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CREATING A JOY FOR WRITING IN YOUNG WRITERS

by

Mary Kornmann

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

Hamline University

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Patty Born

Content Expert: Laura Blackledge

Peer Reviewers: Mary Beth Youngblut, Jody Wenum and Maren Swann

ABSTRACT

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The research question addressed in this project was, how can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing? It documents how teachers can encourage their struggling writers to write narrative stories. The literature found was focused on motivation strategies, how to identify and teach struggling writers, and effective writing strategies. During the research, there was the idea of interactive writing and how seeing the writing being done by the teacher, before the students try is effective. The research has shown that young writers need scaffolding and modeling to effectively learn how to write different genres. The project is a presentation focused on teaching primary teachers the effectiveness of motivating struggling writers. The project's limitation is it is only presented once during a professional development session lasting 30-40 minutes long. The plans for the future of this project are for teachers to bring the strategies back to their classrooms.

Dedication

Paul

Thank you for being my partner, my biggest fan and encourager. Thank you for putting up with my ups and downs. I could not have done this part of my life without you. Thank you for being my favorite person.

Mom and Dad

Thank you for supporting me and encouraging me to pursue my Masters. Thank you for all your love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introductions

Overview.....	6
Personal and Professional Connections.....	7
Potential Importance of the Capstone Question.....	12
Conclusion.....	13

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction.....	14
Definition of Struggling or Reluctant Writer and The Number of US Students Who Struggle.....	15
Identifying Struggling Writers.....	16
Common Barriers for K-6 Learners in Becoming a Proficient Writer.....	17
Struggling Writers.....	18
Choice.....	19
Digital Storytelling.....	20
Create a Safe Writing Environment.....	21
Motivation.....	22
Supportive Environment.....	23
Mentor Texts.....	25
Writing for Real Purposes.....	26

Writing Strategies.....	27
Instructional Models for Supporting Struggling Writers: Definitions and Models.....	29
Inquiry, Modeling, Shared, Collaborative, and Independent (IMSCI) Model.....	29
Self-regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) Model.....	31
Interactive Writing Model.....	33
Conclusion.....	35
CHAPTER THREE: Project Description	
Introduction.....	36
Project Description.....	36
Setting.....	40
Target Audience.....	41
Timeline.....	41
Summary.....	42
CHAPTER FOUR: Reflection	
Introduction.....	43
Connecting to the Research.....	44
Description of Project.....	45
Limitations of Project.....	46
Implications of Project.....	46
Author's Reflection.....	47

Conclusion.....48

REFERENCES.....50

CHAPTER ONE

Motivating reluctant students to write

Chapter Introduction

Writing has always been one of my weaknesses, a subject where I am not comfortable or confident. As a teacher, with this weakness, I have never felt comfortable teaching reading or sharing my writing. As an educator, I have always had a lack of confidence in my writing, and I knew I wanted to learn how to effectively teach writing and create an intrinsic motivation in my students, so they would want to write, and enjoy it, just as they do with reading. This interest to create a joy of writing in my students brings me to my capstone project question *How can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?*

My interest in this question and the capstone project I want to create are related to my experiences as an elementary teacher. My teacher career started in 2011 and I started as a second grade teacher in 2014. While teaching second grade there have been many students in my class that have no problems with writing. They know how to get their ideas down on paper and how to explain their ideas through writing, but there have been many times students look at a blank piece of paper and have nothing written down.

I provide encouragement to my students by asking them think of their ideas to write down. Too often, even after encouragement, they have the idea, but it is hard for them to get over the barrier of spelling, or just getting their ideas to paper. I have taught in primary grades for seven years and have been teaching second grade since 2014. I have

taught second grade for four years and I always wonder how I can help my students transfer their ideas down and write when they have stories or ideas, but they seem reluctant or struggle to write them down.

The purpose of this project is to explore the research that has been documented for effective writing strategies that create an intrinsic motivation for reluctant primary age students so that they produce narrative written work. My desire is to support my students in being able to put their ideas in writing. From the knowledge gained while researching, there will be a professional development created. The professional development is focused on primary grade teachers at a suburban elementary in a suburban school district. At this stage in the research project, reluctant students are defined by Lowe and Bormann (2012) as unwilling or disengaged writers.

In this chapter there will be explanations on my personal and professional significance for my project question. My life as a student was very difficult, which forced me to work very hard to learn all through my educational career. My struggle as a learner has helped me understand my students who also show signs of not understanding certain lessons or skills. With that, it is easier for me to relate to my students and develop effective ways to help them learn. Following the connections, will be a rationale for why this topic was picked. Lastly, there will be a transition from my rationale to my literature review.

Personal and Professional Connections

Being an average student in school, it was more interesting talking with friends and playing at recess than studying or reading. During my early school years, there was

more pressure from my parents and peer pressure to give more effort in school. The reason why I felt pressured in school was studying seemed to come easier to my peers than it did to me. One time in elementary school, when there was a need to do my best, was in second grade during a spelling test. All week there was nothing but practicing the spelling words with my parents and I felt prepared. I took my time during the test, while others rushed through their spelling test. The test was getting close to finishing and there was just me left taking the test. The rest of the class was onto the next lesson, while a teacher's aid was still giving me the test. I started to feel uncomfortable and rushed. There was one word that I was stuck on. I kept erasing and rewriting the *school*. The teacher's aid looked at me while I rewrote *school* over and over, but it never looked right to me. It was taking me a long time to write down this one word, but there was no doubt in my mind to give up that easily. There had been many hours of practice that had gone into the spelling test. After erasing it and trying to rewrite it for what felt like the tenth time, the test was taken from my hands. The teacher's assistant took it from me and said, "You are never going to figure it out. Go join the rest of the class." Even to this day, when I spell *school*, I think of this spelling test and this teacher.

This teacher did not encourage me or suggest to come back to the word after a little break. There was no support from her. In her eyes, the student in front of her was not the perfect student, who had finished like the other students in an appropriate amount of time. This student was trying and showing their best work, and as that student, all that was needed, was support. My memories of elementary school were of me getting average

grades, average comments on progress reports and from my teachers. I always compared myself and others on how easy school was for them.

Average or subpar was how I felt all through junior high and especially in high school. All my friends in high school were academic all-stars and athletes who teachers dreamed of being in their classrooms. My friends were in every honors class, AP class and accelerated program that was offered. I felt like I didn't have the ability to be in a Honors or advanced writing class. With those feelings in me, my chances of being in any of those classes wouldn't happen. When it was time to sign up for the next semester's classes and I saw that a writing class was a requirement, I signed up for the average writing class. There was a good chance that none of my friends would be in the class, so there was less of a chance for them to see how average their friend was, especially when it came to my academics. The memory of that writing class was fun, but it was because of my teacher. She was funny, helpful and gave us time to think and write. Even though my grades were fine, there was still a lack of confidence in me compared to my other friend's writing. My effort in the class was doing the bare minimum. Even having a motivational teacher, there was no fire in me to do better. This lack of interest and motivation for writing affected writing courses in college as well.

Starting college, I was convinced the university had sent the acceptance letter to the wrong girl. The idea of being accepted to a good school was astonishing, because it felt like I was not "smart" enough to be in this college. My expectation of not being "smart" enough came true when I had to sign up for the remedial writing course. This was a course designed to help incoming freshmen write academically and successfully.

This course made me feel lesser than my friends who were in the general education writing classes. They all discussed the same writing assignments. I would just sit and listen, without saying anything. There was a fear that they would ask me about my writing class assignments. All through college, I felt inadequate with my writing and my academics. School never came easy for me, but I was always trying my best. A moment of excitement came when I was accepted into the Education program, along with a small amount of other students. This feeling of motivation and determination was racing through my body! I was ready to learn all I could, and become a great teacher. My excitement vanished as I started writing Standard in Education papers each week.

There were ten standards in the Education program for teachers and educators. My instructor wanted us to write about how we met these standards in our practicum, readings and instruction time, using examples. Each week, I would make sure I had lots of examples and many resources added, but every week I had to go to her office and meet with my professor about my papers. My skills in writing were very low. Each week she would tell me what to do for the next week to improve my paper. After listening to her and making those improvements for the next paper, I would be right back in her office going over the same paper.

After many meetings with my professor, I was exhausted trying to figure out how she wanted me to write these papers, so I looked at my friend's paper that was in the Education program too. I used her exact lay out with my own examples. The day the papers were returned to us with grades and comments, my friend's had a perfect score and positive comments written all over it. My paper was returned to me with a below

average score, many negative comments and another note to come in and discuss my paper. After this situation with my professor, she made me realize that this is not the type of teacher I want to be for what my students deserve.

Growing up with all of these challenges helped me become the teacher I am today. I never fully felt comfortable as a writer. I would write something and it would be wrong over and over. Even when I turn in any written assignments, I question myself as a writer. When I became a teacher seven years ago, I made sure not to be one of those teachers I have previously mentioned. It is my goal to create an open, comfortable and positive environment in my classroom. I explain to my students that in our classroom it is okay to make mistakes. Further, I explain when we make mistakes we learn from them. I tell my students about the spelling test from second grade and how I hope to never make them feel discouraged and like a failure. My teachers never gave me the idea that it is okay to make mistakes in my writing. My understanding was it was their way of writing or it was wrong.

As a teacher, I have always wanted to learn more, and especially more how I can help my students academically be their best selves. Whenever there are opportunities for professional developments through my district or outside of the district, I try to attend and learn as much as I can. Teachers encourage their students to keep thinking, working and continuing to be lifelong learners. We all hope for this, but many times teachers do not follow this same advice. The next step in order to teach my students, was to get my Masters degree. After a year in the Masters of Literacy Education Program, I am more confident in my ability to teach students to read and that they will find reading enjoyable.

In the Summer of 2017, my confidence in teaching reading was boosted. I took a class through the reading licensure courses, called Advancing Secondary Readers, 7-12. One of the required reading in the class was Steven Layne's (2009) *Igniting a Passion for Reading*. After reading this text, I was motivated to implement these strategies into my second grade classroom even though this text was designed for applications in 7-12 grade classrooms. Many of the ideas can be altered for a primary classroom. After one year of implementing his strategies into my classroom, my students were excited to read, excited to discuss texts and excited to learn more. Thinking of all this excitement that reading created in my classroom, I realized that I did not have this same energy for writing in my classroom. In my classroom, I have many students who say, "Can I read now?" when they finish with task, but I have only a handful who ask if they can write. After seven years of teaching, professional developments and graduate courses, I do not feel like I have a firm understanding on how to effectively help my reluctant writers. In my classroom, I would love to create a passion for writing in my classroom, where all students are asking to read and write.

Potential Importance of the Capstone Question

My team at work meets often and one thing that is brought up often is what do you do with those students that do not write and just sit there with a blank paper in front of them. This project will give me the ideas to teach other teachers who do not know how to effectively teach writing to their reluctant writers. One of my goals after creating this project is to create a professional development for primary age teachers on how to motivate reluctant writers to write narrative stories. Another goal is to learn what

strategies and ideas can I incorporate into my classroom to motivate my students to write even if they are reluctant.

Conclusion

In Chapter Two of this project I will summarize my findings related to defining what a struggling writer is and what struggling writers look like in a classroom. Further, I will also include what motivates the students to write. Lastly, I will explain types of strategies that teachers can implement into their writing time. Chapter Three will include a description of the project I will create. In addition, I will include the demographics and setting of the project. Then, I will explain who will benefit from my project. Lastly, Chapter Four will be my concluding chapter and will be my final reflection on the project.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter Two, I will discuss my research about struggling writers. In this chapter, I will also explain what motivates students to write. Finally, I will explain the research on models of writing that effectively teach students how to write. The research described in the following chapter helps answer my question, *How can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?* In classrooms, students can feel frustrated by their writing or the process of writing, which can cause them to struggle or become reluctant to write. Many educators have encountered a struggling writer in their classroom. In this chapter, it is important to know what defines a struggling or reluctant writer. My definition of a struggling writer or reluctant writer will be explained in the chapter. Once the definition is explained, there will be a better understanding in the research and help teachers relate to their classroom settings.

When researching, I found three emerging themes. The first theme that came from the research is the idea of the struggling/reluctant writer. There are definitions for these types of writers. I have also researched how to help reluctant or struggling writers become successful writers. Defining the struggling/reluctant writers will also be used in my final project, which will be explained in Chapter Three. The second theme is what strategies are there to intrinsically motivate students. This information will be used in my final project and explained more in depth in Chapter Three. The third and last theme that will be discussed in Chapter Two is research on how to teach writing to students. The

following section is about struggling or reluctant writers and what they need to be successful as writers at their grade level.

Definition of Struggling or Reluctant Writer and The Number of US Students Who Struggle

Lowe and Bormann (2012) define struggling writers as unwilling or disengaged writers. Another definition of struggling writers comes from Harris, Graham and Mason (2006) who define a struggling writer as,

a child who scored at or below the 25th percentile on a norm-referenced test of writing performance that measured the inclusion of specific thematic elements in a story and who was also identified as a poor writer by the classroom teacher. (p. 296)

While there are different ways to define struggling writer, the National Assessment of Education Progress assessment provides a way to quantify the number of struggling writers.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (as cited in Lienemann, Graham, Leader-Janssen & Reid, 2006) states that only 1 in 100 students achieves “advanced” writing skills. In addition, three out of four 4th, 8th and 12th grade students achieve only partial mastery of the writing skills and knowledge they need at their grade level. Persky, Daane, and Jin (2003) also state that of the students taking these written assessments, the 28% of the fourth grade students scored at or below basic level of writing. Also, 84% of the fourth grade students scored at or above proficient. This means that they may have also achieved an advanced score on the written assessment.

In addition to this data the National Commission on Writing in America's Schools and Colleges released a report, *The Neglected "R"*. The three "R's" are reading, writing and arithmetic. The writing subject as described by Mo, Kopke, Hawkins, Troia & Olinghouse (2014) states that writing has been become overlooked and marginalized. Since writing isn't a teachers main priority, like reading and math, it has been deemed the neglected "R". Math and reading can incorporate writing, but not explicit and scaffolded writing. In my own classroom, my main focus was always math and reading. My goal for my weekly lesson plans are to schedule math, reading and writing each week. Once the planning is finished and after scheduling math, reading, lunch, recess, specials and read aloud, writing time doesn't seem to fit into the schedule. This scenario is familiar between my teammates and other colleagues. There is a growing concern that the students in the United States are not meeting the basic expectations. When there isn't a consistent writing time in class, students don't get enough practice writing, which creates incompetent writers. Through this project, my goal is to make writing a priority and easier to fit into the daily schedule and help all my students even the struggling writers.

Identifying Struggling Writers

From the research, Cruz (2008), states that struggling writers can be identified as those students who are stuck all the time. Those students who are frequently seen sitting for several minutes or a whole writing time, with almost nothing on the page. These students can also be known for sharpening pencils, using the bathroom, or visiting the nurse often. Another type of struggling writer in your class may be the student who suddenly starts making jokes and talking back, or the ones who burst into tears. These

students are in classrooms all over the state and they have barriers in their way. It is a teacher's job to break down those barriers and clear a way for writing success.

Common Barriers for K-6 Learners in Becoming a Proficient Writer

Lowe and Bormann (2012) describe four common barriers that writers often experience including:

- fear of writing,
- lack of understanding,
- vulnerability and
- the act and process of writing.

The first barrier of fear of writing comes from a fear of starting the writing due to the student's perceived inability to spell, the feeling of 'nothing to write' or poor handwriting. These types of barriers make students afraid to write. They may feel incompetent compared to their peers. Reluctance in writing can come from lack of understanding described by Lowe and Bormann (2012) as not comprehending the parts that are involved in written texts. Also, writers can experience barriers such as vulnerability. Their vulnerability may come from having to share their writing in front of other peers. If a writer doesn't feel confident in their writing abilities and is now being asked to share their writing in a public space, there can be barriers. The last common barrier that writers may experience is the act and process of writing. This barrier will be explained further in the chapter.

Three additional barriers to becoming proficient in writer have been identified in the research of Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) including;

- start to write, but do not go back and check their spelling or make revisions,
- have trouble coming up with what to write after prewriting activities and
- not connecting their ideas to make sense in their writing

The students that start to write, but do not go back and check their spelling or make revisions, these barriers include make spelling errors, skip words, and rarely read over their writing again to determine if the writing makes sense and has a flow. Another barrier that Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) explain is when students have trouble coming up with what to write after prewriting activities. Prewriting activities can stimulate writing ideas and help students get an idea of what to write during independent time, also can be described as brainstorming. The last writing barrier that can affect a writer is when they don't connect their ideas from prewriting or brainstorming stage to make sense in their written text. In this last section, research has shown that many barriers or roadblocks prevent students to write and to write proficiently. The following section will explain more on the topics of a struggling writer, motivation and writing strategies.

Struggling Writers

The review of the research identified three ways of supporting struggling writers that are related to this capstone project. The three include:

- providing choice to writers
- using alternatives to traditional writing activities such as digital storytelling
- creating safe writing environments

One way to help our struggling writers is by giving the students choice in their writing. Bromley (2015) explains that choice is when the teacher gives multiple options for writing topics. Choice in both topic and format builds interest and commitment to writing. When teachers suggest choice it frees students to write, instead of giving the student one choice to write. Bromley (2015) suggests that struggling writers should be given choice when writing a topic. Research identified in this review of the literature supports the importance of providing students with choice when engaged in writing is explored next.

Choice. Most often, struggling writers have difficulties because they are given a writing assignment or a topic to write about that does not interest them. There is no motivation for the struggling writer. They can be disengaged in the idea or topic of the writing assignment. The advantages of giving students choice allows them to be active participants in the topic. Mayher (as cited in Street, 2005) states that, “student-initiated writing assignments will produce better results due to the inherent stake that students have in projects of their own choosing” (p. 638). The ability to choose the writing topic helps the students use their wealth of knowledge.

Furr (2003) explains that students have the ability to produce quality writing when they write from their own personal experiences. The students write with more voice in these assignments. Allowing students to write from their own personal experience also helps them create identity in their writing. Furr (2003) explains what identity in writing is. It is when the writing isn’t the impersonal writing that most students learn to practice in school. If students have no voice, as Street (2005) states there will be no identity in

their writing. This section described the importance of choice during writing time. The quality of work improves when choice is implemented. Choice can also be represented by other forms of written work.

Digital storytelling. There is the traditional way of writing, with a pencil and paper. This has been the traditional way of writing ever since I was a student in school. During my preparation for teaching, writing had always been taught the traditional way too. The lessons I learned were about five paragraph writing or using sentence starters for everything. This is how I taught writing in my classroom for years. The students would produce minimal work and it would be dull to read. The traditional way of getting down the student's ideas about their writing is onto paper, but it has to make sense once it has been written down. There is no time to think or share ideas so many students have difficulties with this process and how to get their ideas down on paper.

An alternative to the traditional approach to writing is described by Sylvester and Greenidge (2009). These authors suggest using digital stories as a way to teach writing and describe it as a, "multimedia text consisting of still images complemented by a narrated soundtrack to tell a story" (p. 284) This strategy allows students to create stories through different technologies. According to Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) the use of a digital storytelling approach is that it allows struggling writers to stay motivated when they are engaged in the whole process. Another reason why students are more likely to stay motivated is the use of computers. Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) explain that the presence of computers or devices in schools offers unparalleled success in learning.

Another benefit of digital storied identified by Sylvester and Greenidge (2009) is how this approach gives students a chance to create something using another form of communication. The different form of written communication is the use of storyboards. The students write down their ideas using a storyboard. Then, they are able to show their ideas through visuals. From the visual storyboard it helps create a narration that is cohesive. The scenes or images can be expanded into paragraphs, once the ideas are drawn. The students stay engaged in the process because creating a digital form of a written text is more motivating to share with other students. Teachers can use digital storytelling in their classrooms to engage students in a nontraditional way. Also, teachers can be comfortable with giving their students the choice of multimedia text and know that this other form can still generate written work.

Create a safe writing environment. Ganske, Monroe and Strickland (2003) explain the importance of teachers asking themselves, “have I created a safe environment for my students to write?” The authors recommend that teachers ask themselves this question because students feel comfortable to write freely. In order for students to feel comfortable, they must know that they are in an environment where they can make mistakes. Additionally, Ganske, Monroe and Strickland (2003) state this is an environment where these mistakes are supported by students’ peers and teachers. They should be able to take risks in their writing and have their ideas be valued and listened to thoroughly.

Summary

The review of the research literature for this capstone highlights that There are different types of struggling writers. It also has shown many on how teachers can implement strategies for their struggling writers. Teachers must understand where their students need some assistance or what the classroom can provide for their students based on their needs. The interest in completing this research and this project is help other teachers understand the research.

Struggling writers can improve if given different nontraditional options, choices in their writing and a place where they know they can be comfortable making mistakes and learning from. When teachers identify the struggling writers in their classrooms or setting, there becomes a need for motivating their students. Teachers need to encourage these struggling writers even more than the students who are successful writers. In this section struggling writers have been explains and this information can help teachers understand what barriers stand in the way of students finding joy in writing. In addition to struggling writers, motivation can be a barrier for writers.

Motivation

My classroom experience provides evidence that writing does not come easily to all students, especially students who are are below their grade level expectations. So it was important to search the research literature for ideas regarding recommended motivational strategies that can inform the design of my project. The goal of this aspect of my review of the research literature was to provide real life strategies for teachers to implement in their classrooms. The question that is trying to be answered is *how can*

primary teachers motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing? The research will answer the part of how primary teachers can motivate their students.

The review of the research literature for this capstone research, revealed how motivation comes from relationships, purposeful writing, and the use of mentor texts. Serravallo (2017) describes how writing does not come easy to students, but the goal of motivating the students to write is to have them find something they love about writing and be engaged in some part of it. The next section will explain how research reviewed for this capstone recommends ways to motivate students and get them to engage in their writing starting with the importance of a supportive environment where relationships are built.

Supportive environment. Bromley (2015) states that in order for students to start to feel motivated or engaged in their writing, they need “a supportive environment for writing that includes individual, physical and social aspects is critical to best-practices instruction” (p. 295). Some of these individual, physical and social best practices aspects include a classroom rich with words for students to use in their writing. An example of physical way that teachers can create a supportive environment is by using a word wall. According to Serravallo (2017b), a word wall in a classroom has high frequency words. In the classroom the teacher adds commonly used words to it that students can access all day long in the classroom. Word walls should be something the students are a part of making. If there are already fifty words on the wall before the students come to class, it becomes wallpaper. If students are involved in adding the carefully chosen words, then the words will be used more often. In my experience using a word wall makes words

more easily accessible to students, the students can gain independence by finding the spelling of these commonly used words.

Another form, explained by Bromley (2015), of creating a supportive environment in a classroom is promoting a collaborative writing classroom. In this type of classroom, the use of collaborative writing can be helpful for students who have ideas to add, but do not yet have the language skills, confidence to write or the motivation. The students can talk ideas out and help each other with their ideas and writing. After students feel comfortable with each other, students can start to feel comfortable in the classroom and the teacher.

Once a supportive environment is created, McDonough and Ackerman (2017) state that forming a strong relationship with students is a must. The following are strategies created by McDonough and Ackerman (2017), that can create a culture of trust and respect. The first strategy to create a strong relationships is to have the teacher write. Teachers can show how hard it is to create an idea, and get their ideas down on paper. Teachers can show how tricky it is to write and what potential problems that might arise for the students. The students see their teacher as a student too.

Hale (20017) suggests another way of creating a supportive environment and creating strong relationships is by sharing students strengths. Relationships do not begin by putting down others and focusing on their problems. Instead of focusing on what a student needs to work on in their writing, teachers focus on their writing strengths. For example, the strengths can be details, sentence structure, specific locations or key ideas written down. Hale (2017) suggests that teachers that support the student's strengths are

more interested in showing the students their accomplishments and that even the simplest form of writing has successes in it. The praise should focus on specific strategies and techniques. Students will feel success in learning they are more willing to learn.

According to Julien (2018), one last way to motivate our students in a supportive environment can be achieved by knowing our students. This can be simply done by noticing new shoes, new haircut, having morning meeting or eating lunch with them. When students feel comfortable and feel safe in their learning environment, Julien (2018) states they can learn effectively and enthusiastically. She also states that students who are in highly emotional supportive classrooms do better in transitioning grade levels. In addition to creating a supportive writing environment another way to support struggling writers is by using mentor texts. The use of mentor texts is explored in the next section.

Mentor texts. Once a strong relationship is built between the teacher and the students, the teacher can employ more motivational strategies such as reading mentor texts. Serravallo (2017) explains that mentor texts are aids for students to show how other authors write a specific genre. Teachers read mentor texts to introduce a certain writing style or genre to their writers on style, voice and characteristics of a certain way of writing. This is motivational, according to Serravallo (2017), because it gives the students an idea of how to write a piece of writing. In addition to Serravallo (2017) the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (as cited in Bromley, 2015) also provide a rationale for how the use of mentor texts can be motivational to students.

CCSS support the use of mentor texts as a way to motivate students to write because when teachers “read widely and deeply from among a broad range of

high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts [it] builds a foundation for school success” (as cited in Bromley, 2015, p. 296). In the following quote Serravallo (2017) describes how the use of mentor texts can be motivating for students who have little or no knowledge on how to write a piece of writing. Serravallo (2017) states:

When we [teachers] help them to study the work of other authors (“mentor authors”) who have written something similar in form of genre to what they [the students] want to write, they can study it, “reading it like a writer”, to learn about the craft techniques and strategies the writer must have employed to write it and then they can transfer those discoveries to their own writing. (p. 25)

In other words, the mentor texts offer a starting point for students who have yet to engage with the various types of writing expected to be used within the class. In addition to the use of mentor texts another way to support struggling writers is by having them write for real purposes. Writing for real purposes is explored in the next section.

Writing for Real Purposes

Teachers must know their students and know to focus on them. Students come to school with many experiences, background knowledge, and ideas. Teachers need to recognize that, “writers who discover their own topics write with voice and commitment” (Spandel, 2005, p. 18).

Dryden (2005) explains another strategy on motivation; writing advice to others. The students write advice letters to characters in stories, after reading about their problem. Dryden (2005) explains that the students show enthusiasm as they composed

letters to characters in stories. These written assignments are not just dull sentence starters or unoriginal writing prompts. The advice letters ask for the students thoughts and ideas in a purposeful way. Another way to think about writing for real purposes is explained by Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall & Tower state (as cited in Wilson, 2008).

According to Duke et al. (as cited in Wilson, 2008) writing for authentic purposes in authentic contexts is another way to write for a real purpose. A real purpose can be students writing a persuasive piece about wanting an allowance, or asking for a later curfew. These issues are real to them and more meaningful, because they are given the choice. The authors continue that this type of writing can increase the quality of the writing. When a student writes for real purposes they stay engaged in the writing for longer. The writing starts to show more passion, and more interest, instead of the writing what is expected and dull, just to pass a writing grade.

Teachers need to give students less assigned pieces of writing and give them more writing that is for a real purpose. These written texts need to be explicitly taught using many models of interactive writing. In addition to the motivational strategies discussed there are other writing strategies that can support struggling writers explained in the next section.

Writing Strategies

Read (2010) reflects on the idea that many of us do not know how to write specific format or style, so why would we expect our students to write in a format without proper modeling, and scaffolding. For example, if you were asked to write a legal document for an adoption, would you be able to do it? In order for our students to

be able to write the expected genres and styles that we expect of them in school, No one would expect a normal person to be able to write a legal adoption form, without proper training. Gibson (2008), claims that children need explicit instruction and scaffolded practice in order to solve the problem of writing a certain style. In this section there will be evidence that supports Gibson's (2008) claim. This section will outline what teachers and students need in the classroom in order to help all students know how to write specific genres and styles such as those defined by The Common Core Standards (2010).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010) define three broad writing genres; opinion writing, informative or explanatory text, and narrative or creative text. The CCSS define opinion writing as

pieces in which they introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an 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. (2011, p.26)

CCSS (2010) define an informative or explanatory written text as “ texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section” (2011, p.26). The last writing genre is narrative text, and it is described as, “recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure” (2011, p.26).

In the state where the project is being developed the types of writing that second grade students are expected to master are explicit. For example, one writing standard

for second grade students is to engage in narrative writing. This means that my students are able to write a narrative piece in which they introduce the start with a hook, write a beginning, middle and end and add transition words to their written piece.

Roth and Dabrowski (2014) argue that interactive writing is an ideal method for addressing all three Common Core Writing Standards because it provides explicit modeling and gives guidance to the students as they learn how to write in each of these standards. In order to address all three CCSS standards, there should be some explicit modeling and teaching to the students.

Instructional models for supporting struggling writers: definitions and models. In the research, I found many styles of teaching writing that all teach explicit writing styles. This is explained as Read (2010) refers to it as scaffolded writing instruction, or Inquiry, Modeling, Shared, Collaborative and Independent writing (IMSCI). This IMSCI model is also similar to what Williams (2017) describes as interactive writing. The following section's purpose is to introduce these models and understand them. The next section also is designed to support teachers on how to create a scaffolded writing process. The different models are the IMSCI model, the SRSD model and the interactive model.

Inquiry, modeling, shared, collaborative, and independent (IMSCI) model.

The IMSCI model (Read, 2010) is described as a series of steps, based on the concept of scaffolding. Read (2010) explains what each of the five letters of the title means. For example, the I stands for inquiry. The IMSCI model includes class read aloud. During

the read aloud the teacher focuses on a particular genre for a week or two to engage their students in an inquiry with the features of that genre.

Read (2010) continues that the M stands for modeling in the IMSCI model. During this step the teacher models for their students how to write a text in that specific genre highlighted during the read aloud. The teachers engages in modeling using graphic organizers, brainstorming topics, drafting and revising.

The third letter of IMSCI is S and Read (2010) describes that it represents shared writing. After the students have had exposure to the genre and some modeling, the students and teacher co-write a text following the patterns and styles found in the inquiry step. During shared writing Read (2010) notes that the students are engaged in making decisions about the topic, sentences structure, and organization. All of these decisions will also be made by them in the independent writing time.

The fourth letter if IMSCI is C, and Read (2010) describes that it is for the collaborative step. Read (2010) explains that during this step the students work together to produce writing. This step can be done with students taking turns being the scribe or each student writing their own text, but using similar ideas.

The last and fifth step in the IMSCI model is I the independent step. This steps involves gradually releasing responsibility to the students, which consist of students slowly being released from whole group lesson to writing independently. They are ready to write independently after all the scaffolding, normally after the M, modeling step. Once they have all this scaffolding it will be easier for students to write successfully. This

is different than what Read (2010) explains about how some writing teachers teach in class.

Many teachers tell their students to write anything, on any topic and expect their students to be able to do it without any problem. This type of writing instruction is like having the students being thrown into the deep end of the pool without being able to swim. Read (2010), affirms that, “students are more successful writing independently if they have become familiar with the features of the genre during an inquiry phase, have seen the teacher model the genre, and participated in writing in that genre through shared or collaborative writing” (p. 48). The IMSCI is a model for scaffolding writing instruction and it is similar to the interactive writing model, and similar to the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD).

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) model. The model of SRSD is a powerful evidence based approach for developing young writers. Harris, Graham, Friedlander and Laud (2013) state that the SRSD instruction, “includes explicit, interactive learning of powerful strategies for writing both across and within genres” (p. 539). Harris et al. (2013) state that this writing approach, “develops self-efficacy for writing, attributions to strategy knowledge and effort, and motivation for writing” (p. 539). Similar to the IMSCI model, the SRSD instruction follows six steps that are highly structured and develop into gradual release of responsibility for writing. The following table shows the six steps.

Table 1. SRSD Stages of Instruction

1. Develop and activate knowledge needed for writing and self-regulation
 - a. Read and discuss working in the genre being addressed (persuasive essays, reports, etc.) to develop declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge (e.g. What is an opinion? What are the parts of a persuasive essay, are they here? How do you think the author came up with this idea; what would you do? What might the author have done to organize the ideas? What might the author do when he gets frustrated?); appreciation of characteristics of effective writing (How did the writer grab your interest?); and other knowledge and understandings targeted for instruction. Continue development through the next two stages as needed until key knowledge and understandings are clear.
 - b. Discuss and explore both writing and self-regulation strategies to be learned; may begin development of self-regulation, introducing goal setting and self-monitoring.
2. Discuss it--discourse is critical!
 - a. Discuss students' current writing and self-regulation abilities, their attitudes and beliefs about writing, what they are saying to themselves as they write, and how these factors might help or hinder them as writers; emphasize role of both effort and learning powerful strategies in becoming a better writer.
 - b. Graphing (self-monitoring) may be introduced, using prior compositions; this will assist with goal setting (graphing prior writing can be skipped if the student is likely to react negatively--graph only essays written during instruction).
 - c. Further discuss writing and self-regulation strategies to be learned: purpose, benefits, how and when they can be used or might be inappropriate (begin generalization support).
 - d. Establish students' commitment to learn strategies and act as collaborative partner; establish role of student effort and strategy use.
3. Model it
 - a. Use interactive teacher modeling or collaborative modeling of writing and self-regulation strategies.
 - b. Analyze and discuss strategies and model's performance and make changes as needed.
 - c. Model self-assessment and self-recording through graphing of modeling compositions.
 - d. Continue student development of self-regulation strategies across composition and other tasks and situations; discuss use here and in other settings (continue generalization support).
4. Memorize it
 - a. Although typically begun in earlier stages, require and confirm memorization of strategies, mnemonic(s), and self-instruction as appropriate.
 - b. Continue to confirm and support memorization in following stages, and make sure students have memorized the mnemonics and what they mean before independent performance.
5. Support it
 - a. Teachers and students use writing and self-regulation strategies collaboratively to achieve success in composing, using prompts such as strategy charts, self-instruction sheets, and graphic organizers.
 - b. Challenging, appropriate initial goals for genre elements and characteristics of writing are established collaboratively with individual students; criterion levels are increased gradually until final goals are met.
 - c. Prompts, guidance and collaboration are faded individually (e.g., graphic organizer replaced with student creating mnemonic on scratch paper) until the student can compose successfully alone.
 - d. Self-regulation components (goal setting, self-instructions, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement) are all being used by this stage; additional forms of self-regulation, such as managing the writing environment, use of imagery, and so on may be introduced.

- e. Discuss plans for maintenance and continue support of generalization.
- 6. Independent performance
 - a. Students are able to use writing and self-regulation strategies independently; teachers monitor and support as necessary.
 - b. Fading of overt self-regulation may begin (graphing may be discontinued).
 - c. Plans for maintenance and generalization continue to be discussed and implemented.

Graham, Harris and McKeown (cited in Harris, et al. 2013) explain that there have been over 80 studies of SRSD (true experiments, quasi-experiments, and single-subject design studies) and there is convincing evidence that the SRSD model is an effective method of teaching writing to a full range of writing abilities. The SRSD model can be implemented into many writing genres, including narratives, opinion and persuasive essays, story writing and other genres. In addition to the SRSD model, another model can help students write independently.

Interactive writing model. Roth and Dabrowski (2014) highlight and define that, “interactive writing is a teaching approach that can simultaneously advance both the individualized needs of writers and any grade-level goals” (p. 43). Roth and Dabrowski explain that interactive writing needs thoughtful teaching decisions, in order to advance the individual needs of the writers and the grade level goals. The interactive writing model is described by Clay, Lave and Wenger, Vygotsky, Wertsch, (as cited in Williams, 2017) as “grounded in cognitive and sociocultural theories of learning” (p. 523). Williams (2017), states that the purpose of interactive writing is to “mediate students’ understanding of what it means to write” (p. 523). The lessons in order to mediate students are how-to oriented and teachers model what students are expected to do during

independent writing. Interactive writing has also been described by Roth and Dabrowski (2014) as a powerful teaching approach worth revisiting and refining to support writers.

The definition that I will be using to guide this section is explained by Roth and Dabrowski (2014) as a “dynamic instructional method during which the teacher and students work together to construct a meaningful text while discussing the details of the writing process” (p. 34). This model is similar to the IMSCI model because lessons are taught through modeling what students are expected to do during independent writing.

For example, modeling interactive writing means that the teacher and students work together to create an oral message without revising. Then, the teacher and students “share the pen” and create a written text together from the oral message. When students and the teacher “share the pen” the teacher shows their thought process by sharing their thoughts out loud. Williams (2017), states that when the teacher uses think alouds it gives a window into her composing process. The teacher is vital for students to write independently and with motivation.

In all of these models there is an element of group writing, meaning students and teachers write one piece of writing together in a whole group. Collier (2014) affirms the idea of whole group writing because it allows writing to be a safe place for success. Flood and Lapp (as cited in Gibson, 2008) states that grouping practices are often missing in effective writing instruction. Gibson (2008) states that effective writing teachers should demonstrate the many stages of the writing process including but not limiting to, word choice, rereading the text, and solving problems. This is all done as a group and done collaboratively.

Teachers must teach writing daily and show the students their thought process and use think alouds. Herbert (2015) explains that the process of learning to write is difficult, frustrating and wearisome. There needs to be enough practice with the writing process in order for the students to understand how to effectively write a piece of text.

Summary

This chapter has outlines effective and evidence based instructional models that helps students of all levels become independent writers. Each model has steps to follow to allow the writer to feel confident in the writing process. In addition, each model has a gradual release of responsibility to the student writer.

Conclusion

The literature review has shown that struggling writers may have barriers that teachers need to be aware of when teaching their students. The literature review also explained what strategies can be implemented for struggling writers. In the previous chapter, motivational strategies were explained. These strategies are focused on motivating students to write. The last section of the chapter explained many models of writing that help students learn how to write independently.

The focus for the Chapter Three is how to incorporate all of these models into a effective professional development for K-2 teachers. In Chapter Three, I will describe the project description, the setting, demographics and the intended audience for the professional development.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

Writing continues to be something that I do not feel comfortable teaching. It is not easy for me to share my own writing. At the start of this project my perception of writing was an area of growth for me, as a teacher. During my research for this project, I became interested in narrative writing. The ability to write creatively, in a narrative style and creatively intrigued me after reading so many picture books to my students throughout the years. Moving forward my goal was to create a project that would support my professional goal of growing as a teacher of writing, and creating intrinsic motivation in my students to want to write. The project allows me to support educators in understanding the elements of effective writing instruction, especially narrative writing instruction. This leads to my capstone project question is *How can primary teachers motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?*

In the following section, I will explain my project and describe in detail what it will entail. Also, there will be an explanation of my reasoning for a professional development style. The setting of the project will be described and the demographics of the district. Lastly, there will be a description of the target audience.

Project Description

My project was intended for grades K-2 teachers in my setting who are also interested in learning additional writing strategies to help their struggling writers write narrative stories. It was a 30-40 minute professional development session (PD) that

includes a Google Slide presentation. This one time professional development was limited in length of time and number of sessions. This is a limitation, but before and after this session, the teachers and staff who have participated will have access to my personal information, such as my name, email, and Google Slide presentation. This professional development was offered at the end of the school year for any teachers and staff who wanted to participate. This session was part of a two day professional development workshop. These days were held annually after the school year in my school district. Each day was full of different professional development sessions. Teachers could attend up to three sessions per day. The teachers could attend at least three sessions, because of the time constraints of the day and the lunch hour. My presentation was only one session long.

My session used a presentation type of tool; Google Slides. The slides included the research from the literature and how it can be implemented into the teacher's classrooms. The project was presented to about 30 teachers and staff. The presentation's goal was to answer my project's question *How can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?* for the teachers and staff. At the end of the presentation, the last Google Slide will have my contact information. If teachers have a questions or comments after the presentation, they can contact me. They can also contact me to find out more information about my research.

In my presentation, the slides included my objectives. My objectives for the presentation were defining struggling writers, identifying struggling writers, why we need to motivate our students to write and how using mentor texts can motivate students. After

listing the objectives, I introduced myself and my credentials. Then, the rationale for the presentation was explained, along with the definition of a struggling writer. After, this slide I had slides to help the teachers get up and move. The slides have statements on them and the teachers had to decide if they were true or false. They walked to either side of the room marked with “true” or “false”. Once they moved and discussed with other teachers about the statements, I shared a video from Steven Graham (2013) explaining characteristics of struggling writers. After the video, I explained how to identify struggling writers. After this, I used the interactive model strategy of inquiry. We looked through mentor texts and identified patterns in the mentor texts.

During the presentation, the teachers learned about my educational background and listened to my rationale for the professional development presentation. The presentation started with how I defined a “struggling writer,” and how to identify those students in a classroom. After defining a struggling writer and how to identify them, the teachers thought of a student that matched the description of the struggling writer. I asked each teacher to think of a specific struggling writer from their class, and start planning their instruction around that student. Once the teacher had identified a specific struggling writer in their class they started to think of how to implement the strategies for those students.

After thinking or visualizing one to two students that were identified as struggling writers, I gave examples and strategies of what motivates students to write. In addition to the motivational strategies, there was a stress on explaining why there is a need for students to be motivated to write, before they begin to learn how to write. After

introducing the meaning of struggling writers and what motivates students, I had the teachers and their table group or, the grade level team, discuss together motivation in their students and write down how those strategies could be incorporated into their classrooms. The next part of my presentation was a hands on activity from the first component of the interactive writing model mentioned in my literature review.

For the first hands on activity, the teachers looked through actual mentor texts for different genres. They used the inquiry lesson to understand what each writing genre needs to include, by finding patterns. The presentation ended with the teachers giving feedback through an interactive bulletin board website called Padlet. My prompt for my Padlet was, “1. What information was new to you? 2. What would you like to have learned more about? 3. On a scale from 1-5, 1 being not useful, and 5 being very useful, how would you rate this professional development?” This professional development had hands on activities and a time for the teachers to respond to the presentation, as explained in research about professional development.

Drew Perkins (2018) explained that teachers want a professional development that is relevant to their content, helps them plan, improves their instruction, includes hands on strategies, applicable to their classroom, is highly interactive, and is sustained over time. Perkins (2018) recognizes that teachers are professionals with valuable insights, which is why I asked for their feedback on the Padlet website. To extend what Perkins stated is what Dr. Jana Hunzicker (2010), states about effective professional development. Hunzicker (2010), states that an effective professional development needs intrinsic

motivation that supports the teachers. My goal was for the presentation to stay focused on instructional strategies and be collaborative in nature.

Setting

My setting was a suburban public school, in the upper midwest. My school is one of six elementary schools in the district. The school I work in has approximately 730 students in grades K-6. This project was presented to the district at an annual end of the year professional development. Any teacher from the district could attend. The potential pool of participants from the district were 68 K-2 teachers. The session was offered to all teachers in the district, but K-2 teachers were the intended audience. According to the state department of education, where the project was being implemented there were approximately 456 teachers in the entire district. Of these approximate 456 teachers, 68% have their master's degree, 30% have their bachelor's degree and .8% have their doctorate degree. In this district 68% of the teachers have taught for more than 10 years, 29.5% have taught between 3-10 years and 2.3% have taught less than 3 years.

In AY 2017/2018 school year, the district had approximately 6,719 students in K-12. The demographics of the students included 54% are white, 22% are black or african american, 10% are hispanic or latino, 7% are two or more races, 6% are Asian, .3% are american indian or alaska native and .1% are native hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. In my elementary school, there are 36% of students who identify as free/reduced priced lunch, 15% are in special education, 8% are English Learners and .8% are homeless.

According to the state department of education where the project was implemented, from 2016-2018 scores on the annual standardized test indicated that 775 students exceeded expectations in reading, 1,327 students met expectations, 537 students partially met expectations, and 643 students did not meet the reading expectations.

Target Audience

The intended audience was K-2 teachers from the district. My assumption was that teachers in grades 1-2 would benefit the most, because the literature I had collected and reviewed grades 1-2 writing strategies more in depth.

Timeline

Task Description and Timeline for Completing Capstone Project in Spring of 2019

Task	Task Description	Date	Notes/Completed
Register	Register for GED 8490 Capstone Project class Spring 2019	Spr registration opens in Fall '18	Completed
Resources & Revision	-Identify resources for revisions -Continue to revise Chapter One -Chapter Two revised based on feedback from GED 8023 -Create Reference List -Ensure 100 % APA accuracy	Jan	Completed

	Chapter One, Two, and Three		
	Created project, made slides to go with motivation and struggling writers and made slides for interactive writing	Feb	Completed
	Wrote Chapter Four	March	Completed
	Revised whole project and Chapter Four	April	Completed
Project Completed	Project completed Project submitted for assessment	By the end of April	Completed

Summary

In Chapter Three there was the project description, the background knowledge and research on professional development. In addition, there were descriptions of the setting of the project, target audience, and a timeline of the project. Chapter Four documents how the project progressed and what was experienced while creating the project.

Chapter Four

Reflection

Introduction

The summer before my final year of graduate school, my mind was filled with many capstone possibilities. What topic would I choose? What topic would benefit my teaching? Another question that crossed my mind was, what topic will benefit my students? My goal when starting this capstone project was identifying what would help my students enjoy writing. Through this research and project, I feel that I have answered that question.

In this chapter, I will reflect on the capstone process, revisit the literature review and discuss how my research is connected to it. I explain my limitations, and possible future implications for presenting my information. In addition, I will share my reflection and describe my growth as a learner, researcher and writer. Also, I will explain how I met my goal of answering the question, *How can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?* Throughout this experience, I will describe how I changed my mindset towards teaching writing from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset.

Throughout this process of researching and writing, I learned that my first step was changing my fixed mindset about my own writing, to a growth mindset. When I started this process, there was always a hope that the researching and writing would be understandable and applicable to my career. There had to be a shift in my mindset, from

fixed to growth. Instead of *hoping* that the research and writing would be understandable, I shifted to, “my research and writing *will* be understandable for others to read.”

Starting graduate school, I knew that I would have to conduct research. There would have to be credible sources found. There had been no reasons in my educational career for me to research so thoroughly. This type of research made me nervous. It made me nervous because completing written school work has never come easily to me and I did not want to fail. When the research process started, it was difficult to find articles about motivating young writers. I started to realize that there were few articles that focused on motivating young students to write. It was too broad of a topic. I changed my research on how to motivate students. There were very few resources about motivating students with their writing. I needed to narrow my research.

Connecting to the Research

While searching and reading through the research on writing and helping struggling writers, the one piece of information that was mentioned often, was the use of choice in the classroom. Bromley (2015) states that choice is when multiple options are given to the student when completing the subject. The research states that when choice is given, the students feel more in charge and empowered to do the work. The writing subject can be given, but the topic can be the student’s choice. For example, students in second grade must write a personal narrative, a story about a moment in their own life. The student has the choice to write about any moment in their life. They can have the choice to write their final story using technology, or paper and pencil.

Mayer (cited in Street, 2005) explains that choice helps students feel confident in their writing. Choice in writing can help a struggling writer because they can still complete the same writing piece, but they will have other options on how to finish it. When a student gets to pick their own story topic, it interests them more, so they stay motivated to write about it.

Another point made in my literature review is the use of mentor texts to aid struggling writers in particular. Mentor texts, as stated by Serravallo (2017), give an example on how to write a specific story. Mentor texts can be used in inquiry lessons to give students an idea of what specific writing topics need in order to be understood.

Mentor texts are a great way to introduce a writing topic to students. Through the research, the big idea that stood out to me, is that oftentimes teachers assume that when they teach a writing lesson, students will immediately know how to write that form of writing. Teachers, must explicitly teach and model each step to complete the writing topic. In my project, I have made slides in my presentation about the importance of mentor texts. In addition to mentor texts, I give the teachers a choice of books to search through.

Description of Project

My project focuses on professional development for teachers in primary elementary grades in my district. Teachers will have the opportunity to participate in a two day, end of the school year professional development. Teachers can self select which professional development sessions they attend. My professional development is entitled, “Creating a Love of Writing in Struggling Students”. The presentation will last for one

session of 45 minutes. During the session, teachers will learn about motivating writers and how to use mentor texts to introduce writing topics. The professional development was created using Google Slides. The teachers in the session will have access to the presentation, along with my Padlet where they will provide answers to the following questions, 1. What information was new to you? 2. What would you like to have learned more about? 3. On a scale from 1-5, 1 being not useful, and 5 being very useful, how would you rate this professional development?

Limitations of Project

As I started to think of my presentation format, I was not sure what form of presentation tool I would use or what would be easier for me to communicate my information to the teachers. As I was creating the presentation, I wanted to add all the research and information that I learned through my research. If all of this information was added, the presentation would be much longer than 45 minutes. It was a challenge for me to only focus on using mentor texts to motivate struggling writers. I wanted to add more about the interactive writing process to my presentation. As I was creating the professional development, I wanted to create an engaging and purposeful presentation. I wanted the teachers to feel prepared to teach their struggling writers in their classrooms. My goal was to make a professional development that I would enjoy attending myself. I often had to imagine myself in the presentation to view it from a teacher's perspective.

Implications of Project

My goal for this professional development was to create a joy of writing amongst my peers and for them to share that joy with their students.. My capstone question is *How*

can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing? I believe this question is answered through my professional development. In the presentation, there are strategies to motivate struggling writers and the definition of a reluctant writer. This professional development presentation will be presented at the end of the school year. When a professional development session is at the end of the school year, there can be knowledge lost over the summer, but the information can be revisited, because I will send out my presentation to the participants. They can look back at my slides at their leisure. Also, they will have my contact information, for further questions, or if they need any of my research. My goal after this presentation is for teachers, such as myself that don't feel confident teaching writing will gain confidence. I hope that the teachers leave feeling ready and prepared to write, with a newfound sense of excitement.

Author's Reflection

Before the start of my research, I knew I wanted to learn more about something I was passionate about. Through my time in graduate school, I started to feel confident in my ability to teach my students the importance of reading and how they can have a love for reading. When I thought about a topic for my capstone, I thought, how could I have my students love reading AND writing? Writing has never been my strongest subject, or my strongest subject to teach. My goal was to feel confident in my writing abilities and my abilities to teach writing.

Through my research, I found many effective ways to help students write. The ideas I found were creative and something different than the basic techniques I have always used to help my students write. I previously taught the basics of what makes up a

sentence, how to expand a sentence to have more detail or draw a picture then write a story about it. The idea of drawing a picture and writing a story about it was about as creative as I had previously tried.

The research helped me learn new, creative ways to help every one of my students with their writing. This past year, I implemented many of the new strategies I had found through the research into my classroom. At the beginning of the year, my students' interest in writing was average. Early on, I had one student always ask me if she could write, while the rest of the students would always ask if they could read when they finished something. Towards the end of the year, I have many more students ask if they can write when they finish their work. They have the choice to write in their journals, or on their ipads. This year I had a student who I would say is the typical struggling writer. He had all the ideas in his head, but it was difficult for him to get his ideas down in word form. He came up to me, unprompted, and said, "I like writing, I didn't like it before, but now I like writing." After he said this, he walked away and all I could do was smile at him and say thank you for sharing that with me. What I really wanted to do was hug him and jump up for joy because this hard work has paid off and my students are benefiting! I hope I can spread this joy to the rest of my students, future students and hopefully my peers.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I reflected on the capstone process, revisited the literature review and discussed how my research is connected to it. I explained my limitations, possible and the future implications for presenting my information. In

addition, I shared my reflection and described my growth as a learner, researcher and writer. I also explained how I met my goal of answering my question, *How can primary teachers intrinsically motivate their reluctant writers through narrative writing?*

Throughout this experience, I have learned to change my mindset of teaching writing from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset.

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