

Hamline University

DigitalCommons@Hamline

---

School of Education Student Capstone Projects

School of Education

---

Fall 2018

## A 21st Century Approach to Developing Engaged Writers in a Second Grade Classroom

BekkiRae House  
*Hamline University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_cp](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

House, BekkiRae, "A 21st Century Approach to Developing Engaged Writers in a Second Grade Classroom" (2018). *School of Education Student Capstone Projects*. 254.  
[https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse\\_cp/254](https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp/254)

This Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Education at DigitalCommons@Hamline. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Education Student Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Hamline. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@hamline.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@hamline.edu), [wstraub01@hamline.edu](mailto:wstraub01@hamline.edu), [modea02@hamline.edu](mailto:modea02@hamline.edu).

A 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ENGAGED WRITERS IN A  
SECOND GRADE CLASSROOM

By

BekkiRae L. House

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

December 2018

Primary Advisor: Trish Harvey

Content Expert: Lori Eckert

Peer Editors: Katie Coulson, Courtney Loynachan, Leticia Stabrino

To my family for your continuous encouragement and support. Thank you Trish, Susan and Lori for your guidance and patience in helping me complete this project. Special thanks to my present and former students who helped shape me into the teacher I am today.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....         | 6  |
| Overview.....                          | 6  |
| Background of the Researcher.....      | 7  |
| Writing as an Outlet.....              | 8  |
| Writing Over the Years.....            | 8  |
| Intentions.....                        | 9  |
| Meeting Academic Standards.....        | 10 |
| Summary.....                           | 11 |
| Chapter Overview.....                  | 11 |
| CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review.....    | 13 |
| Introduction.....                      | 13 |
| Theory.....                            | 14 |
| Constructivism.....                    | 14 |
| Cooperative Learning.....              | 16 |
| Social Learning Theory.....            | 18 |
| Fundamental Skills.....                | 19 |
| State Standards.....                   | 19 |
| Writer’s Workshop.....                 | 21 |
| Peer Review.....                       | 26 |
| Benefits of Using Peer Review.....     | 27 |
| Challenges Faced with Peer Review..... | 29 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Digital Technology in the Classroom.....                               | 31 |
| Using Technology in the Classroom to Motivate and Engage Learners..... | 31 |
| Importance of Teaching 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills.....            | 33 |
| Seesaw.....  | 33 |
| Why I Chose to Research This Topic.....                                | 35 |
| Summary.....   | 36 |
| Chapter Overview.....  | 37 |
| CHAPTER THREE: Methodology.....  | 38 |
| Introduction.....  | 38 |
| Research Paradigm.....   | 38 |
| Setting.....   | 39 |
| Participants.....  | 40 |
| Project Descriptions.....  | 41 |
| Project Assessment.....  | 42 |
| Project Assessment: Student Attitude Inventory.....                    | 42 |
| Project Assessment: Anecdotal Notes.....                               | 43 |
| Project Assessment: Rubrics.....                                       | 43 |
| Project Timeline.....  | 43 |
| Summary.....   | 44 |
| Chapter Overview.....  | 44 |
| CHAPTER FOUR: Project Conclusion.....                                  | 46 |
| Introduction and Overview.....   | 46 |
| New Learning.....  | 46 |

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Revisiting the Literature.....                    | 48 |
| Implications of my Project.....                   | 50 |
| Limitations of my Project.....                    | 49 |
| Where Do We Go from Here.....                     | 51 |
| Communicating Results.....                        | 52 |
| How My Project Benefits Others.....               | 52 |
| Summary of Chapter Four.....                      | 53 |
| Conclusions of Writer’s Workshop with Seesaw..... | 54 |
| Appendix A.....                                   | 58 |

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Overview

Writing is a personal journey. It connects us to literature, to other people, to the world around us, and to our own emotions. Writing develops us as readers and improves our communication and comprehension skills. Yet, I find so many students who are not interested in writing and a significant amount who lack the foundational skills needed to become an effective writer. I am hoping to change this by answering the question: *How do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?*

On any given day in my second grade classroom, I will hear the moans and groans when I post the rotations for our small groups. So many of my students do not enjoy writing in any way, shape or form. I would even go as far to say that they appear to fear writing. Writing causes them anxiety. Countless students worry about their spelling and just struggle with getting the assignment started. If and when they manage to put something on paper, I find they do not use capital letters, punctuation, and/or spacing appropriately. Here are some quotes from my second grade writers: “Mrs. House, I don’t know what to write,” “Mrs. House, I don’t want to write;” “Mrs. House, is this okay?” “Mrs. House, did I do this right?” “Mrs. House, how to you spell \_\_\_?” Imagine these comments in frustrated and frantic sounding little voices. If you can do that, then you can understand my struggle with writing in my second grade classroom.

Another observation during small group rotations in our literacy block, is the fact that the students who are working with the iPads are always excited. I hear cheers when they see their group listed in the iPad column of our small group rotations. I hear things like,

“Yay! It’s our turn with the iPads,” and a simple yet enthusiastic sounding, “Yes!” There is no doubt my students are 21st Century learners. Whenever I can put technology into their hands, their level of engagement goes up, along with their excitement about the work they need to complete.

These observations led me to the question-*how do I transfer their love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?*

Within this chapter I will review my educational background, including my experiences with writing and technology. Then I will discuss the role iPads can play in the writing process using an app called Seesaw.

### **Background of the Researcher**

Currently, I work as a second grade teacher in a Central Minnesota classroom. Before becoming a second grade teacher, I worked for four years as a Reading Specialist. Two of these years I worked full-time in the same school district, and the first two years I worked part-time for a different school district in central Minnesota. As a reading teacher, I was able to work with students one-on-one or in small groups of three or less. I loved the attention I could give these students with their reading and writing skills. Holding a position as a reading teacher offered me the opportunity to grow my skills in literacy instruction. As a second grade teacher I find myself often wishing I could have the time to work with my students one-on-one to improve their writing skills. So many of them would benefit from individualized instruction.

My own personal education journey has brought me down the path to a Master’s degree in Literacy. Before beginning this adventure, I completed my Undergraduate degree in early childhood education from Southwest Minnesota State in May 2011.



Shortly after graduation I applied to Hamline University where I took the courses to complete a K-12 reading license.

**Writing as an outlet.** Writing has always been something I enjoy doing. Growing up I found myself writing poetry and journaling about my life. I believe it helped shaped me into the person I am today. Being a teenager is not always an easy time in our lives, and having the skills to write about my experiences gave me an outlet for my emotions. In turn, I grew as a writer and as a person. I was able to make connections to my world around me, communicate my emotions, and process my life.

I do not believe writing has always been easy for me. In fact, in my early years of school I struggled to just write letters. To this day my handwriting is not the neatest. I do not have what people like to refer to as “teacher handwriting.” My writing struggles also included getting ideas out on paper, spelling words correctly, and how to use punctuation. Even today as a teacher I sometimes second guess when putting thoughts onto paper. I know having this background as a writer helped me connect with and understand my struggling writers.

When I was in the seventh grade I began to write poems. I think the thing I liked best about poetry was the ability to write freely. Poems come in all sizes and layouts. There is not one formula needed to express yourself. This freeness really spoke to me as a writer and led me toward enjoying other types of writing. I found that I started to write and comprehend more deeply in my English class. My grades and confidence greatly improved. So, when I finally made my way to college I was able to read and write on higher level.

**Writing over the years.** Growing up, writing first involved paper and pencil. I would

write, erase, and write again. This was followed by learning to use typewriters in upper elementary school, and finally learning with computers in middle school. Computers revolutionized the writing process for me. Gone were the messy marks on my paper from erasing, and the need to start a whole page over because I made a mistake while typing. Computers gave me freedom to write, type and edit on a new level. I now have the ability to use spell check and not worry if my writing is legible. My computer does all that for me. I also have access to iPads and iPhones where I can record my ideas simply by the push of a button, and I can speak my thoughts and have them saved for future use. I would say my means for writing has greatly expanded over the years along with my passion for writing.

### **Intentions for My Project**

The availability of technology is at the heart of my burning question. I know my students are capable of using technology on a higher level than I ever imagined at their age. I believe it can and will motivate them to become confident writers, who encourage their peers to become the same.

I have scoured the app store and held discussions with my colleagues, including our building media specialist, looking to find the most appropriate app to accomplish my goals of improving student engagement and building fundamental skills. I believe Seesaw is the way to go. Seesaw is a digital portfolio that empowers students to independently document their work and show others what they know ([www.seesaw.me](http://www.seesaw.me)). They may upload digital stories or take a quick snapshot of a handwritten story. Their stories can be organized into folders according to date or subject; however, the teacher may choose. A second feature is easy announcements and messaging. Once a student has added a writing

sample to a folder or their journal they can choose to message others to view their work.

I intend to have students work with one or two of their peers reviewing and reflecting on learning together. There is real significance in learning to work together in a peer review process. It not only motivates students; it empowers them to take charge of their own learning. In this practice of peer collaboration my students will become more reflective and engaged writers.

Within my own classroom, 12 out of 23 of my students are English Language (EL) learners. They are struggling to read, write, and comprehend on grade level. While using the app, students have an option to use Seesaw's built-in audio recording, drawing and caption tools to reflect or explain their suggestions for their peer's writing sample. I believe this will be an easy to use tool for students of all learning levels due to these built in features.

As mentioned in the overview, writers are readers and readers are writers. When my students improve their writing skills they will also improve their reading skills. This is very important in the building where I work. We have a high number of students not meeting proficiency on the MCA tests, and I know using Seesaw would develop the skills they need to perform better in the classroom, and on high-stakes testing.

### **Meeting Academic Standards**

According to the state standards in writing, my students should be able to do the following things by the end of second grade: write opinion pieces, narratives, informative/explanatory text ("Minnesota k-12 academic standards in english language art," 2010). Another standard discussed that second graders should be able to, with guidance from an adult, focus on a topic and strengthen writing by revising and editing.

Standard W.2.6.6.6 adds “that with support from an adult, second grade students should be able to use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers,” (“Minnesota k-12 academic standards in English language arts,” 2010). As I read these standards, I recognize just how much work lies ahead of me as I coach my students to become better writers.

### **Summary of chapter one**

It is evident that technology is here to stay, and students today should have ample opportunities to use it in the classroom. “Technology must be thought of as an integral component of curriculum,” (Strommen & Lincoln, 1992, p.469). I want to build on my second graders 21<sup>st</sup> century skills while improving their fundamental writing skills. I believe this can happen with the use of an app called Seesaw. Seesaw is a digital portfolio that allows students the opportunity to load digital text, take pictures of their written work, share it with others, and provide feedback on each other’s work. One feature that will really help my high population of EL students is the ability to record their own voice. Seesaw offers every student a voice. I am certain giving my students more time with an iPad will increase their engagement. They love to use them to read; now it is time to teach them to learn to use it as a tool for writing as well. I know there are many mediums out there to help students write digitally, but for this study I will focus on using Seesaw.

### **Chapter Overview**

In Chapter two, I will present the professional literature that connects to and supports my research question, beginning with theory. It will also contain a review of literature in order to provide background knowledge on the skills needed to be a successful writer in second grade. This will include state standards, writer’s workshop, and the nine rights of

every writer. I will discuss peer conferencing, digital writing, and how technology in the classroom motivates and engages students in the writing and learning process. Lastly, I will discuss the impact of these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for my students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

In chapter one I reflected on why I want my students to become more active and engaged in the writing process, and my desire to develop writing skills appropriate for their grade level, second grade. I retold my students worries about writing, and about their love of iPads and technology. Then I shared my own personal journey as a writer and my experience with technology, or lack of technology at some points of my life. I shared how writing is an outlet in my life, even though it has not always been easy for me. I wrote about my intentions; including how I will use Seesaw, a digital portfolio, as a source where my students will share their writing, peer review, and grow in their own skills. In the end of chapter one I included state standards in writing for second grade. It serves as a reference for reflecting on where my students are in their writing skills, and where I want to see them go. This has led me to pursue my essential question for my capstone, *How do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?*

The four main focus areas for chapter two are theories of fundamental writing skills, peer review, and how digital technology engages students in the classroom. Theory will involve constructivism, cooperative learning, social learning theory and how these theories both positively and negatively affect the outcome of digital writing and the peer review process. Fundamental skills are the skills required to be a successful writer in second grade. So, I will study these skills and how they impact the writing process. Also, I will examine past studies in Writer's Workshop, and how these studies can bring

success to my classroom. I will also reflect on the nine rights of every writer and how these rights build engagement and skills. In the peer review section, I will examine how peer-assisted learning is an effective tool in education, and what kinds of drawbacks there may be from this model. The ending section of chapter two will inform the reader on digital technology in the classroom. I will examine Seesaw; what it is, how it will motivate my students and help them build their writing skills. Will it be enough to support my question, or will I need to look at other forms of digital writing? I will also report on why it's important to teach my students 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and how these skills will engage and motivate students to achieve grade level benchmarks.

### **Theory**

In this section, I will take a look at constructivism, cooperative learning, and social learning theory because these theories involved students working together in the learning process. Just as my research question involved students learning to become engaged writers while working with peers. I will discuss what they are, and how they relate to the subject of writing in the classroom. I will look to understand how these theories interact positively and negatively with my question of using iPads to engage learners while increasing their own writing skills by working with other students, a peer or peers.

**Constructivism.** In *Lenses on Reading*, Tracey and Morrow (2006) explained constructivism as a theory of learning that emphasizes the active construction of knowledge by individuals, and views learning as a natural and ongoing state of mind. It states that children do not sit back and quietly absorb knowledge; instead, they learn by exploring. They take new information and use it to modify their current level of understanding. Although this theory discusses the knowledge of the individual student, it

can be connected to social groups and collaborative learning. This is a branch of constructivism known as social constructivism. Strommen & Lincoln, 1992, p. 468, share the idea when children collaborate they share the process of constructing their ideas, instead of being left to discover on their own. So, the advantage is that children are able to think more deeply not only about their ideas, but the on the ideas of other as well.

“Play and experimentation are powerful forces in development of the individual mind, but constructivism has led to the additional discovery that powerful gains are made when children work together” (Strommen & Lincoln, 1992, p. 468). My research question revolves around exploring technology, and working with peers. It brings the theory of constructivism into my research, and links together my idea that my students will learn when they are given the time to collaborate with peers.

***John Dewey.*** John Dewey is known to be one of the first American constructivists. His work has had a major impact on the American education system since the early 1900’s. In fact, his work and beliefs are still affecting education today.

Dewey believed that children’s education should not be viewed as students sitting passively absorbing information that is being spewed from a teacher, to be recalled later. Instead, he believed the student should be encouraged to, “operate as a member of a community, actively pursuing interests in cooperation with others” (As cited in Fields, 2018, p. 12). He felt this would encourage children to grow academically and prepare them to become productive members in society. It is this belief you see in classrooms today. There is an emphasis on the role of the environment, problem-based learning, and social collaboration (Tracy & Marrow, 2006). Students are being asked to actively



participate in group work or in partnerships to further their education and prepare them for real-world experiences.

**Cooperative learning.** Balkcom (1992) defined cooperative learning as “a successful, contemporary teaching practice in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, using a variety of learning activities to improve their own understanding of a subject” (p.1). Each member of the team is responsible not only for their own learning but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. The origins of cooperative learning can be traced to the work of social scientists, “It is the product of theoretical and applied research having evolved from 3 decades of scientific work in the fields of social relationships, group dynamics, learning, and instruction” (Antil, Jenkins, Wayne, & Vadasy, 1998, p. 420).

Many factors contribute to why cooperative learning has become so popular in our classrooms, from preschool through college. For example, we may face large gaps in the achievement levels of students in our classrooms. These gaps may be covered by working with a student or a group of students performing on a higher level through cooperative learning. Some other reasons cooperative learning is important include improved behavior and attendance, more self-confidence, higher levels of motivation, and building positive relationships. Antil et al. (1998) stated there are four major themes as to why teachers subscribe to cooperative learning: academic learning, active involvement, social learning, and experiences as learners. The next four paragraphs will closely examine these four themes.

**Academic learning.** Cooperative learning positively affects students’ academic learning. Students have their own language they speak to one another. Antil et al. (1998)

referred to their language as, “kid talk.” Through the use of “kid talk” students have a way of explaining things to each other in terms they can understand. Through this conversation between students learning takes place when one child hears another’s explanation. Comprehension and knowledge increase, and the general overall speed of learning is accelerated.

***Active involvement.*** Antil et al. (1998) stated, “71% of teachers surveyed told us that cooperative learning is beneficial because it results in broader student participation in lessons as a result of being permitted to work together” (p. 425). Students are more likely to retain information when working with peers. Also, they are more involved because they are not just sitting listening to a teacher, they are doing something that encourages them to actively take part in their learning.

***Social learning.*** As with active involvement, 71% of teachers surveyed believe that students who learn through cooperative learning also learn to cooperate with others and value that cooperation (Antil et al., 1998). The teachers surveyed mentioned their students showed better listening and responding skills, acted more respectfully toward peers, and were more likely to work with a nonpreferred classmate. These are skills required in the real world. Many people today are required to work in groups, and be a part of a team. Students who have these skills will become more effective members in our society.

***Experiences as learners.*** In the survey by Antil, Jenkins, Wayne, and Vadasy, (1998) 38% of teachers reported positive experiences for learners who take part in activities using cooperative learning. One reason for the positive feedback is students become involved in a community that is always asking questions. This leads to a safe place for

students to ask questions, and within this safe place students who may normally fear having a stupid question are more likely to not feel that way and ask. A second reason teachers reported positive feedback is the end products are better when students worked together versus working alone. This shows there is real power in students combining their skills and talents to create a project, or in my case, build writing skills.

**Social learning theory.** Research by Gagne and Middlebrooks (1977) described social learning theory as a theory that is based on the premise that much of learning taking place by people occurs through the observation of another human who serves as a model to the learner. This definition involves students learning from a model. In our world, children come in contact with many people who serve as a model to them. This would include parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, classmates, even characters on their favorite television shows.

**Albert Bandura.** Albert Bandura developed the social learning theory. He argued that people learn from observing others. We learn from their mistakes, successes, efforts, and styles (Tracey and Morrow, 2006). Bandura (2006) wrote about four stages to observational learning (p. 111). In these stages he outlined how the learner learns by observing others. The first phase is the attentional phase. This is the phase where students learn from watching a model. In the case of my research question, this involves the students first watching me as model and then seeing their peers as the model. The second phase is the retention phase. In this phase, students remember the modeled behavior. Phase three is the reproduction phase. This is the ability to repeat the behavior the model just demonstrated. This is where the students take over and become models for one another in the writing process. Lastly, the reinforcement phase is where the student

receives rewards or reprimands for the repeated behavior. This phase is important because they are more likely to repeat and internalize the behavior if they are rewarded.

### **Summary**

In this section of my research I dove into the theory behind my project. First, I discussed constructivism and John Dewey, where I learned students who work collaboratively learn from one another. Next, I discussed cooperative learning and how students work together in groups, each having something to contribute to the learning process. Lastly, this section covers social learning theory and Bandura. Bandura believed people learn from watching those around them do the task that needs to be completed. The theory discussed leads into the idea of my research question. It tells me that my students will learn when they have the opportunity to explore and work with their peers. In the next section of my paper will I discuss the fundamental skills necessary to be a successful second grade writer. I will address the state standards and their limitations, the basic framework for writer's workshop, and how to build a community of writers.

### **Fundamental Skills**

Dictionary.com defines fundamental as, "serving as, or being an essential part of, a foundation or basis; basic; underlying." Therefore, the fundamental skills for writing would be the set of basic skills a student needs in order to become a successful writer in second grade. In this section of my literature review. I examined the state standards for writing in second grade, look at the basic framework for writer's workshop, and explored the nine rights of every writer.

**State standards.** The standards and benchmarks are important for three main reasons. First, they identify the knowledge and skills that all students must achieve by the

end of a grade level. For my project, this involves examining the writing standards related to second grade. It is important for my project because it serves as a key to where my students are and where they need to be at the end of the school year. Second, they help define the pathway for course credit requirements for graduation. Third, they serve as a guide for local adoption and design of curricula. My project is designing curriculum so knowing the second-grade requirements helped me develop a unit that is appropriate for my current grade level.

The following standards are listed as required to be met by the end of second grade, and can be found directly on the Department of Education website (<https://education.mn.gov/MDE/index.html>). They offer a focus for teachers to ensure students are on track for mastering the skills needed to be a successful grade level writer. Also, this list will inform the teacher of areas of concern as a student is progressing and developing as a writer. The list is broken down into three categories; Text Types and Purposes, Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing, and Research to Build and Present Knowledge. The complete list of writing standards is provided in Appendix A.

All English Language Arts (ELA) standards, including reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, media literacy and language are assessed at the classroom level by the teacher-and through district-selected assessments (Department of Education, 2010). Students who are meeting the standards are more likely to be prepared for work both inside and outside the classroom. They are engaged 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. It is important to note that students are expected to meet each year's grade level standards, while retaining information and skills mastered in previous grades.

***Limitations of the standards.*** When studying the academic standards, it is important to also consider the limitations involved. The Minnesota Department of Education (2010) recognizes that there are limitations to the standards. This begins with the fact that standards cannot stand on their own. Instead, they must be accompanied by well-developed, content-rich curriculum. In other words, the standards outline what students should learn, but do not suggest how teachers should teach them. The standards also do not recognize the advanced work for students who achieve the requirements prior to the end of high school graduation. In the case of my research, the second grade standards will not guide my project when students have mastered second grade skills. It may require the need to look ahead to third grade standards and find ways to challenge student learning. As read on the Minnesota Department of Education webpage (2010), “This goes along with the idea that the standards do not define intervention methods or materials to support students who are well above or well below grade level”.

**Writers workshop.** “A great many teachers who want to involve their students in daily, self-sponsored writing workshops have questions about the value of this type of writing period” (Freedman, 1995, p. 97). It is a commitment of time, and time is a valuable resource in our classrooms today. Routines and rituals need to be carefully planned, and thoughtfully followed by teacher and students.

***Routines and Rituals for writer’s workshop.*** Each workshop session begins with a brief mini-lesson. A lesson that is centered around a concept, skill, procedure, or issue relevant to the students. After the mini-lesson, students engage in the writing process while the teacher focuses on conferencing with students for revision, editing, and publishing. At this point, students are free to interact with their peers. They may work on

their own, work in pairs, or in a larger group if desired. Freedman (1995) described the writing period as a time when, “Students use dramatic play, informal dialogue and talk, and peer conferencing, which includes lots of reading, sharing, and rereading texts” (p. 97). Students have the option to work on one piece of writing as long as they wish and will move freely from one piece of writing to another. At the end of each writer’s workshop, the class will take part in an author’s chair. It provides the opportunity for students to share their creativity, and provides an audience that delivers feedback and commentary.

***Building a community of writers.*** Thomas (2007) put together a series of videos discussing writer’s workshop and how to best implement it in a classroom. In the first video she walks the viewer through the steps of creating a “community of writers.” Thomas (2007) wrote, “First of all, the students need a very structured place created with love, trust, and risk taking. It should be safe, and a place where every student has a voice.” A safe environment is a place where writers feel they can write about what matters to them, and they can speak without being criticized. Everyone is willing to share with each other, not just with friends. The writers share experiences that bridge the gap between them. In order to ensure all voices are heard, teachers need to structure writer’s workshop to include opportunities for conversation. Thomas (2007) added, “Another key to building a community of writers is to develop a space where students can go to meet and sit and talk about what’s going on with their writing.” This would include; what is challenging them, and what is celebratory? Students need time to reflect on learning. If they write and walk away without reflection they are less likely to retain the information being taught, or the skills they are developing. Lastly, the video stated, “To have a

community of writers, it means, first and foremost that you're all writing, adults & everybody who's there." (Thomas, 2007 episode 12). Teachers need to continue to write to develop their own skills, while inspiring their young writers to do the same.

**Nine rights of every writer.** Vicki Spandel is the author of *The 9 Rights of Every Writer*. In this text she tells us about teaching and assessing writing in ways that most benefit our students. "In this time when standards are all around us, and assessments to ensure that we and our students are meeting those standards are prevalent, it is useful to pause and reflect about why and how we teach writing-and whether it is a voice or an echo that we seek" (Spandel, 2005). The following rights are offered by Spandel, 2005.

***The right to be reflective.*** Serious writing requires long thinking. It takes reflection, and the courage to dive below the surface. Writers must have a willingness to live with a topic for a long period of time, and turn it over and over again in their mind. If we truly want to encourage reflective thinking we must allow students the time to disconnect from the world, and develop their abilities to imagine and think (Spandel, 2005, pp. 1-13).

***The right to choose a personally important topic.*** Writers who have the right to discover their own topics have an easier time writing with voice and commitment. These qualities draw us to what the writer is saying, and pulls us into their story. As teachers, we have to assist our students-not by choosing for them, but by coaching them to learn how to choose for themselves. Ideas about writing can be a struggle for some students, but if we speak honestly about where ideas come from then students will be able to find topics that interest them. Ideas are all around us. Some examples for ideas include; every book, film, conversation, a ride on a bus, a glance out a window, and thousands of other possibilities (Spandel, 2005, pp. 14-26).



***The right to go off topic.*** It's not possible to find a writing topic that fits. We have to consider age, gender, culture, and experience. Writers who are forced to write about a certain topic have a difficult time finding their voice because they lack passion for what they are writing. "Since we know what the problem is, we should not only allow students to wander far afield from these banal topics, we should encourage it" (Spandel, 2005, p. 31).

***The right to personalize writing process.*** Individualizing the writing process is an important step to student success. One thing we can do for our students is to give them the freedom to leave some of their writing unfinished. Sometimes, the writing is just not working and there is no point to continue. Second, we should give our writers the right to decide for themselves what is published. For some writers the process is very personal, and they may be uncomfortable sharing it with others. Teachers need to honor their wishes. Third, teachers should encourage students to make their own decisions about whether or not their own work is good. Lastly, we must allow our students to act as coaches and mentors for us and with each other ( Spandel, 2005, p. 50).

***The right to write badly.*** "Somewhere along the way, school became a place where it is not all right to fail-ever" (Spandel, 2005, p. 63). We should trust our student writers by giving them the freedom to explore, write badly in order to bring them to a place where they are writing well. One way to help our students get there is to write more and assess less.

***The right to see others write.*** If all our students see is managing and accessing, what do they really learn? Most of us do not understand writing and revising. Students are left to figuring it out by themselves. This way of writing is not best practices. Students need

to see teachers writing about personal topics out loud, revising, editing, and sharing our work. Spandel (2005, p. 79) wrote, “If a picture is worth a thousand words, modeling is worth a thousand pictures.”

***The right to be assessed well.*** According to Spandel, (2005, pp. 94-95), “Being assessed well in the area of writing involves three things; the assessment to be perceptive, it is compassionate, and useful.” Being a perceptive assessor demands careful and reflective reading of the writer’s work. It goes beyond the surface level and finds the heartbeat behind the writer’s words. Being compassionate as an assessor means to not search out fault in the writing, but to uplift the writer. Assessment that is useful will first and foremost serve the student. Many students have strengths in which we can build on, but they need to know these strengths. Good assessment does not just happen on its own. It comes from clear vision and thoughtful planning. Lastly, good assessment involves teachers providing a heartfelt response for the writers. They need to know that their writing has touched us in some way.

***The right to go beyond formula.*** If we are supposed to let go of the formula, how do we teach our students to write? Spandel (2005, pp. 122-123) laid out five suggestions for us. First, we should write to create reading. Second, read as you write. Students should read every words as they go, and read them out loud while asking themselves if what they just read makes sense. Third, remember writing is a journey. There are many paths from point A to point B. The road the writers choose will determine how long and interesting the journey will be for the writer. Fourth, think deeply about the terms *expand*, *support*, and *detail*. We should give the reader a “front row seat with a close up view of the world as you see it,” (Spandel, 2005, p. 122). Finally, look at what professional writers do. See

if you can trace the path of their thinking. Writing well requires the writer to wear two hats; writer and reader. This is a delicate balance that requires practice, vision, and an internal dialogue about the journey. One last point to remember is that formula writing takes away both the pain and reward of thinking like a reader.

***The right to find your own voice.*** “Voice comes from who we are, from our deepest part of ourselves, from the most sacred beliefs that define us” (Spandel, 2005, p. 128). Like our normal speaking voices, our writing voice changes over the years, and in different situations. When a student writes from deep within themselves, their voice emerges because they feel passionate about the topic. It’s important to encourage voice because it’s what makes us human, individual, and unique. Voice gives the writer power; power that makes the readers listen.

### **Summary**

In this section I discussed state standards and their limitations pertaining to writing. Then I provided the framework for writer’s workshop; followed by building a community of writers within a classroom and the nine rights of every writer. The literature in this section helped focus on my students’ academic needs, and how to reach second grade expectations. In the next section, I will look into the peer review process. First, talking about the benefits of peer review including; self-concept and diverse learners. I will also look into the challenges involved in the peer review process, and ending it with preparing students for giving feedback on other’s writing.

### **Peer Review**

Boase-Jelink, Parker, and Herrington (2013, p. 119) defined peer review as “a review process that is generally used for giving and receiving non-summative formative

feedback.” Usually, the experience is viewed as non-threatening and benefits student learning by providing suggestions from other students about how to improve their work. “Peer-assisted learning is one of the most effective methods in education” (Tsuei, 2009, p. 214). It’s a technique that can be seen in both classrooms and online learning.

**Benefits of using peer review in the classroom.** Research indicates the process of peer review provides ample opportunities for student growth within the classroom. “Children enjoy playing together and engage in fruitful face-to-face social interactions, and research has demonstrated that when children work in pairs, small groups, and interact with computers, there are positive effects on learning and development” (Tsuei, 2009, p. 215). When using peer review during the writing process students take on a dual role. They are not only writers but also become readers. The process of peer review helps to develop a sense of audience, and while thinking about other’s potential problems in their writing begin to understand the areas they need to improve upon in their own writing. Giving feedback not only improves a student’s ability to write, it deepens their skills to read critically.

**Improved self-concept.** As cited by Tsuei 2009, p. 217), “self-concept is an individual’s perception of self, which is formed through experiences with the environment and interactions with others,” and self-concept is a vital part of the learning process. Peer tutoring is said to have a positive effect on a student’s self-concept because the process of peer tutoring involves the use of social skills. It also provides students with opportunities for instructional self-evaluation and self-reward, which has been associated with increased feelings of autonomy, motivation and achievement (Tsuei, 2009). While students are learning to work together with writing and peer tutoring, they are learning

skills that will improve their writing ability. As they are building these skills, they are also building self-esteem, and they are beginning to see themselves as writers. Once they feel empowered and believe they can write, they will.

***Meeting the needs of diverse learners.*** Peer review gives teachers the opportunity to meet the needs of diverse learners through structured learning activities. It offers immediate corrective feedback and role-rotation between the tutor and tutee. When applied class-wide, the peer-assisted learning strategy has the benefit of one-on-one instruction, which involves all the students in peer tutoring (Tsuei, 2009). Children have a way of speaking to each other and teaching one another concepts when they are allowed to share ideas, and build on each other's thoughts. They gain the ability to learn from each other's mistakes, and develop new learning. When teachers provide guided scripts they permit learning to take place between students by allowing them to work with partners or in small groups. Once students become proficient with the necessary procedures of peer tutoring, they are free to focus on learning the content of the lesson.

EL students can greatly benefit from peer review as well as non EL students. In *The Potential of Dual-Language Cross-Cultural Peer Review* by Todd Ruecker (2011), he discussed the benefits of peer review on students who are considered English language learners. Often students who are new to English are segregated into separate classes or placed into mainstream classes with little to no support causing them to feel isolated and marginalized by peers and teachers. If teachers carefully train students and thoughtfully set up groups, peer review can become a valuable practice for all learners. Dual-language cross-cultural peer review will increase interaction between EL and non EL students, making EL students feel less isolated. It will also build confidence for EL students by

putting them in a position of the tutor as well as the tutee. Dual-language cross-cultural peer review also builds confidence by providing a supportive, safe environment in which students share learning struggles. In this type of supportive environment students bond through mutual recognition that we all face obstacles when learning another language.

**Challenges faced with peer review.** Despite the many benefits to using peer reviewing/tutoring in the classroom, there are some challenges to consider. Boase-Jelink et al., 2013, said the first thing to consider is the attributes of students. Students may lack the proper skills to engage in the peer review process. This revolves around the idea that students may not have the skills needed to identify strengths and weaknesses in other's work. They may not have the ability to give constructive feedback, and lack the motivation to carefully evaluate another's work. "Consequently, students may engage in sentence-by-sentence editing with changes on the word level instead of substantive changes to the organization and ideas" (Philippakos, 2017, p. 13). Secondly, students might be able to diagnose problems with their work, but they may lack the skills needed to make the revisions needed in their work. Thirdly, students may not value the comments offered by their peers. Furthermore, students may hesitate to offer truthful feedback to their peers because they do not clearly understand the criteria of the evaluation and/or they do not want to hurt another's feelings. This could lead to superficial comments and general statements.

**Preparing students for giving feedback on writing.** In order to set students up for success, certain steps should be followed. According to Philippakos (2017), there are steps that should be considered when preparing students to give feedback during the peer review process. This includes giving students time for lots of practice and repetition in

order for them to internalize and better understand the process. Time for practice and exploration will be built into this project in order to allow time for students to develop an understanding of peer review, and the technology involved. The next important step to consider is the guidelines and criteria for evaluation. These need to be well thought out and carefully developed. Rubrics will be developed along with the unit to determine if the students are reaching the required goals of the lessons. Students should also be provided with stronger and weaker examples in order to make comparisons. Examples should be provided by the teacher. Instruction requires explicit explanation and modeling by the teacher. During the modeling phase, students will observe how the teacher applies the evaluation criteria to properly analyze the writing piece. After modeling, the teacher will ask students to work collaboratively to practice the process. It is not only important to have time to practice these skills, students also need time to reflect on their learning. Overall, rich classroom discussions need to take place so students can exchange ideas and develop understanding.

### **Summary**

In this section I discussed peer review. I looked at what it is and how it benefits students and teachers in a classroom. As well as looking at the benefits, I covered the downfalls of this strategy in the classroom. I specifically looked at writing instruction and peer review. I found it relates back to the theories I discussed, and will be beneficial to all learners in my classroom. It informs me that students who have the opportunity to work together will learn more and be more engaged in the writing process. In the next section I will address digital technology in the classroom, and the use of iPads to engage and inspire writing in my second grade classroom.

## **Digital Technology in the Classroom**

As we travel through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology in the classroom is becoming more and more visible. Laptops and tablets are replacing textbooks, and smartphones make it possible to find any information at any time and in any place. Social media has become a commonplace, and the way people use technology has forever changed our lives (Cox, 2018).

**Using technology to motivate and engage students.** First and foremost, technology makes learning more fun. Cox (2018) referenced a study by IT Trade Association in which it found that students prefer the use of technology, especially; laptops and tablets. Subjects that students found difficult or boring become more interesting with virtual lessons, through video, or when using a tablet. Second, the use of technology offers a place for students to collaborate. Zoch, Langston-DeMont, and Adams-Budde (2014) reported, “students seem to learn the most when collaborating with each other and experimenting with technology rather than from adult” (p. 3). This relates back to my section on peer review. Students empower and engage one another through collaboration and technology. A third way technology motivates and engages students is by creating an authentic audience. In the past, students have only composed their work for an audience of one, the teacher. By using technological resources to establish authentic audiences for student work, we are telling our students their work is important. It is worth seeing, worth reading, and worth doing (Blair, 2018). This creates a feeling of purpose and accomplishment, and encourages our students to continue to create and share their work. Burns (2018) stated, “Authentic audiences help students connect their work in the classroom to the real world” (p. 3). There are many apps created to allow a space where



students can create, share, and connect with others. Eyal (2015) described these spaces as a place where authentic learning can take place, and a place where students develop interpersonal skills and social ties.

**How iPads are used to engage students.** With all the different kinds of technology available, why would teachers select the use of iPads in their classroom? The first reason that comes to mind is the 1:1 opportunity that many schools are taking part in within their school districts. In a 1:1 setting, that means that each and every student has their own device to use. Sometimes, that means iPads, sometimes it's Chromebooks or MacBooks. For my research I am focusing on iPads because it is what is available in my classroom for my students.

Besides the 1:1 component of iPads, Zammit (2016) described other positive reasons to use iPads in the classroom. This includes; encouraging a change to teaching and learning, enabling students to demonstrate their learning in a different way, and taking advantage of the fact iPads are portable and user friendly. All of these reasons are exciting to both students and teachers. iPads make it possible for students to learn across space, meaning students can work from various locations and still communicate with one another. This permits students to take control over their own learning. Lastly, through the use of various apps students are able to create high quality work to submit and share not only with their teacher but also with other students. Eyal (2015) stated, "Different mobile applications enable the learner to create, share, and connect with others within the context of authentic learning and to participate in online learning communities" (p. 3). Which leads to the development of interpersonal and social ties.

iPads also lead to the development of visual and textual literacy. Students have the ability to take a photograph and immediately upload it to the internet, edit videos quickly and easily, and use applications that teach languages, math, problem-solving, critical thinking games, drawing tools, as well as learning aids such as spoken texts. The possibilities are endless and make the use of iPads a powerful tool for teachers and learners.

**Importance of teaching 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.** Over the past several decades there has been an increased demand for formal education to include the development of generic skills as well as traditional education (Vista, Kim & Alvin, 2017). These skills for today's world include; communication, problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking, and technology. As you enter any elementary classroom, students are busily posting online sticky notes, searching for videos, creating graphic organizers, and recording their voices. Some are talking with peers, sharing ideas, providing technical assistance, and navigating back and forth between various websites, apps, and programs (Zoch et al., 2014). This demand for these skills has shifted education, and the way students are learning. Blair (2018) described today's 21<sup>st</sup> century learners as. "highly relational and demand quick access to knowledge" (p. 8.). She went on to discuss what she calls the 4 C's: critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. Today the 4 C's are at the heart of the International Society of Technology in Education. Lessons that include the 4 C's, along with technology, put the students as the focal point of the classroom, giving them the role of explorer and designer.

**Seesaw.** Seesaw is a student driven digital portfolio. The website ([www.seesaw.me](http://www.seesaw.me)) described the app as "a place where students are empowered to work independently,

document their work with built in tools and provide an authentic audience for their own work.” Having an authentic audience motivates students to work harder and produce better quality work, Seesaw quality work. Teachers can refer to Seesaw quality work as students putting forth their best effort, and turning in work that has been drafted, edited, revised, and rewritten to the best of the students’ ability. Students are able to show what they are learning by using photos, videos, drawings, text, PDF’s, and it links to other sites. Seesaw also has the ability to directly import from other popular apps like Google apps.

Teachers and families also enjoy the use of Seesaw within the classroom as well. Teachers find that it saves time on organization, parent communications, makes formative assessment easy, and offers a safe place to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. It is a place to build a comprehensive record of student learning. Portfolios sync class to class and have the ability to follow students from grade to grade, creating a record of their entire career in school. Families like the option of an immediate and personalized window into their child’s school day, and the ability to easily communicate with their child’s teacher.

### **Summary**

In this section of my literature review I focused on digital technology in the classroom. First, I defined the term digital technology, and then I looked into how it motivates and engages students, specifically the use of iPads. This was followed by reasons to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in the classroom, and I ended the section with information about the app Seesaw, and how it empowers student learning and how it creates a space where teachers, students, and families work together. This information tells me that my students need 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to perform in the classroom and beyond

formal education. iPads are an engaging form of technology, in my classroom I have a 3:1 ratio for iPads to students. Seesaw will help my students build a community of learners who use the 4 C's. The next section is a summary that gives rationale for my research and how it relates to the question; *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement.*

### **Why I Chose to Research This Topic**

Writing is an important part of the second grade curriculum, and it is something my students struggle with on a daily basis. I believe it's my role to create a supportive and motivating classroom environment. My students need a space where they are free to collaborate, ask questions, learn through trial and error, while actively creating their own learning. This can happen while working with digital writing. It defines my role as the teacher. I am there to provide curriculum that is enticing to my students. The research indicates that students who have the opportunity to collaborate improve upon their own writing skills while helping others do the same. The technology provides a medium that entices students to actively engage in the process. The tools available in Seesaw make it easy for all students to participate, and build upon the skills they currently have, while moving them to a higher level of participation and rigor.

The theories I wrote about support the idea of working collectively. They support my question, *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* I believe there can be a downside to these theories. There will always be exceptions to the norm. For example, behavior is something to consider. Students will need explicit instruction on group expectations. Even with procedures in place, there could still be a student or two who choose not to

participate in the learning process. However, overwhelming research indicates that students who work with technology and collaborate with peers have an advantage in learning. They are more successful in the classroom and better prepared for the real-world.

### **Summary of chapter two**

The research question revolves around exploring technology and students working together with their peers. It is evident that students who work collaboratively have an advantage in learning. Constructivism led to the discovery that powerful gains are made when children have the opportunity to work together. This is why many teachers have brought the cooperative learning practice into their classrooms. Through this teaching practice students are paired with other students with differing ability levels, and the teacher uses a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Cooperative learning is said to improve behavior attendance, raise student self-confidence, build positive relationships, and produce higher levels of motivation. It is my desire to raise my students' motivation, and create a space where writing becomes a collaborative experience. Cooperative learning is one of the keys to building the skills needed to increase learning and make this project successful.

It is also important to look at the state standards and the framework for writer's workshop. The standards in writing will inform me of what skills are needed and the framework for writer's workshop will guide me in the process for setting my students up for success. It is important to first establish routines and rituals for writer's workshop, and at the same time work on building a community of writers. A safe writing community involves a place where students feel safe to share. It also involves students who are

willing to share with everyone, and creating a place where these shared experiences bridge gaps between the students. However, the most valuable part of a community of writers is the fact that everyone is writing, and every writer has the right to write about what is important to them. They should be allowed to have time for reflection, be able to write badly, see others write, and the right to be assessed well. All of this will help them find their voice, and bring passion and engagement into their writing.

The use of technology brings a new level of engagement for students. Students think learning is more fun, and using Seesaw on the iPads offers a place for students to collaborate. Technology also gives students an authentic audience which creates a feeling of purpose and encourages students to continue to create and share work.

### **Chapter Overview**

In chapter three, I will use the information I gained in chapter two to put together my project. I will provide information on the setting and participants to inform upon who will be a part of the project and where they come from. Next, I will outline my project in detail as well as the assessment tools needed to determine the results. Finally, I will offer the timeline, and why it is important to the project.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

#### Introduction

The focus of this project is my desire to learn more about my research question, *How do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* I see a real need to build my students writing skills, and I have noticed their excitement when they work collaboratively using technology. Therefore, I want to design a launch to writer's workshop that involves the use of the Seesaw app on iPads, and allows my students the opportunities to work collaboratively while evaluating each other's writing. In chapter two I explained several research studies revolving around theory, fundamental skills, peer review, and digital technology in the classroom. All of this research indicates that my students will improve their own writing skills while assisting others in doing the same, and it also supports the concept of learning with technology.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the description and rationale of the research paradigm. Second, it will provide information about the setting where the project will be used and the participants who shall take part in the study. This will be followed by a detailed description of the project, and how the effectiveness of the project will be measured. Finally, I will address the timeline for when the project will be best used for the benefit of my students.

#### Research Paradigm

This study has a constructivist worldview. It involves constructivism combined with interpretivism. It also relates back to the theory discussed in chapter one. Social

constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. (Cresswell, 2014). The idea behind this type of research is to rely as much as possible on my students' views of the situation being studied. Questions are broad and general so that my students will be allowed to construct meaning of the situation, and typically participants are involved in discussions or interactions with other people. Questions are also more open-ended, to provide opportunities for deep discussion.

### **Summary**

In this section, I wrote about how my project has a constructivist worldview. This view relates back to my theory in chapter one, and links to my belief that students learn through the process of working with their peers. When given the opportunities to interact and discuss open-ended questions, students will construct new meaning. In the next section, I will describe the setting in which the project will take place.

### **Setting**

The setting of this project will take place in a public elementary school for preschool through fifth grade. It is located in a larger city with approximately 67,000 people. The public elementary school's ethnic demographics for the student population are as follows: .7% American Indian, 1.9% Asian, 39% Black/African American, 5.8% Hispanic, and 44.1% White. Approximately 16% of the student population receives special education services. In addition to this, 26.5% of its student population are identified as English Language Learners.

Over the past ten years this underperforming elementary school has been impacted with considerable change. It has witnessed an abundant turnover in staffing and



administration. Due to the changes, there has been a significant decline in state test scores.

In this section I describe the demographics found in the setting of my research. I listed the percentage of students in each category. Lastly, I offered information on the school itself, describing how it has been impacted by change. In the next section, I will take a closer look at the actual participants.

### **Participants**

The participants in this project included my second grade classroom. Currently, I have 23 students who come with a wide range of skills. This number includes 5 boys and 18 girls. This number tends to fluctuate a bit due to the fact the school serves a somewhat transient population. Many students move in and out of the building and transfer both within and outside of the district throughout a school year. My class has a high number of EL students, a little more than half of my class. The school also serves a high number of students living in poverty. Many of my students lack support from home because language may be the barrier or parents who are absent from their children's life due to various reasons such as work, addictions, and single parent families. Many of my students face daily struggles that go beyond academics.

### **Summary**

In this section, I addressed the participants of my research. It illustrated my current students, and gave insight to their present needs. The following section describes the details of my project. I have provided an explanation about what it is, and how it will be developed.

## **Project Description**

Based on my research of the literature, and observations within my classroom I have decided to design curriculum that will bring technology and the peer review process into our writer's workshop launch. I focused on the use of an app called Seesaw. Seesaw provides a digital space where students can create, share, and collaborate while using an iPad. As mentioned in chapter one, I see a real need for opportunities where students can use technology and collaboration. I will begin with the launch used for our district's writer's workshop. It has provided a solid introduction to the writing process, and what is expected of our second grade writers. It does an outstanding job teaching rules and procedures. I infused lessons on how to properly use Seesaw and peer review. This involved creating some of my own additional lesson plans, and deciding where and how to add the technology piece into the existing unit. I included the use of time for exploring Seesaw early on in the unit, making sure to allow plenty of time for my students to become familiar with the tools available and the process in using them. As my students became familiar with Seesaw, they also learned how to use the writer's workshop area within the app. Here they were taking pictures, recording stories, using the drawing tools, and adding text. I have created additional lessons that provide the skills needed for editing their own work and the work of others. Which included creating a key for the symbols we use in the editing process. Students were then given ample time to practice and explore before leaping into the process on their own. It involved a great deal of modeling on my part. This unit is designed with an, *I do, we do, you do* approach to teaching and learning.

## Summary

In this section I laid out the plans for developing my project. I used the district's current launch for writer's workshop. From this, I added lesson plans, and created opportunities within the launch to fully develop the use of Seesaw with the curriculum. I designed my unit based on modeling and an *I do, you do, we do*, approach to teaching and learning. In the next section, I describe my methods of assessment for the project. Specifically, the techniques that will be used to determine the if I am meeting the needs of my students.

## Project Assessment

Several project assessment techniques will be used over the course of the research. These assessments are intended to give insight into the student's progression with writing skills, how they see themselves as writers, and if they are engaged in the peer review process. It will inform me of areas of strength and those that need to be improved upon.

**Project assessment: Student attitude inventory.** Students are given an attitude assessment survey at the beginning of the unit and then again at the end. It asks them to evaluate themselves as writers. Also, it asks students to describe how they feel about the writing process. It is kept short to no more than ten questions, and some of the questions are open-end, allowing them to further discuss their opinions. A few of the questions are based on them rating themselves as; *always, sometimes, or never*. These few questions ask students how they feel about writing. The open-ended questions will ask, *What is your favorite part about writing?* and *Why is it important to learn how to write?* The assessment is placed on smartboard and read aloud to assure students understand the questions being asked.

**Project assessment: Anecdotal notes.** These are used in two ways. First, to collect anecdotal notes during writer's workshop as a way to conference with each writer individually. It includes the following information; date, compliment, teaching point, and goal for next meeting. I conference with students during writer's workshop time each day. Second, anecdotal notes are used during the process of peer evaluation time. The following information gathered during this time will be date, student name, and observational notes. This observation gave insight to how the students are working during the peer review time. It advised me as to how to support the students in the peer review process.

**Project assessment: Rubrics.** Rubrics are used to assess the writing skills of each student. Rubrics are based on the particular lessons being taught to target certain skills. Most importantly, the rubric addressed the state standards in second grade writing. Students are given (as needed) a student-friendly copy of the rubric to use during peer review times.

### **Summary**

In this section I gave details about the assessment of my project. I laid out my ideas for student attitude assessments, anecdotal notes, and the use of rubrics. Each are designed to help me evaluate student progress in the areas of writing skills and engagement. The next section will describe the timeline and deadlines for completing the project.

### **Project Timeline**

The project took place the first six weeks of the 2018-2019 school year. As stated earlier, this project is a launch into writer's workshop that included the use of Seesaw and

peer review. It is important it took place before getting into the second grade *Wonders* curriculum and daily writer's workshop. It developed the participants' skills and prepared them for writing as a second grader. A forty-five to fifty-minute block was scheduled each day during this launch.

### **Summary**

In this section, I explained the project timeline. Informing the reader when the project will take place during the school year, and stating how much time will be allowed daily to work on the skills involved with the project. In the next section I will summarize chapter three reviewing the main emphases and learnings of the chapter.

### **Summary of chapter three**

This chapter described the students involved in this study and how they came from a second grade classroom with a diverse background. The project itself involves designing curriculum for writer's workshop using technology, Seesaw, and the peer review process. To determine if the project was a success the curriculum used a variety of assessments to evaluate student engagement and progress of writing goals. It took place the first six weeks of the school year intertwined with the school district's launch to writer's workshop.

### **Chapter Overview**

In chapter four, I will discuss what I have learned throughout the capstone process. Highlighting my new learnings as a writer and learner. I will revisit the literature review and review which parts proved to be the most important for my capstone. Next, I will talk about possible implications of my project, and limitation as well. Finally, I will write about some future research projects based on the ideas studied around my research

question, *How do I transfer my students love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Project Conclusion

#### Introduction

My project was designed to answer the question- *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* As I discussed in chapter one, my students love to use iPads, and many of them are excited when it is their turn to use iPads in our reading rotations. However, I have also noticed that many of my students do not like to write, and many of them lack the skills they need to be a successful second grade writer. So, the purpose of my project was to address student engagement and fundamental writing skills in my second grade classroom through the use of peer review and an app called Seesaw.

#### Overview

In chapter four, I write about major learnings including what I learned in the capstone process as a researcher, writer, and learner. Next, I discuss parts of my literature review and what proved to be the most important for my capstone project, focusing on the sources that most influence my work. Then I write about the implications and limitations of my project. I also include some future or related projects, how I plan to communicate my results, and end by discussing how my project will benefit others in the teaching profession.

#### New Learning

As I worked on my project, I developed new skills as a researcher, writer, and learner. I began the process by researching my burning question- *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and*

*engagement?* I spent countless hours reading educational journals, eBooks, textbooks, curriculum, capstones and dissertations. I spoke with colleagues, specifically my media specialist, second grade team and the literacy coordinator for our district. I learned from all of this reading and conversation that many second grade students, not just my own classroom, struggle with writing. They need support in how to write and need something that motivates them to want to write.

While researching the best way to design my lessons, I learned there is power behind cooperative learning and the peer review process. Creating lessons with these in mind empowers my students to take control of their learning through the use of positive, meaningful conversations. These conversations can bring my students writing skills to a higher level, and keep them engaged in their learning. I also learned that students have a way of speaking to each other and they use words they understand. This may be different than the way a teacher may speak, and by using their own words to peer review each other's work they build on each other's skills.

While researching apps, I discovered many existed. However, I found myself continually going back to Seesaw. I was surprised by how many teachers already use Seesaw in their classrooms, and it can be used across the curriculum. I learned that teachers use Seesaw for reading, math, science, social studies, and as a means to track student progress to share with families. Many teachers shared with me that Seesaw is easy to navigate, and their students are engaged while working with this app. However, not many teachers talked about using Seesaw for writing. So, I knew I was on track with a project many teachers can use, and already have some background on the technology skills needed to work within Seesaw.



As I reflected on technology already used in my classroom, I thought about how my own students are engaged when working with iPads. Whether they are reading books on Epic or improving their math skills on IXL, they are engaged and excited to be learning on the iPads. In the end of this project, I can say I was able to answer my research question, *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* I answered my question by bringing peer review and technology into our writing workshop.

### **Revisiting the Literature**

As I reviewed the literature for theory related to my project, I found information about John Dewey and how his ideas supported my project. Dewey believed that students should not sit passively by and take in information being taught by teachers. Instead he said students should, “operate as a member of a community, actively pursuing interests in cooperation with others,” (as cited in Fields, 2018, p. 12). A second theory that related well to my project is cooperative learning. Balkcom (1992) defined cooperative learning as “a successful, contemporary teaching practice which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, using a variety of learning activities to improve their own understanding of a subject” (p. 1). My project was created with John Dewey and cooperative learning in mind because it revolved around the idea of students working with peers to improve their own writing skills. My students will work together to read, write, and peer review each other’s work. Some of that work takes place using paper and pencil, but it leads into using technology and Seesaw. The literature also supported using peer review in my classroom. In fact, Tsuei (2009) wrote, “Peer-assisted learning is one of the most effective methods in education,” (p. 215). One thought that had not yet

occurred to me was just how much peer review could benefit my EL students. Todd Ruecker (2011) wrote about how EL students feel less isolated and gain more confidence when they are working in peer review situations. As I reflected back on my students, I was reminded that a little more than half of them are considered EL students. My project offers support for all learners through the use of peer review, but will be especially helpful for my EL students to feel included.

The final area I researched was using digital technology in the classroom. Technology is all around us. Zoch, Langston-DeMont, and Adams-Budde (2014) reported, “students seem to learn the most when collaborating with each other and experimenting with technology rather than from adults” (p. 3). Furthermore, the literature revealed that lessons that include the 4 C’s (critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration), along with technology, puts students as the focal point of the classroom, giving them the role of explorer and designer (Blair, 2018). Lastly, the use of Seesaw offers a platform where students are able to show what they are learning, and gives them an authentic audience for their work. The authentic audience motivates students to work harder and produce better quality work.

The literature review supported my question, *how do I transfer my students’ love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* From the literature, I discovered that my project supports student growth in engagement and writing skills. It offered opportunities for collaboration and technology to build on the routines and procedures of writing workshop.

### **Implications of My Project**

When students participate in the work for this project they will build trust and established relationships with their Seesaw partners. In the process of building engagement and writing skills, my students also will develop interpersonal skills. These are skills that will follow them throughout their educational journey and throughout life. They also will develop self-awareness of their own writing skills, and learn how to critique others in a positive manner. Gaining self-awareness in writing will lead to self-awareness in other content areas, and boost critical thinking skills. Of course, not all students are always on the same level, but they all will progress as writers, thinkers, and communicators.

Technology, specifically Seesaw, was integrated into my lesson plans to build on my students 21<sup>st</sup> century writing skills. I found that many of them were excited to use Seesaw for other purposes, and in the process they added to the skills they already knew about using iPads. This led me to believe they will also be excited to use Seesaw for writing. My project supports the need for a 1:1 technology initiative. It shows how students grow academically, and engage in the learning process when they have the ability to work with technology. Many districts have 1:1 devices on the upper levels, but in elementary schools there is a need to consider 1:1 devices to support student learning.

### **Limitations of the Project**

My biggest concern with this project will be the peer review process. Students will need a lot of practice with offering positive, truthful feedback. They may hesitate to do so because they may not want to hurt a friend's feelings or they may need more time to understand the criteria of the evaluation process. Students may lack the skills to identify

strengths and weaknesses in other's work. However, with modeling and practice time they can develop the needed skills.

Time is also a consideration in this process. It takes time for students to learn how to become a writer during the writing workshop time. It takes time to learn the rules and procedures involved. It takes time to develop the skills needed to peer review other's work. However, it is time well spent and will lead students to become successful writers, thinkers and collaborators.

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

When I began the journey of creating my project my goal was to develop a writing workshop that not only enhanced my students' writing skills, but also sparked an interest in my second grade writers. I wanted to improve their skills and see them become excited about the writing process. In the end, my project not only did these things, it developed personal relationships and built on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Going forward, I will use this project to develop my second graders as writers, thinkers and communicators at the start of each new school year.

My plans also involve researching for digital writing apps or websites. I would like to find a medium for writing stories, and then have the ability to share those stories on Seesaw. I recommend the use of Seesaw because it can be used not only for writing but across the curriculum, and as a form of family communication. I also plan to use Seesaw in other forms within my own classroom. Another way I plan to use it is within my math content. There are activities already in the Seesaw activity library that are educational and engaging. One example I have used is a making tens lesson. My students created "tens" using connecting cubes, and then recorded their work on Seesaw. Lastly, I intend to

design some of my own lessons that will be added to the Seesaw activity library. I will design lessons plans that coincide with my math curriculum. These lessons will serve as additional support to my students in building their math skills. This could mean extra support to struggling students, enhancing grade level learners, or challenging my high achieving math students.

### **Communicating the Results**

Gaining insight into how to use technology to engage students and improve their writing skills through the use of writing workshop in a second grade classroom, allows me the opportunity to share my finding with my second grade team. I plan to share my project during a team meeting after I am able to implement this project within my own classroom. First, I will share the reasons of my project, followed by how I included Seesaw, and finally results related to my project. Prior to the meeting, I will email my project to each of them to review before I present my findings. A second way I will share my project is as a mentor teacher. I will utilize the results of my project to assist preservice teachers in building a successful second grade writer's workshop.

### **How My Project Benefits Others**

Teachers who use my project, specifically second grade teachers, will benefit from the results of this work. The unit is designed to give teachers the opportunity to roll out classroom expectations and procedures in writer's workshop including the use of Seesaw. It is designed with a script as well that may offer a great deal of assistance to new teachers to the profession or those who are struggling with getting started with writer's workshop. My project brings together writing workshop, peer review, and digital

technology in a logical sequence that engages students while improving their writing skills. The creation of this project benefits both classroom teachers and their students.

#### **Summary of chapter four**

In chapter four I described my why for this project, it was designed to answer the question- *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement.* I gave an overview of the chapter and then revisited the literature. My project was created with John Dewey and cooperative learning in mind because it is revolved around the idea of students working with peers to improve their own writing skills. My students will work together to read, write, and peer review each other's work. Some of that work takes place using paper and pencil, but it leads into using technology and Seesaw. Next, I wrote about the implications of this project. The implications involve my students establishing trusting relationships, becoming more self-aware, and developing critical thinking skills. These are skills they will carry with them into their futures, and will benefit them for the rest of their lives. I ended the section on implications suggesting 1:1 devices in all grades, because students of all ages are engaged learners with technology. In the next section of the chapter I mentioned the limitations of my project. This included the time and practice with the writing and peer review process. The last three sections of chapter four I wrote about where do I go from here, communicating my results, and how my project benefits others. In these paragraphs, I discussed sharing my ideas with my second grade team, and any future preservice teachers I may work with to help them set up writer's workshop with Seesaw in their classroom. This would benefit them by giving them the tools they

need to establish an engaging writing workshop that teaches rules and procedures along with technology.

### **Conclusions of Writer's Workshop with Seesaw**

As I concluded this project, and had time to reflect on my learning and my students potential learning. Over the course of the past four months, I researched and wrote about using Seesaw along with writer's workshop to build engagement and fundamental writing skills. I chose this topic because writing has always been important and a valuable skill in my life. When I noticed my students did not like to write or just lacked the skills to put their thoughts on paper. I knew this was an area to explore and then develop into my project. As the project ended, I was amazed by the potential skills my second grade writers will be learning. Many of them will build trusting relationships with their Seesaw partners, and improve their writing skills. However, the part I am the proudest of is the fact they will become more engaged in the writing process and develop into a community of writers. This community of writers will work together peer reviewing and using Seesaw. At the same time, they will be developing habits to establish rules and routines in writer's workshop. In the end, I have answered my research question, *how do I transfer my students' love of iPads and technology into their writing in order to build fundamental skills and engagement?* Through the implementation of my project, my students will benefit from it by engaging in the writing process and developing the skills required of second grade writers.

## REFERENCES

- Antil, L. R., Jenkins, J. R., Wayne, S. K., & Vadasy, P. F. (1998). Cooperative learning: Prevalence, conceptualizations, and the relation between research and practice. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35(3), 419-54.  
10.3102/00028312035003419
- Balkcom, J. (1992). Cooperative learning. *Education Research Consumer Guide*, 1, 1-3
- Blair, N. (2012). Technology integration for the new 21st century learner. *Principal*, 91(3), 8-13. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eft&AN=70203968&site=ehost-live>
- Boase-Jelinek, D., Parker, J., & Herrington, J. (2013). Student reflection and learning through peer reviews. *Issues in Educational Research*, 23(2), 119-131.
- Building a community of writers. Thomas, L. (Director). (2007a). [Video/DVD] Burlington, VT: Annenberg Learner. Retrieved from <http://www.aspresolver.com/aspresolver.asp?MARC;1839907>. Inside writing communities. Grades 3-5, episode 12, peer conferences by Annenberg Learner.
- Thomas, L. (director). (2007b). [Video/DVD].
- Burns, M. (n.d.). The value of an authentic audience. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/value-of-authentic-audience-monica-burns>
- Cox, J. (n.d.). Benefits of teaching technology in the classroom. *K-12 News, Lessons & Shared Resources by Teachers, for Teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.teachhub.com/benefits-technology-classroom>



- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Fourth edition ed.). California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Eyal, L. (2015). Taxonomy of students' use of the iPad in education: A pilot. (report). *II*, 67.
- Field, R. (2018) Internet encyclopedia of philosophy.
- Freedman, R. A. (1995). The Mr. and Mrs. club: The value of collaboration in writers' workshop. *Language Arts*, 72(2), 97-104.
- Gagne, E. D., & Middlebrooks, M. S. (1977). Encouraging generosity: A perspective from social learning theory and research. *The Elementary School Journal*, 77(4), 281-291. 10.1086/461059
- Minnesota Department of Education. (2010). *Minnesota K-12 academic standards in english language arts*. Retrieved from <http://education.mn.gov/MDE/index.html>
- Philippakos, Z. A. (2017). Giving feedback: Preparing students for peer review and Self-Evaluation. *The Reading Teacher*, 71(1), 13-22. 10.1002/trtr.1568 Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1568/abstract>
- Ruecker, T. (2011). The potential of dual-language cross-cultural peer review. *ELT Journal*, 65(4), 398-407. 10.1093/elt/ccq067 Retrieved from <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.hamline.edu/eltj/article/65/4/398/359914>
- Seesaw (n.d.) Student driven digital portfolios. Retrieved (2018) from <https://web.seesaw.me/>
- Social learning | psychology. Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/science/social-learning>

- Spandel, V. (2005). *The 9 rights of every writer A guide for teachers*. New Hampshire: Heineman.
- Strommen, E. F., & Lincoln, B. (1992). Constructivism, technology, and the future of classroom learning. *Education and Urban Society*, 24(4), 466-476.  
10.1177/0013124592024004004
- Tracey, D. H. (2006). In Morrow L. M. (Ed.), *Lenses on reading: An introduction to theories and models / Diane H. Tracey, Lesley Mandel morrow*. New York: New York: Guilford Press.
- Tsuei, M. (2011). Development of a peer-assisted learning strategy in computer-supported collaborative learning environments for elementary school students. (report). *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 42(2), 214.
- Vista, Esther Care, Helyn Kim, and Alvin. (2017, -10-17T13:15:50+00:00). How do we teach 21st century skills in classrooms? Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2017/10/17/how-do-we-teach-21st-century-skills-in-classrooms/>
- Zammit, K. (2016). Responding to literature: iPads, apps and multimodal text creation. *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years*, 24(2), 8.
- Zoch, M., Langston-DeMott, B., & Adams-Budde, M. (2014). Creating digital authors: Given access to the technology, encouragement, and assistance, even elementary school students can become engaged and enthusiastic digital authors. (literacy & technology). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 96(3), 32.

## Appendix A State Standards for Writing in Second Grade

### **Text Types and Purposes**

**2.6.1.1** Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

**2.6.2.2** Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

**2.6.3.3** Write narrative and other creative text in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thought, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

### **Writing Process: Production and Distribution of Writing**

**2.6.5.5** With guidance and support from adults, and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.

**2.6.6.6** With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including collaboration with peers.

### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

**2.6.7.7** Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g. read a number of books on a single topic to produce a report; record a science observation.)

**2.6.8.8** Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer question).

As listed on the Minnesota Department of Education Website