale, these students scored ones and twos, which qualifies them for AIS services. Many of these students also received 504 accommodations or had an Individualized Education Plan. These students had a negative view of reading and were discouraged about being placed in a reading lab.

For the purpose of this study, I interviewed four students (two girls and two boys) on their views of technology for the use of text comprehension and more specifically their reflections on using Animoto video. Animoto video is a website that allows individuals to create movies using pictures, text, and music. In this study, students used Animoto to provide their audience with a book trailer on an independent reading book of their choice.
McKenna is fourteen years old and is a Caucasian female. McKenna is an easy-going teenager who enjoys activities such as going to the movies, texting, and hanging out with friends. She also enjoys skateboarding. McKenna is currently in 8th grade and is attending a middle school near her home. McKenna receives free lunch services from school. McKenna was granted a 504 plan based on evaluations which revealed significant anxiety and slower processing skills during testing situations. Although McKenna puts forth effort in her schoolwork, she is not focused or motivated when doing teacher directed tasks. McKenna is a competent math student; however, she struggles with comprehension and fluency in reading. She is an average student who benefits from one on one interaction with her teachers.

Jade is fourteen years old and is a Caucasian female. Jade is an active teenager who enjoys activities such as shopping, going to the movies, and going on Facebook. She is currently in 8th grade and is attending a middle school near her home. Jade receives free lunch services. She currently lives with her father who is unemployed. Jade is diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). Jade displays a negative attitude towards school and has a hard time focusing on a single task unless it is something of interest to her. Her teachers claim that it takes a great deal of effort to keep her focused on a task she is disinterested in. She does however, enjoy projects on the computer and writing tasks.

Fritz is thirteen years old and is a Caucasian male. He is a quiet, hard working teenager who enjoys activities such as long boarding, snowboarding, and playing video games. Fritz is currently in 8th grade and is attending a middle school near his home. The family is from a middle class, working family. Fritz lives with his mother and stepfather. Both parents work long hours, often until 9 or 10 at night, and because of this, Fritz struggles to get assignments completed on time and/or at all. Fritz has a 504 plan due to being easily distracted during
testing situations. Although Fritz is an above average student in math and science, he struggles with reading comprehension in most content areas.

Daniel is thirteen years old and is a Caucasian male. Daniel is diagnosed with an emotional disorder. He is very shy and withdrawn from his peers. He does enjoy activities such as video games, skiing, and taking piano lessons. Daniel receives reduced lunch. His parents are divorced; therefore, Daniel lives mainly with his mother. Daniel has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for his emotional disorder. Although Daniel often has a negative opinion of school and especially reading; he thrives on tasks where he is able to be reflective. He is successful in content areas such as science that involve hands on activities. His grades may indicate that he is an average student. Daniel however, shows improvements completing assignments and participating in class.

**Researcher Stance**

As a researcher I was a passive observer of the 8th grade AIS Reading Lab. Mills (2007) explains that when teachers take on the role of passive observers, they no longer assume the responsibilities of the teacher; their main focus is on their data collection. I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College. I am working on obtaining a Master’s Degree in Literacy, and I have a current bachelor’s degree in Childhood and Special Education.

**Method**

During this study, I investigated the construction of Animoto videos based on literary elements found in student chosen independent reading books. The study focused on the ability of the students to incorporate many different literary elements into their videos. Through the use of video technology, I observed the students interacting with the Animoto technology in order to
demonstrate comprehension of their novels. I also observed how the unique creation of videos allowed the students a better understanding of what they had read. The four students and I had four sessions together and each lasted forty-two minutes. During each session, a new element was added to the videos.

During the first session the students worked on creating a “hook” or introduction. The students obtained a hook by creating a list of words they associated with their book in order to entice a potential audience. Once they created the list, they then created their “hook phrase.” The hook phrase was the first text the audience saw in their story trailers. For example, Daniel read the novel Tangerine, about a soccer star who was blind. His “hook phrase” was “No sight, all skills!”

During the next session, the students added the setting, genre, and theme to their trailer. The students were asked to close their eyes and visualize where their novels took place. After the students had their mental images, they were then sent in search of images to match what each one visualized. Two students in the class read the same book. It was interesting to see the different visual interpretations of these students.

In the following session, the students were asked to think about the mood or feeling of the book. Without talking, the students accessed the paint program and drew a picture that showed their understanding of the mood in the video. The students then shared these images with the class. The students were then able to embed their own picture into the story trailers or find a similar picture that illustrated the mood of the novel. They also started adding the conflict and resolution. In an interview, I asked the students about their experiences using the Animoto technology and how it helped them comprehend the story more effectively. I also asked the
students about what motivates them to learn and what types of learning techniques are the most successful for them.

**Quality and Credibility of Research**

In doing this research, it was essential to guarantee the quality and credibility of the study. Mills (2007) defines credibility as the researcher’s ability to take into account the complications that transpire during a study and to deal with patterns that may be difficult to explain. To help ensure credibility during this study, I employed multiple methods. I did persistent observation during four consecutive sessions to identify qualities as well as atypical characteristics witnessed during the study (Mills 2007). My data was triangulated in this study. Triangulation occurs when the researcher compares a variety of data sources and different methods with one another in order to crosscheck the data (Mills, 2007). I collected data using multiple approaches, including observing the students and being a passive participant in my work with them. In addition, I conducted follow up interviews with the students, asking them about what they learned about the elements of a story by using the Animoto video. Lastly, I had student work to show the process the students went through in creating their story trailers.

I also ensured transferability during my research. Transferability refers to a researcher’s belief that everything that is studied is context bound. Researchers should not develop statements that can be generalized to larger groups of people (Mills, 2007). Here, I collected detailed and descriptive data that is specific to the study. The data allowed for comparisons to be made between field notes, observations, and student work. It will also be important to develop these descriptions in order for judgments to be made with other pieces of information.
Dependability, which refers to the stability of the data, was also important to ensure during the study (Mills, 2007). I made sure my data was triangulated and used multiple methods to ensure a strong outcome when comparing the weakness of one is compensated by the strength of another (Mills, 2007). Another strategy to ensure dependability is to establish an “audit trail” (Mills, 2007, p. 105). During this project, my critical colleague examined the process of my data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Finally, I guaranteed confirmability during my research. Mills (2007) defines confirmability as the neutrality of objectivity of the data that has been collected. The triangulation process where I compared a variety of methods in the study helped ensure confirmability because the methods were compared to one another while crosschecking the data. I also practiced reflexivity, where I continued to refer back to my research question, and compared it to the results I found. Making reflections each time I observed and collected data helped me to reflect on these areas.

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

Before beginning the research, I gathered informed consent and protected the rights of the participants. An assent form was given to the students who were discussed in the study. I asked for the students’ permission and signatures to confirm authorization to perform research. In addition, I also gave the parents/guardians a consent form that explained the purpose of the study to ask them for their permission and signatures. These forms allowed me to work with his/her child. I also gave a consent form to the reading teacher I observed. All of the participants and their parents were aware that all names were assigned pseudonyms and all names were removed from the artifacts created during the study. Confidentiality was assured.
Data Collection

There were multiple forms of data collected. I performed passive observations in the reading lab with eight students. My observations provided understanding of the process and outcomes the students came to while creating their Animoto videos. The field notes were also helpful in assessing the findings of the study by being analyzed and categorized. Following the study, I interviewed four students to discuss their experiences of creating the piece of technology as well as their understanding of the text that was read. I also interviewed the Reading teacher to discuss her views on using technology in the classroom. She summarized her reflection of the project, and how she motivated kids in her reading class. Lastly, I collected students’ videos for review and analysis of the different literary elements.

Data Analysis

A collection of qualitative data was gathered for analysis. This data included teacher interviews, field notes, and student work samples. Because my primary data sources were field notes and interviews, I first read and reread both sets of documents. As I identified patterns within my records, I generated codes to group the patterns together. Categories of data were organized based on reoccurring findings from student questionnaires, personal interviews and interactions with the teacher, field notes that were taken on days of observation, and student work samples that were gathered at the completion of the project. These categories were as followed: comprehension, student choice, motivation, engagement, peer collaboration, questioning, making connections, and using technology. I then coded my data according to the patterns that I identified and grouped the codes into themes. I recognized three common themes with regards to how the use of technology influenced in struggling readers. An increase in
motivation and engagement was a result of the students being able to choose their books as well as being allowed the freedom to be their own creators. These categories therefore, were formed into the following theme: Increasing motivation through student choice. Making connections and questioning through peer collaboration are evidence of comprehension. The students used the Animoto video technology to improve these comprehension skills. This second grouping of categories presented the following theme of: Developing comprehension through technology. The data also indicated an increase in engagement and motivation through the use of technology to complete the projects. The third grouping of categories established the following theme of: Building motivation and engagement through technology.

Findings and Discussion

After reviewing and analyzing my data collected, three major themes emerged. These three themes were the following: Increasing motivation through student choice, Building motivation and engagement through technology, and Developing comprehension through technology. Through analysis of the data sources I collected, I recognized three common themes with regards to how the use of technology has influenced comprehension in struggling readers.

Increasing motivation through student choice

The first theme that emerged from the data was increasing motivation through student choice. Giving students options and freedom to make their own decisions was an important motivator in this study. There was a noticeable shift in motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic. Before the project was introduced the students appeared bored and disconnected from learning. This behavior was evident when students were observed coming to class late, putting their heads down on the desks, and complaining to their teacher that they were doing the same activities day
in and day out. Throughout the project, there was a clear indication that the students were motivated when they were given the freedom of choice and the ability to investigate their own learning. Mrs. Scott also emphasizes in her interview that her students “become investigators especially on topics of interest” (Personal interview, June, 2010). She adds that, “Although many of them have problems focusing, they work well when they are given a task that allows them freedom of choice and the opportunity to work together. When I am constantly choosing the activities and text we read, they become uninterested and their only motivation is to get the assignment completed for a grade” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). This research aligns with findings by Ivey and Broaddus (2001) who found that many students are reluctant readers because what they want to read and what the school requires are not in conjunction with each other. The teacher also expressed that the “Students engagement in reading lab increases when they are able to choose an activity or a text to read” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). She states, “My students will say, “Can I pick Manga?” or “Do you have any books about horses? My sister just got one, and I want to know how to take care of them” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). It can be concluded from these observations that although many teachers may believe students are unmotivated and disinterested in participating in academics, these students have many interests and are looking for the opportunity to explore and engage in them.

Similarly, evidence from the student survey as well as comments made during my observations indicated students’ motivation towards reading increased when they were given the opportunity to select a text. One student commented, “I like reading when I can pick what I read” (Student Questionnaire, June, 2010). Another said, “I wish teachers would let us pick books we wanted to read in class. I get bored reading the ones that they make us read” (Student Questionnaire, June, 2010). These statements concur with what Hammon (2004) suggests that
the shift from an elementary to a middle school classroom often times moves from student centered to teacher centered. Many times middle school teachers are choosing books to read to prepare for tests or because it is required in the curriculum. Students in elementary classrooms are given more freedom to explore many different genres at their reading levels. Hammon (2004) argues that a teacher must have some understanding of the needs of middle school students when making decisions about instructional practices. Another student commented, “I guess I would feel more excited if I could pick my book and didn’t have to read so much” (Student Questionnaire, June, 2010). It is clear from this statement that the students are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of reading because it may not be a topic of interest. If students were able to select texts that appealed to them, they may not be as concerned with the amount of reading they were doing. This finding also shows that student choice is an important strategy for motivating and engaging students in the classroom. This evidence aligns with Gurthie and Davis (2003) when they argue that if students don’t hold interest and do not value reading, they will continue being unmotivated. Teachers may underestimate the power of student choice. This lack of realization is evident in a comment made by Mrs. Scott following the conclusion of the project: “I think I get so concentrated on choosing activities that are going to improve their reading abilities when really all they want is to be in control and have some options, I forget that sometimes” (Personal interaction, June, 2010). Allowing the students to choose a book of interest will increase motivation. These findings align with Ivey and Broaddus’s (2001) conclusion that students are expected to know how to read a wide range of texts, yet in school they are mostly limited to teacher-selected reading materials.
Another important theme that came from the data was increase in motivation and engagement through the use of technology. As expressed by the teacher, “My students are highly engaged and motivated when they are given the opportunity to be on computers.” (Personal Interview, June, 2010) As one student commented in one survey, “I wish our teachers would let us use the computer more. It is the only way I learn” (field notes, June, 2010). It is also important to note that the same students that said they learned better by using the computer are the same students who said they only use the computer 1-2 times a week in their classes. Mrs. Scott also commented, “My students are most enchanted with learning when they are in front of a computer” (Personal interview, June, 2010). Providing access to technology is allowing students the opportunity to learn in different ways. It was observed that students were able to navigate and form ideas much more quickly with the use of technology. With the background knowledge and enthusiasm for computers, the students were able to successfully analyze the content of their books by designing the videos. I observed the students’ abilities to connect the Animoto program to their text. Interest in the program influenced their ability to stay on task and accomplish a goal. The teacher commented that the students could teach her way more than she already knows about technology and said, “I am shocked at the shift in attention and skill level from a paper and pencil activity at our small table in comparison to an activity involving the use of technology. Their knowledge far surpasses mine” (Personal Interview, June, 2010).

Mrs. Scott later explains, that in addition to building on the strengths of her students, this project aims to help focus and engage them. She hopes to witness a shift in motivation and
attitude from her students (Personal Interview, June, 2010). Evidence from my field notes reveal immediate engagement when the students were told they would be creating the Animoto videos using the independent reading books that they had chosen. One student said, “Yes! My book was so good; it’ll be an awesome video!” Another comments, “So we aren’t just going to talk about it like we usual do?” (Field notes, June, 2010). These findings show engagement for the task and also the monotony of previous classroom activities. These students obviously have the potential to be engaged and motivated with tasks that hold their interest and allow for different ways of learning and interacting. The shift in attitude Mrs. Scott previously referred to was apparent when she first told the students that they were doing an end of the year project; they were slumped in their seats and the classroom was filled with disapproving groans. She made them sit up while she explained that they would be creating a video on the computer. A few students simultaneously shouted, “Sweet!” (Field notes, June, 2010). The teacher further explained that they would be creating a book trailer (similar to a movie trailer) to introduce their book to the class. The book trailers will be designed on a website called animoto.com. One student immediately raced to the computer while two others high-fived each other and most of the rest of the class was smiling. These findings suggest the students’ enthusiasm for technology. These struggling readers who are typically unmotivated by the standard activities that their teacher presents to them, are now up and out of their seats; excited to get started and learn. These results not only show the need for students to be using multimodal resources in the classroom but also the importance for teachers to allow the students the options to explore different forms of learning to be successful. These findings align with Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) and their argument that engagement is related to achievement and persistence in a task. In order to be engaged in a task there needs to be mixture of interest, value, and influence.
Soon after Mrs. Scott explained that they needed to incorporate the different story elements into their videos, the classroom was filled with chatter. The students were frantically logging on to animoto.com while finding out about each other’s books. Once they were logged onto the website, the students were exploring the site. One student commented, “Did you see that you can add your own pictures?” Another said, “Cool, you can add music!” (Field notes, June, 2010). Over the course of my observations, students shifted engagement from coming late to class and seemingly unhappy, to running into the classroom and getting right to work. Students would gather around their peers’ computers to find out what part of the site they were on and if they found something the others might have missed. This parallels with what Mrs. Scott said about the students having a “constant need for peer interactions.” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). This finding aligns with Larson and Marsh (2005) and their view of literacy as a social practice, which is fostered in the interaction between people.

Developing Comprehension through Technology

In addition to technology being excellent motivation tool and source engagement for students who have tuned out in the classroom, teachers can also use technology as an instructional tool. As expressed by Mrs. Scott in the interview, her students “Struggle with comprehending text” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). She goes on to say, “Many of my students also have difficulty following a story and often times cannot recall different events in a text” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). Mrs. Scott chose to have the students create these videos for the end of the year project because the task is asking them to recall specific story elements: mood, genre, setting, conflict, protagonist, antagonist, etc. According to Mrs. Scott, these are “Parts of a story they have struggled with throughout the year” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). Mrs. Scott states, “Because my students are visual learners the option to import images is an
added perk to using the Animoto video site to increase their comprehension” (Personal Interview, June, 2010). The Animoto video was effective in providing the option of importing pictures that were available on the site and also allowing the students to upload their own pictures. She feels this project will help build on the students strengths while helping to improve weaker literacy skills such as comprehension (Personal Interview, June, 2010). Mrs. Scott has created this project because her students have a background knowledge and enthusiasm for technology. She will capitalize on these skills. Because her students are visual learners, her goal is for her students to be able to improve comprehension by visually connecting their text onto the screen for the audience.

Findings from my field notes and student surveys and discussions have indicated evidence of improved comprehension by making connections between the project and their text. To get them started, the teacher provided them with a graphic organizer to guide them through the production process. As observed throughout the project, the students were constantly referring back to their graphic organizers to make sure they had incorporated all the story elements that were required. This evidence is important because they are taking ownership and responsibility for the learning. This data shows the students were investing in the project by making it their own. They were organized because the task was important to them. The students were using the graphic organizer to assist them through each element of the story. The graphic organizer allowed them to self-monitor each part of the project, increasing comprehension. As observation progressed, mini groups of two to three students were forming around the computers to discuss their books. Some comments I heard were the following: “Well, my book was about a guy with a disease, but he never gave up and still worked hard” (Field notes, June, 2010). And “My book is about a boy who was blind but was a soccer star so I think the theme of my book is
determination” (Field notes, June, 2010). This statement shows not only an understanding of the text but also the students’ ability to make connections between visual images they found in the Animoto program and characters and events in their books. One student commented, “My song is going to be slow and deep like my character!” (Field notes, June, 2010). Another student said, “My character had to overcome his disease, I’m going to find a picture of a guy climbing a mountain!” (Field notes, June, 2010). Many of the students found pictures of themes and events from their stories and would then look them up on Google to learn more about them. These findings align with Schmakel’s (2008) conclusion that by incorporating technology and allowing students to use of multimodal activities, teachers can help to engage and allow students to be in control of their own learning.

The students demonstrated their abilities to make connections between the images they imported and the text they were going to write to describe the image. One student commented to another, “Look, I have a picture of a kid with a soccer ball, I’m going to write, “Boy with no sight, overcomes it all” (Field notes, June, 2010). Another student states, “I found a picture of the character’s disease, the caption is going to say, “How would you beat this?” (Field notes, June, 2010). These statements show the student’s ability to transfer knowledge about the character to the select the appropriate visual image to be accurately portrayed to the audience. The first student understands that even though the character is blind he becomes a soccer star. This statement also shows the students ability to provoke questions to the audience. The audience may question for example, “What is this boy overcoming? I want to read and find out!” The second student investigates his character’s disease and makes a connection between the text and a visual representation; this again, reels in the audience to ask questions. This aligns with Freebody and Luke’s (1990) arguments on critical readers and writers.
Another important finding was the ability of the students' comprehension to lead to questioning. During my observations, students were continually questioning one another’s books as well as the text in the videos. They began asking questions that led them to understand each other’s books. After viewing each others videos one student commented, “Yours is really cool, is your story about a sick guy?” “Does he die?” (Field notes, June, 2010) Another said, “Yours is awesome! It makes me want read your book and I don’t even like those kinds of books!” (Field notes, June, 2010). One student survey revealed, “Making the videos taught me more about my book than I thought. It made me want to read and do the project” (Student survey, June, 2010). One student commented, “I learned how to get information out of my book and kept asking questions to learn even more” (Student Survey, June, 2010). The students were able to comprehend their books as well as form questions for future research. As seen in my observations, the students developed the ability to revisit sections in their books to be sure that they were putting the correct information into their videos. Revisiting the text then helped to strengthen their visual images and text that was added to the videos. The students would go back to sections in their books and then look up additional information online. Without realizing it, they were the ones doing the work and increasing their knowledge. These students were going back to analyze, question, and then research, and were engaged and motivated to complete the task.

Finally, technology helped to develop students’ comprehension skills simply through the process of completing the video projects. Mrs. Scott commented, “My students feel important when they have a job to do. When they are engaged in a task it becomes important to them to be active members in the classroom.” (Personal interview, June, 2010). Being the creators of the videos made them feel important. The students were becoming the teachers. This finding is
evident in a comment made by McKenna, “I think I could tell everyone about muck farms now.” (Field notes, June, 2010). Jade also commented, “I didn’t know that Lou Gerhig’s Disease breaks down your insides, did you also know that some people start to twitch?” (Field notes, June, 2010). This finding is especially important because the true test of comprehension is the ability to teach a new skill or concept to another person. Students were also investigators of others video projects. They wanted to know more about one another’s books before the videos were even complete. This finding shows the importance of using technology to build knowledge and obtain a deeper understanding of a topic.

**Implications and Conclusions**

The findings from this research project gives teachers an insight into the ways in which struggling readers view reading and their abilities as well as the success of using technology to strengthen comprehension of a story. I have also found that the use of technology increased motivation and engagement in students. The results of this study will be used to improve classroom practices.

As observed in beginning of this study, the reading teacher struggled to motivate and invest her students in any classroom instruction. Based on the research and findings of this study, these struggling readers were highly motivated and engage when they were given a choice of not only text but also the freedom to create their own book trailers. Since the students were motivated, they were excited to come to class and get to work.

The task of creating the book trailers also showed an increase in comprehension as the students told a story to communicate to their peers the meaning of the text. The students’ selection of words and images enabled them to construct their own interpretations for their
CONTENT CREATION WITH STRUGGLING READERS

The value of this experience for these students was evident in not only the quality of work that was produced but also the learning that took place. For example, Fritz was able to explain to another student about Lou Gerhig’s disease, which prompted an exchange of information between the students. These students showed they could successfully analyze text to be shared with their peers.

Furthermore, the use of technology also increased enthusiasm and collaborations among the students. As both my literature and findings suggest, peer collaborations and discussion and the use of multimodality in teaching are ways that can foster intrinsic reading motivation among students. The student interviews showed that the students possessed a shared interest and prior knowledge of technology. These students revealed that they were more confident in themselves as readers when they were using a computer. Although they had never used Animoto video, the students were active participants and worked hard to create something they were proud to share with their classmates. The exploration of animoto video provided a platform for discussion and peer collaborations. As sociocultural-historical theory maintains, social interaction among students is key, as students’ literacy skills are formed through such experiences (Larson & Marsh, 2005). In addition to forming one’s literacy skills, socializing with others also exposes students to others perspectives regarding reading and literacy practices (Larson & Marsh, 2005). These findings as well as my research help to make it clear that students need the opportunity to be actively engaging with their peers. In my classroom, I will provide ample opportunity for collaboration, as this will be important in building literacy skills and confidence in students.

If I were to investigate this topic further, there are other questions that have come up within my own research which I feel may have limited my study. Due to the time restraint of it being the end of the year, the students didn’t have a sufficient amount of time to present and
explain their videos at the end. The students all presented in one class period. Given more time, I would have liked to see the students discuss the process of making the videos and what they took away from the project. I would have also liked to do a follow up interview with the teacher to discuss her thoughts about the outcome of the project and how she will use technology in the future to improve literacy skills. Furthermore, it would also be important to investigate other ways in which teachers can use technology with struggling readers to improve other areas of literacy through content area classes.

Finally, after considering all of the implications that my research brings to mind, I am left with a few additional unanswered questions for myself, as well as for other teachers. First, what others ways can teachers help to motivate students? If students in middle school are extrinsically motivated by grades and competition with their peers, what are some other strategies besides the ones presented here that teachers can use for engaging these struggling readers? A second question that arises is what else can teachers do to build struggling readers’ confidence? As Hall (2005) argues the importance of student confidence and the way they view themselves as competent and capable readers. If students do not possess these beliefs about themselves, it is likely that they will either never develop the desire to read, or they will ultimately lose any motivation to read. A third question that comes to mind is what can teachers do in the upper elementary years through the high school level to help motivate students who lack reading motivation? It is clear that the primary years of schooling are crucial to building our students’ confidence levels and instilling an intrinsic desire to read in our students. What can be done if student confidence is shattered at the primary level and it is never built back to where it was? Also what extra steps do teachers need to take with students who have gone through years of schooling with low-self esteem and self-efficacy and who have lost the motivation to read? In
CONTENT CREATION WITH STRUGGLING READERS

this study most of the students struggled with comprehension and a lack of self-confidence as readers. It was found that the use of technology, students’ views in themselves as readers, and their comprehension of the story were evident through their presentations. The last question that arose was what are other ways teachers can use technology to help struggling readers improve literacy skills?

Many struggling readers in middle school are disengaged from reading. Many factors contribute to disengagement in middle school. Reading is often an overwhelming task for students making reading instruction detached from other content areas. Middle school often shows an increase of teacher control and a decrease in student freedom in comparison to elementary school. Guthrie and Davis (2003) state that by using real world and personal interaction to connect students to reading, providing students with a large quantity of interesting books while allowing them choice, freedom, and encouraging peer collaboration in different aspects there will be engagement in literacy learning. Teachers can incorporate technology and other multimodal forms of literacy in the hopes to enhance their literacy skills. Content that is uninteresting and/or difficult to understand may complicate the struggle for students to become proficient and engaged readers and writers, without appropriate instruction. By allowing the students to choose their reading materials and providing an opportunity for struggling readers to be creators of their own content, it will help to boost their self esteem and motivation towards reading. With the important idea that one size doesn’t fit all, it is important for teachers to use many modes or instruction. Similar to the findings in this study, many students are disenchanted with the thought of reading a teacher-selected book followed by a question and answer session. If students need to be engaged and motivated in order to learn and improve their literacy skills then why are many teachers reluctantly embracing the shift in education?
As educators it is our job to foster a love of reading and learning as well as intrinsic motivation in order for our students to be successful. Students who aren’t interested and do not see the value in reading, will continue to be unmotivated (Gurthie & Davis, 2003). The findings from this study and research conclude that choosing and allowing the students to choose texts that interest them is a powerful motivator. It is also important to conclude that the use of hands on activities and technologies will also aid the students to take control of their learning and become engaged and motivated. Teachers need to allow their classrooms to be places where students are able to be in the drivers seat and made to feel that they can investigate their own interests and learning. This freedom will provide success in the classroom and help our students to become responsible, focused, individuals.
References


Appendix

1. How do you feel about yourself as a reader?

2. What do you struggle with in reading?

3. What did you like about doing your Animoto Video Project?

4. What did you learn from using Animoto?

5. What are some difficulties you had when using Animoto?

6. Have you used Animoto before doing this project?
7. About how many days a week do you use the computer in your classes?

8. Which class do you use the computer the most?

9. Rank in order of interest: 1 being you enjoy it the most and 5 being your least favorite.

   Working in a group: _______

   Using technology: _______

   Lecture: _______

   Discussion: _______

   Alone: _______