Increasing Engagement and Comprehension Through Cooperative, Collaborative and Game-Based Learning in a Middle School Literacy Intervention Class

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INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND COMPREHENSION THROUGH
COOPERATIVE, COLLABORATIVE AND GAME-BASED LEARNING IN A
MIDDLE SCHOOL LITERACY INTERVENTION CLASS

by

Tarah Eck

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

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CHAPTER ONE
My Personal Journey

Introduction

Reading is fundamental to my career and personal life. Reading has been an essential part of my job as a teacher for the past 11 years as both a professional necessity and also a passion. My love for reading led me to obtaining my K-12 literacy license and becoming a literacy intervention teacher. In my personal life, reading is a way for me to relax and escape to a new world, even if just for a few chapters a day. Reading helps me to connect to the world around me. When I read my book club novel, I feel connected to my friends and enjoy discussing the latest literary adventure. When I read a Serravallo (2015) or Kittle (2013) teaching strategy book, I feel connected to my coworkers by collaborating on what strategies we have used and what new ones we are going to use in the classroom the following year. Reading especially helps me feel connected as a mother when I sit down and read my son his bedtime story before laying him down at night. Reading is powerful. It has the power to connect us all in a world where social communication is becoming less and isolation is becoming more.

It is unfortunate that some of my students do not feel the same way about reading. As a literacy intervention teacher, the students I work with are struggling with the skills to read grade-level texts. Knowing this struggle, they tend to lack the will to try and fail to see just how important reading is to their daily lives. Most students who walk into my classroom do not like to read and have little motivation to work on skills they
believe they *already have*. It can be a struggle for them to see how it can benefit their academic and personal lives. This is a problem that I want to fix. It is my goal for my students to work together to learn the skills necessary to be successful, life-long readers. That is why, in this project, I will be looking to answer the following question: *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?* Through my teaching website; students, teachers and families will be able to access materials and games that can be used in a small group, general education and home setting.

**My Story**

I love to read. I intentionally find time to read each and every day. Since welcoming my son in February 2019, I have had to become more creative and strategic about when, where and *how* I read, but I make it an essential part of my daily life. On any given day, I am reading: academic books, gossip magazines, children’s books, emails, text messages and status updates, or listening to audible books. Reading is a necessary skill that students will use for the rest of their lives. As a mom of a son who has had multiple medical issues in his short 18 months, I have had to rely on my skills as a reader to comprehend the various medical documents that come from the doctors and insurance companies. Without my knowledge of how to decode unknown words and terminology used, I would have been a confused bystander instead of an active advocate for my son. There are many incidences in life where one will come across a document, form or book that requires them to draw upon the ability to decode, determine importance, draw conclusions, and so on, but unfortunately, there are many individuals who leave school without such skills. It is my job as an English Language Arts (ELA)
teacher to change that and to make sure my students leave my classroom with the tools necessary to be life-long readers in today’s society.

**Reading Intervention**

Reading is often met with disdain in my reading intervention classroom. I hear common statements from students that walk through my door such as, “I hate reading,” “I don’t want to read,” “I can’t read,” “I already know how to read, why do I have to continue to learn it?” I can understand their frustration given the lessons they have had to endure: read an article, follow these steps, choose the best multiple choice answer, reflect on what you did. It sounds more like I was preparing them to be lifelong test takers rather than lifelong readers. I want my students to find enjoyment in reading. I want them to thrive and be successful in school and beyond. Reading isn’t just a hobby, it is a life skill and necessity in this text heavy world.

In this chapter, I will bring you along on my journey as a reader and how it molded my academic, professional, and social life, and why I believe that reading engagement and learning through collaboration is essential to comprehension. In the subsequent chapters, I will analyze how introducing a more social aspect to my lessons will improve the learning and enjoyment of my middle school readers.

**Academic Life**

**The joyful young reader.** My love for reading started at a very young age. The earliest reading memory I have was reading a Berenstain Bears book by Berenstain and Berenstain, out loud for my kindergarten class. I remember feeling so proud in my ability to read an entire book with multiple sentences on each page while some of my peers could hardly read two words on a page. It soon became an obsession for me. We would
go to the public library every week and I would take home two large grocery bags of books, knowing that they would all be read within a couple of days. As I grew into chapter books, I became obsessed with *The Baby-sitter’s Club* by A. M. Martin, a series about a group of girls who would gather frequently at a friend’s house and provide babysitting services to families in their neighborhoods all while navigating the ins and outs of high school drama and boys. I took them everywhere with me: in the car, at restaurants, doctor’s appointments; anywhere I could. Then I moved on to *The Sweet Valley High* series by F. Pascal about twins Elizabeth and Jessica, who were identical, but completely different: Elizabeth, the shy, sweet academic and Jessica, the sassy, outgoing wild child. As a young girl who lived in the country with the closest *neighborhood* kid being at least a mile away, the girls in these books became my friends and I loved living vicariously through them.

Reading in elementary school was easy for me. There were the obligatory classroom novels and textbooks that the curriculum required of us, but mainly I remember being allowed to read books of my choice. My love of reading flourished because I was able to remain involved with my friends, or characters from *The Baby-sitters Club* and *Sweet Valley High*. Reading was allowed to be fun.

One of my favorite reading experiences involved a game that we played on a weekly basis while reading a class novel. Working together as a group, we had to complete challenges that involved our reading for the week. For example, we had to create a 60 second song in which everyone had a part that would summarize the chapter(s). If we completed the task, we received points. The team with the most points at the end of the unit won a prize. While the game was fun, it also taught me how to set
goals, work towards deadlines, collaborate with others and be creative in the process. These are some of the life skills that I want to bring into my classroom.

**The dark years.** I wish I could say that my love of reading continued into my middle school years, but sadly it did not. There was a period of time, back in my impressionable teenage, middle school years that I like to call *the dark years* because I hated reading. Yep, I said it, I hated reading. I no longer read at every free chance that I could, or read the latest *Sweet Valley High* book, or even obtained good grades in my ELA class. Instead, my life became enthralled in the social life and drama of a middle school girl.

Middle school is hard, period. Everything changes: bodies, hormones, friends, etc. Add two years of braces and you have the most awkward and difficult years of my adolescence. Instead of concentrating on my academics, I concentrated on finding out where I fit in to the social construct of the school. Was I to be a jock? A band kid? Choir, Drama? None of the above? None of my friends were into books. They were into school activities and clubs, school events and parties, hanging out at high school sporting events and finding occasions to flirt and mingle. I wanted to be part of that new school culture.

There is a saying: *at first you learn to read and then you read to learn.* Well transitioning into middle school, it felt more like: *You read for fun and then the fun is done.* I honestly cannot recall one novel that I read for English class, assignment or project that I liked in middle school. Learning was different for me. Middle school separated learners into different classrooms based on ability, and it was pretty evident if you were on the *smart* track or not and I was no longer on it. This did a number on my confidence.
Middle school learning made me feel more isolated. The focus went from student centered to teacher directed, meaning I could just sit in class, not say anything and get by. As a result, I became disinterested in what I was learning and did not feel connected to my learning environment. I see the same behavior with my current middle school students as well. This is precisely why I want to explore ways to bring social learning into the intervention classroom and use it as a way to increase engagement and success by addressing the question of How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?

Social Life

Reading is very social to me. The term social can be defined as connecting or relating to or with someone, an organization, group or level of society (Dictionary.com, 2020). Reading also fosters connections. Until recently, I had not realized the social impact reading has on my life. I connect with thousands of people on a daily basis through mom blogs, email, social media, text messages, books and magazines. What I choose to read says a lot about who I am and what my interests are, even if it is something as small as a gossip magazine. During middle school I may not have read books anymore, but I did enjoy reading the occasional teen magazine. I also spent a good part of my free time participating in AOL (Verizon Media, 2020) chat rooms and using instant messenger to communicate with my friends. Being socially connected to my friends and keeping up with the happenings of pop-culture were important to me, but not recognized a part of my literacy experience.
I was in my third year of college and studying abroad in London when I rediscovered my love of reading and exited my *dark years*. I was living with a host family in Muswell Hill, a neighborhood that was a 45-60 minute commute to our school in central London. Millions of people commute on a daily basis on the busses and tubes, but no one spoke to one another. They either listened to music or read a book or newspaper. This was 2005 and before smartphones, but reading was a huge part of the commuting culture. Just as I did in middle school, I wanted to fit in and be a part of the culture; I just needed the right book.

I fell in love with books again after reading about an orphaned boy with a lightning scar, his rebellious friends and their magical world of witches and wizards. I was a fan of the Harry Potter movies, but I had yet to read one of the books. The first Harry Potter book was published in 1997, the year that I entered middle school, and as I mentioned before, I was not a fan of reading during that time. Many of the other students in my program had already read the books and had seen all the movies as well. The fourth movie was due to premiere and my friends thought that it would be great to go see it while we were in London. So did I. I wanted to be part of this group of ladies who had read the book and would excitedly talk about it while we sampled cider at the local pub. I wanted to read the book and compare it to the movie right alongside them, so I began with *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2002) and was soon hooked. It is not surprising that I was easily entranced with these books. After all, it is a series and I am a sucker for characters that I can follow from book to book.

From there on, my love for reading continued to grow. I read the rest of the Harry Potter books in no time (including the first three) and moved on to the next popular
series: *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) & *Angels and Demons* (2006) by D. Brown. Then eventually *The Hunger Games* (2008) series by S. Collins and *The Divergent* (2012) series by V. Roth. I had become a book reader again. I learned that I loved talking about the books, dissecting the intricacies of the characters and the complexities of the writing and then comparing that to the Hollywood movies. It was engaging and helped me fall back in love with reading. I would love to find a way to bring my student’s interests into my intervention classroom to increase their engagement.

I am on a life-long reading journey. To me, reading isn’t something that you just switch on and off, but something that evolves over time and adjusts to your current life needs. When I was young, reading was a very entertaining hobby, but changed into an annoying part of academic duty in middle school and high school. In my adult life, reading has become entertaining again, but also a way of gaining knowledge and understanding about the world around me by reading articles, online news feeds and academic texts. Reading has become essential in communication as I email and text on a daily basis. Reading is my job, my livelihood. Who knows where my reading journey will bring me next.

**Professional Life**

The English Language Arts curriculum has drastically changed since I first stepped into a classroom 12 years ago as a student teacher. In the spring of 2008, I spent four months in a sixth grade classroom at an intermediate school in a suburb, southwest of the Twin Cities. Sixth grade was still in a self-contained classroom at the time and therefore, I had the students all day long. Reading was taught using a Houghton-Mifflin (2005) textbook and designed for all the students to read the same text, and answer the
same 10 questions afterwards. There was no differentiation, no group activities, no reteaching, nothing. It was simple to teach but difficult to learn.

I then began my teaching career as a third grade teacher in a large urban city in Colorado. It was the first time that I had heard of guided reading and differentiating for English Language Learners (ELL). The district used a reading curriculum that centered around scripted lessons and the Daily 5 (Boushey & Moser, 2006) station activities. With a population of students whose first language was not English, it was greatly beneficial for them to have conversations about their learning and participate in group activities.


In the fall of 2018, I was back in middle school, but this time as a reading intervention teacher for a district north of the Twin Cities. Having a background in elementary, I was not sure how that was going to fit with my new group of students. As I observed and assisted in the ELA classrooms, I realized that some things have changed since I student-taught all those years ago, but others have not. While there was more student choice around reading and group activities, it is still necessary for some units to be centered around a single classroom text. Teachers were learning how to incorporate more collaborative games, but there was still the basic teacher-directed, individualistic approach to learning in the short 50 minute period.
In my intervention classroom, I have even less time, 25 minutes, to engage a small group of five to six kids in lessons. With the constraint on time, we spend the majority of it reading articles, discussing as a group and then answering questions. Thinking back on this now, I thought that my lessons were different from their general ELA class since I would allow more time for discussion, but I now realize that it is not. I was not incorporating games and activities in which students played and interacted in their reading. I was not connecting the material to the lives of my students and giving them choice in their learning. These are students who already struggle and have a distaste for reading. To add to this, I take them out of a class that they might enjoy and feel successful at such as gym, music or art. There were benefits to my intervention class and many of my students made huge growth on their spring standardized tests, but many still ended the year hating reading and not seeing the benefit to it outside of school.

**Rationale**

Middle school students deserve a chance to participate in a reading program that is engaging, motivating and tailored to meet their needs. Struggling readers will only continue to struggle if something isn’t done to close the gap. While many elementary schools in my district have an established intervention program, the middle schools and high schools do not. The *intervention* program at my school has been more of a homework help or a time to assist the classroom teacher. While this helped both the teacher and student immediately with assignments, it did not address the real issue or gap in their learning.

I was hired and given the task of creating an intervention program that was researched based and built around the ELA academic standards. After the first year, 16%
of students participating in my intervention program passed or earned a score of *Meets the Standard* on the MCA-III reading assessment, which is a huge improvement from the previous year’s 9%, but I wanted to see more. My intervention classroom might be their last opportunity to get small group, specialized instruction to help build their comprehension and gain confidence in their skills before heading off to high school. Therefore, it needs to be engaging, motivating and full of skills that they can bring with them to high school and beyond. That is why I am working to address the question of *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?*

**Summary**

Reading is a skill that is essential in this text heavy society. It is a tool that can be used to inform, create and communicate. The written word can evoke emotions of joy, sadness, anger, frustration and confusion. The written word and the ability to read and comprehend it is powerful. Middle school students are immersed in a text rich environment, but may lack the skills necessary to fully comprehend what they are reading, see value in reading for different purposes or enjoy it. It is my goal as a reading intervention teacher, to incorporate lessons, games and activities that will increase skills and engagement with reading.

I will be creating a web page that allows access to student centered, cooperative learning and educational games for my students to answer the question, *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?* While in my classroom, students will participate in lessons that increase social interaction among their peers and
learn from multiple perspectives. They will learn the real world applications of reading and foster skills that are beneficial to them on a daily basis. The webpage will provide links to materials and interactive tools to increase their skills and comprehension. All pages of the website will be accompanied with a video or audio link to ensure that all levels of readers have access to the materials. All materials will be available for students to use in the small group, general ed and home setting.

In the next chapter I will review articles that center around literacy intervention, motivation and engagement, collaborative/cooperative learning and game-based learning. I will take a look at multiple perspectives on the topics listed above and how they will mold my game-based learning and webpage project writing in chapter three.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter one gave a background on my journey as a reader, student and educator. Being a life-long reader doesn’t just mean enjoying the latest novel from the New York Times bestseller list with your bookclub, but being able to use a variety of literacy skills to navigate through the necessities of life. In this chapter, I will offer a review of research on four major topics: literacy intervention, motivation and engagement, cooperative and collaborative learning, and game-based learning. Some of the minor areas of research that will be reviewed within these topics are the different kinds of readers seen in literacy intervention, intervention programs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the different mindsets of learners, and hands-on educational games and digital games. Research and literature from multiple authors and sources will be included in this review of topics, and address the question of: How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?

Literacy Intervention

Literacy Intervention programs are designed to fill the academic gaps that struggling kids are missing. “Literacy skills have always been a precursor to success. Those who can read and write well become powerful communicators; such people are the movers and shakers of society in many cases” (Layne, 2012, p. 5). If the literacy skills
are what paves the road to success, then schools need to do their part to support struggling literacy learners. While there are many different types of intervention strategies, Roberts et al. (2008), as cited by Graves et al. (2011) suggests that “struggling readers benefit from intensive small-group instruction in phonemic awareness and decoding, fluency building, reading comprehension and vocabulary enrichment” (p. 73). Based on Roberts et al. (2008) description, an intervention group could be small, ranging from 4-6 students, and provide supported instruction to struggling readers in vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and decoding.

**Struggling readers vs. disengaged or aliterate readers.** Struggling or disengaged readers need teachers to provide a plan (or way) for them to develop their skills, and grow their will. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) believe that,

There are two sides to reading. On one side are the **skills** which include phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, and simple comprehension.

On the other side is the **will** to read. A good reader has both skill and will. In the **will** part, we are talking about motivation to read. (p. 16)

Some students do have the basic foundation of reading skills, but lack the motivation or will to actually read, and practice the skills necessary to perform at grade level. Thus resulting in the literacy or intervention teachers analyzing if they have truly a struggling reader or a disengaged/aliterate reader.

Students who lack the skill, will be left behind. As Layne (2012) stated:

More information is available today than at any time in history, and we have access to it more rapidly. Such advantages are meaningless, though, to those who cannot read or to those whose reading skills are so underdeveloped, that
comprehending a substantial or complex text structure is a seemingly
insurmountable hurdle. In today’s society, adults and school children whose
reading abilities are deficient are treading water in a pool that has no shallow end.

(p. 5)

Layne (2012) paints a dark future for those who cannot access and use their literacy
skills. Communication has moved to the screen, meaning that most information and
conversations can happen from a smartphone, computer, tablet or some other device.
Conversations have moved from mouth to mouth to text messaging, emails and now
Snapchat, Instagram and emojis. Layne’s (2012) statement “The pool with no shallow
end” is referring to society’s endless use of such materials on a daily basis. If one does
not use some form of social media to communicate or know what is going on in the
world, they will remain isolated and uninformed.

The disengaged reader may have the skill, but not the will. They lack the
motivation to improve their skills because they do not see the benefit in doing so. It can
be concluded that students who lack the will to read are at risk of falling behind because
they do not care or have the motivation to better their skills. These are the kids who often
fall between the cracks because they are not low enough to need severe intervention, but
are at risk of not being literacy proficient. Layne (2012) describes disengaged readers as:

..students who are too often forgotten by lawmakers, education pundits, and
school boards, and the reason is simple: fostering a love of reading in kids is not a
curricular objective. It’s not tested by the state, it’s not a component of any
federal legislation, it’s not in the district strategic plan, nor is it likely the focal
point of any methodology courses at the local college or university. (p. 5)
It can be concluded from Layne’s statement that skill and desire or enjoyment of reading can both be influential pieces of an intervention program. Layne (2012) continues this sentiment by stating,

People, both children and adults, who have the ability but not the desire to read are termed *aliterites* (Mikulecky, 1979), and they should be a source of concern for a nation that wants “no child left behind.” The age-old concern of why Johnny can’t read needs to change with the times. A new question, *Why won’t Johnny read, even if he can?* Needs some of our serious and undivided attention. (p. 6)

These disengaged or aliterate readers are ones that have the skill, but no will and could be mistakenly taking intervention time away from those who are truly struggling. Therefore, the connection that can be made is that they are placed in intervention programs due to their performances, not their ability and therefore, making an intervention program about engagement rather than need.

**Intervention programs.** Schools have tried to develop the *skill* and foster the *will* by giving teachers and students a *way*. Englert et al. 2005; Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004 (as cited by Graves et al. 2011) found that if a student is a struggling reader in elementary school, that the struggle will continue into middle school and high school, widening the achievement gap.

If a middle school student lacks the requisite literacy skills, instructional materials in content areas will be inaccessible, and so will much of the core curriculum, even though these students may otherwise be capable of processing and mastering this information. (p.74)
It can be concluded from this that a successful literacy program must be implemented early on for the struggling reader and continue to be accessible for the student as they grow. They need to be able to build on the skills and tools given to them through small group, specialized instruction. Unfortunately though, small group instruction or intervention programs are not always consistent within a district or even a school.

Although there are many different types of intervention programs available to schools for the struggling and disengaged reader, it is important to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of common intervention programs available for the middle schooler, such as those mentioned in Alvermann and Rush’s article titles: *Literacy intervention programs at the middle and high school levels*, (n.d). *Accelerated Reader (AR*, Renaissance Learning, Inc., 2020) and *Read 180* (Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2020) are computer-based, self-paced programs designed to provide the student with motivating material and immediate feedback. Since these are *individualized*, students are allowed to read text and practice skills at their own levels and are user friendly for both the student and the teacher. While this all sounds very positive, Alvermann and Rush (n.d.), would argue that, although *Accelerated Reader* is:

...advertised as a motivating program for reluctant readers, it’s use seems to be based on the assumption that students with reading difficulties lack practice in reading... Here, the problem is perceived as residing within the student and the solution is to turn that student over to a computer program for assistance. (p. 15)

The connection to be made from Alverman and Rush (n.d.) is that if a student is not showing progress with the program, it is their fault rather than the program’s. Such
programs assume that all students in the program have the same reading deficiencies and therefore need only a prescribed fix.

In continuation to that thought, *Accelerated Reader* and *READ 180* similarly rely on a computer to give the intervention, thus another problem being, “the ease in which it is possible for teachers to turn students who struggle with reading over to computerized programs,” (Alvermann, et al, n.d., p. 16). Thus, concluding that teachers should be looking at the materials used in the classroom and delivery of instruction to see how to best meet the needs of the struggling student. When teachers disengage in the process, everyone seems to lose.

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a model used in many school districts. RTI is “A multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. Struggling learners are provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning” (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2020, para. 1). Based on the intervention guidelines of a midwest suburban district, tier one support is available to anyone in the ELA classroom and facilitated by the ELA teacher or a support staff member. All support and progress monitoring of skills occurs during the literacy block, which consists of 75 minutes of time. Tier two is designed to give additional instruction and support outside of the general ELA block in the form of small groups who would meet 20-30 minutes twice a week. It usually consists of students who are performing two to three levels below grade level, in which was determined from a district sanctioned assessment, and is led by a licensed reading specialist. Tier three is the most intensive form of additional support for students who are performing three or more levels below grade level. In general, a licensed reading
specialist would meet with a student one-on-one or in a small group of 2 or 3 students for 20-30 minutes three to four times a week.

A successful literacy program needs to provide instruction to grow the skill and foster the will of a struggling reader (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015). Some districts, such as that of the researcher, have moved past the use of textbooks as being the sole guide in reading instruction and have turned to standard based learning and district-wide assessments to guide curriculum and instruction. Having standards based lessons is one thing, but one could argue that it is also important to know the reader as an individual through a common assessment. The National Center for Learning Disabilities (2020) believes that “Universal screening and progress monitoring provide information about a student’s learning rate and level of achievement, both individually and in comparison with the peer group. These data are then used when determining which students need closer monitoring or intervention” (Para 2). With this being said, one could conclude that if a district wanted to truly create a literacy intervention program that best meets the needs of each struggling reader, then they would use the results of assessments and standards to provide the skill.

**Motivation and Engagement**

Motivation to read is more than just interest. AsCambria and Guthrie (2010) stated,

> When we talk about reading motivation we refer to (1) interest, (2) dedication, and (3) confidence. An interested student reads because he enjoys it; a dedicated student reads because he believes it is important, and a confident student reads because he can do it. (p. 16)
In this section, the researcher will be delving into the topic of motivation and engagement in the middle school literacy intervention program as it pertains to interest, dedication and confidence.

Struggling readers may be less engaged in reading based on their inability to connect to and comprehend the material, boredom or just plain disdain for reading. This statement is supported by Cambria & Guthrie (2010) when they said “If students have a few effective strategies they will never use them if they are bored, avoidant, or otherwise unmotivated for reading,” (p. 27). This poses a problem for the middle school ELA intervention teacher who asks them to actively participate in extra reading lessons on a weekly basis. Middle schoolers also need to feel a connection between themselves and what they are learning to be fully engaged and dedicated to their learning. “When students can experience the connection between the lesson and their own lives, there is less apathy and more engagement” (Anderson, [as cited in Carrabba & Farmer, 2018, p. 165]). Struggling or disengaged readers may see reading and writing as something that they will not need in their future, especially if their career aspirations do not align with the literacies. Why learn how to analyze character relationships or find themes from *Outsiders* by S.E Hinton (1967), if they have no connection to the life of a poor kid from a rough home? Cambria and Guthrie, (2010) expands this idea:

As students grow in awareness of how reading connects to them, their valuing of reading expands in breadth and depth. With awareness-expanding discussions with the teacher, students can expand their recognition that reading impacts their school success, their prospects for further education, their career potentials, and their prospects in the world of gainful employment. (p. 26)
If students value reading and understand the necessity it brings to their everyday and future life, they might be more motivated to learn the skills and find some enjoyment in reading.

**Mindsets.** Based on the earlier descriptions of Cambria & Guthrie’s (2010) statement on reading motivation, one could conclude that it might be difficult to motivate middle schoolers to engage in an additional class for a subject that they may or may not be interested, dedicated or have confidence in. Some researchers believe that in order to battle the lack of interest, dedication and confidence, one first has to battle the student’s mindset. Dweck (2008) believes that,

> Many students believe that intelligence is fixed, that each person has a certain amount and that’s that. We call this a fixed mindset, and, as you will see, students with this mindset worry about how much of this fixed intelligence they possess. A fixed mindset makes challenges threatening for students and it makes mistakes and failures demoralizing. (p. 6)

Therefore, bringing the conclusion that struggling readers will stay struggling if they do not believe that they have the ability to improve. This can be a tough situation to get out of, especially if they have needed continued extra support, extra work and extra time and effort placed towards a subject that they have seen little improvement in. However, if a student has a growth mindset, they do see possibilities in their dedication and effort.

> “Those with a growth mindset had... the idea that the harder you work, the more your ability will grow...In contrast, the students with the fixed mindset believed that if you worked hard it meant that you didn’t have ability” (Dweck, 2008. p 7).
A Common question asked by students in the intervention classroom is: “Why am I here? Why do I have to do this when others don’t? Is it because I’m stupid?” These students are seeing the difference in effort being placed to learn the material. The connection being that, if they are being asked to do more work or work on something again, they must be thinking it is because they do not have the ability to do it. If they are asked to review the materials again or make adjustments when others do not need to means that they believe it is because they are not as smart, thus displaying a fixed mindset.

It is essential for teachers to know a student’s mindset and academic ability. Hammond (2015) author of Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain, agrees with Dweck’s findings on mindsets. In her 2015 book Hammond describes how teachers often misinterpret non-social behavior as low engagement and motivation, thus resulting in teachers trying to change the energy in the room to ramp up some excitement (p. 110). Hammond suggests a different approach, “What we believe about belonging, effort, and value of the task leads to engagement and motivation” (2015, p. 110).

Leading the researcher to conclude that a teacher shouldn’t have to rely on a catchy game or change in room energy to engage the student, they should focus on knowing their students and how to involve them in the learning process in a way that they value the knowledge and learning the task will bring them.

**Interest.** When a student shows motivation to complete a task or assignment it can be difficult to gage if they did so because they are truly interested in obtaining the knowledge, or because they are working to obtain something else such as a reward. Intrinsic motivation occurs when someone is naturally driven to do something because of
the pleasure it brings to them. Extrinsic motivation happens when there are outside factors driving the task, such as good grades or praise in front of their peers, (About, Inc. 2020). It is common for teachers to use extrinsic motivators to get students to learn or improve their skills, but if a student is not intrinsically motivated, the effects of their achievement will be short-lived (Cambria and Guthrie, 2010). Since motivation can be fostered by the teacher, it is important for them to consider the message they are giving these struggling readers. O'Rourke et al. (2014) said it best, “Praising a student’s inherent ability has been shown to promote the fixed mindset, or the belief that intelligence is unchangeable, while praising a student’s strategies or effort promotes the growth mindset, or the belief that intelligence is malleable” (p. 1). If a teacher is to move towards game-based learning, they need to be cautious of the language used and praise given. The reward should be in the process, not the outcome.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are learned behaviors, fostered through teachers, parents and peers. “An extrinsically motivated middle school reader who faces a quiz on a chapter in an assigned reading and wants to receive a high grade while avoiding a rebuke from a teacher or parent, would read to perform well on the test” (Unrau & Schlackman, 2006 p. 81). It can then be concluded that if a student is only reading to perform well on a test, not to increase their knowledge or a general interest in the material, then they are learning that knowledge and praise can only be obtained through external rewards. If teachers do not work diligently to change the mindset of students to support intrinsic motivation at the elementary level, it will carry with them into middle school, high school and beyond. A 2005 study on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by Lepper et al. (as cited by Unrau & Schlackman, 2006) found that “students’ grades and
standardized test scores correlated positively with measures of intrinsic motivation. However, extrinsic motivation...correlated negatively with academic performance: the higher students’ extrinsic motivation, the lower their academic performance” (p. 82). Working short term towards a reward has short term benefits. Working towards knowledge has long-term benefits and will carry over from year to year.

Students who are more intrinsically motivated tend to be more dedicated in their learning. “Dedication is not devoid of motivation, but relies heavily on intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and value” (Reeve, 2012, as cited by Guthrie & Klauda 2014, p. 390). Leading one to believe that if a learner values what they are learning, they will be more dedicated to learning the material. If a learner is dedicated to learning the material, they are more likely to problem solve and persist when difficulties arise.

**Confidence.** Teachers have the power to build a student’s confidence in their learning. Based on the researcher’s experience, a teacher’s role in a child’s perception of competence is so pivotal and can affect how they perceive themselves as learners for many years after. Not all teachers are aware of this power and how their guidance and support can help or hinder their students. If a student’s confidence is not nurtured, they run into the fear of becoming dependent on the teacher instead of their own background knowledge and learning. Hammond (2015) speaks more about dependent learners and academic capacity building:

Teachers hear a lot about it as the source of self-motivation these days, but not a lot about what’s going on in a student’s brain that creates a positive mindset toward learning. Because we don’t understand how to develop a positive mindset
or shift a negative one, many of our efforts are just trial and error with little lasting impact. (p. 110)

Hammond (2015) also goes into describing academic mindset and confidence to be comprised of four concepts:

(1) Our sense of mastery and competence as learners based on past experience and sense of preparedness. (2) Our belief in our ability to move about the world freely and control our external world. (3) Our deep believe in ourself and our ability to achieve what we put our mind and energy toward. (4) Our explanatory story that we tell ourselves about why we are or aren’t competent learners. (p 111)

Confidence in one’s ability is key to motivation. As teachers, it is easy to look at the materials being used to motivate students and switch them out if the desired outcome isn’t met, but really a teacher should be looking into the student and how they can change the approach to learning through them.

Based on the research and aforementioned authors, it can be concluded that in order for a middle school literacy program to be successful, it needs to be student centered, standards based and motivating and engaging to students. Going about creating a program such as this should incorporate collaborative learning and game-based learning that promotes intrinsic motivation.

**Cooperative and Collaborative Learning**

Cooperative or collaborative learning occurs when two or more students work together to complete a learning task or objective in a small group, social setting. “Group work facilitates learning through social interactions and increases the student’s personal
engagement in the learning process,” (Doise et al., 1975; Johnson et al., 1998 as cited by Marfisi-Schottman, & George, 2014, p.1). Middle school students are social beings. Whether it be during a classroom discussion, an exchange in the hallway, the lunchroom or behind a screen, the need to be part of the greater community has been evident to the researcher. Instead of trying to discourage these social opportunities, incorporate them into intervention lessons. Bacon (2005) who shared this idea stated, “We must acknowledge that middle school children are undeniably social; they love to talk, to share ideas, and to debate” (p. 418). Bacon (2005) also said,

A single student might be more skilled in one behavior and less skilled in another.

It is the lively interaction of these varying abilities in the small-group setting that allows students to be the more skilled someone at different times. (p. 417)

Cooperative or collaborative learning is social learning, which is also beneficial for middle school students where their social life becomes more important than their academic life. Cooperative learning is generally teacher directed and means:

that the teacher makes each member of the group in charge of the academic performance of the others. Each of the members of the group uses their knowledge and skills to help the other members of the group understand the content. (EZtalks, 2020, para. 2)

Where on the other hand, Cooperative learning is more student centered and “means that the students come together to work on a project as a team. Each student is responsible for their own individual work separately. The students are also in charge of the work of the team as a whole” (EZtalks, 2020, para. 3). Using cooperative or collaborative learning in
the intervention environment is beneficial for the learners because it brings in multiple perspectives and levels of knowledge to the table.

School is not only a place to learn the skills necessary for college and a career, but is also a place to learn how to be social and learn with peers. Collaboration is not only a buzz word used in education, but also in the business workplace. In a 2015 Forbes article titled *The 12 Habits Of Highly Collaborative Organizations*, the author, Morgan, talks about how collaboration is important to their employees professional and personal life:

Collaboration is indeed a top priority for many business leaders...collaboration can make our employees more productive and benefit our customers. But collaboration also allows employees to feel more connected to their jobs and co-workers, reduces stress at the workplace, makes their jobs easier, allows for more work freedom, and in general makes them happier people. (para. 25)

As Morgan pointed out, having joint objectives and someone to share the load of responsibility with, makes for a happier workplace. If students understood that learning doesn’t need to be individual, but something that can be collectively discovered, maybe they wouldn’t feel the pressure to get it right away.

Johnson, D.W and Johnson, R.T (n.d), from The Cooperative Learning Institute, speaks to the importance of cooperative learning and how teachers should be trained to foster this kind of learning within their classrooms:

How students interact with each other is a neglected aspect of instruction...

How teachers structure student-student interaction patterns has a lot to say about how well students learn, how they feel about school and the teacher,
how they feel about each other, and how much self-esteem they have. (para. 2) Educators need to teach students the importance of working together towards the same goal. Not only will it allow multiple ideas, but it will allow students to connect with one another and feel that they are not alone in their learning.

**Game-based Learning**

Interest, dedication and confidence can also be built through the use of games in learning. Games and cooperative and collaborative learning can go hand-in-hand when structured appropriately. Bjork and Holopainen (as cited in Marfisi-Schottman & George, 2014) state, “The use of collaboration is also recognized as one of the mechanisms that enhances games. This is due to the **social interactions** and the **extra challenge** of team decision making.” Games do not have to be competitive in the sense that only one person or team wins, but can be collaborative in the sense that each team collectively works together to enhance their learning in a fun, cooperative way. “When used correctly, these game mechanics enhance the learners’ experience with **emotion**, which has positive effects on engagement and memory” (Damasio, 1995).

Games can also be used to increase student engagement, “The reason most kids don’t like school is not that the work is too hard, but that it is utterly boring” (Pivec & Moretti, 2008, p. 1). According to the PEW Research Center (2008), “97% of American youth 12 to 17 play computer, web, portable or cell phone games.” Gaming is a new way of socializing for teens. “For most teens, gaming is a social activity and a major component of their overall social experience. Teens play games in a variety of ways, including with others in person (65%), with others online (27%), and by themselves (82%)” (PEW Research Center, 2008). Since students are spending a large amount of
their social time outside of school around video games, it only makes sense to try and bring that world into the classroom as well and use it to increase their social and academic skills they need.

While it might be thought that the competition or reward in games would promote a fixed mindset, that is just simply not the case. Again, it depends on how the teacher facilitates the competition and the language used.

Constant interactive feedback provides a medium for showing students that their effort translates into progress (Gee & Schaffer, 2010). But most importantly, game incentive structures provide a way to support and reward behaviors consistent with the growth mindset, such as persistence and use of strategy.

Praising a student’s inherent ability has been shown to promote the fixed mindset, or the belief that intelligence is unchangeable, while praising a student’s strategies or effort promotes the growth mindset, or the belief that intelligence is malleable (Mueller & Dweck, 1998 and Gunderson et al. 2013, as cited in O’Rourke, et al, 2014 p. 2-3).

Games have long been used in the classroom to provide fun, interactive learning. Just as curriculum has evolved over the years, so has the use of games in the classroom Marfisi-Schottman et al. (2014) states, “Even though learning games come in various shapes, such as simple card games or live role planning games, the latest ones tend to be designed as video games” (p.1). Incorporating video or digital games and websites into the learning lesson can be beneficial for learning the content as well as other 21st century skills. Pivec et al., (2008) states that,
When using computer games and games in general, for educational purposes several aspects of the learning process are supported: learners are encouraged to combine knowledge from different areas to choose a solution or to make a decision based on their decisions and actions, learners are encouraged to contact other team members and discuss and negotiate subsequent steps, thus improving among other things, their social skills. (p. 2)

And although it is said that some teachers prefer not to use digital learning games in the classroom because it takes themselves out of the instructional center, allowing them choice and ownership in their learning teaches them responsibility and provides engagement (Ketamo, Kiili, Arnab, & Dunwell, 2013).

There are many types of digital and non-digital educational games. Based on the experience of the researcher, games such as Bingo and Jeopardy are ones that can be adapted and changed to fit multiple disciplines and lessons. While typically seen as individual games, they can easily be adapted to be cooperative. In a cooperative Bingo game, students would have to complete certain team challenges to “earn” their Bingo square. Once they have the appropriate number tasks completed (three or five in a consecutive row, column or diagonal), they have a Bingo. In Jeopardy, students tackle questions together by discussing and agreeing on an answer. Websites such as Kahoot (2020) and Plickers (2019) provide the same opportunity through digital devices. Since this is an evolving educational tool, teachers will also need to keep adapting their material to meet the current needs and desires of the students.

Summary
In conclusion, a successful literacy program needs to provide instruction to grow the *skill* and foster the *will* in an interactive and engaging way. With students already finding it difficult to be interested, dedicated and confident in a subject that they are struggling in, teachers need to be more creative with how they approach the learning. By creating an environment that fosters growth mindsets through collaborative and cooperative learning and games, students will not only work on increasing their knowledge and abilities, but have fun in the process. When intervention teachers create programs that are centered around the needs and interests of the reader, they become more engaged in the learning process and understand the importance of reading in their everyday lives.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how I plan on creating a website that houses materials and activities that are centered around games and cooperative learning that can be incorporated into an intervention, general ed and home setting.
CHAPTER THREE

Project

Introduction

Throughout the review of literature, authors provided insight into the different kinds of readers that ELA teachers encounter in the classroom, their mindsets and how motivation and engagement are essential in a successful reading intervention program. The review lent way to cooperative and collaborative learning and game-based learning as great methods to strengthen struggling readers’ abilities, engaging them and motivating them to become life-long readers.

In order for students to grow in their learning, they need to first believe that they can. In chapter two, the literature review revealed that Dweck, Hammond, O’Rourke, Haimovitz, Ballweber and Popović talked about the mindset of the student and how it can affect engagement, motivation and achievement. If one has the confidence in their ability to work through challenges and learn new skills, they will be more successful in school and in the real-world as well. The literature also talked about the importance of cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning in the classroom. By working together, students get to learn from their peers, feel like an expert themselves and be social in the process.

The research identified the need to shift the current literacy intervention program from teacher based, to student based. By having this be the focus, the lessons will be designed in such a way to allow for communication, collaboration and skills work
through games to make the program more engaging, motivating and hopefully shift some mindsets from fixed to growth. The literature helped to answer the question: *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?*

In this chapter, the researcher shares their perspective on learning and methods that led to this research and project topic. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the project followed by sections describing the research paradigm, setting and audience, a detailed project description and timeline and summary. The chapter will conclude with an overview of what to expect in chapter four.

**Overview**

In this project, the focus of the literacy intervention lesson is going to be shifted from teacher centered to student centered and will be accessible through an English Language Arts intervention website. It is the belief of the researcher that the students need a way to interact and discuss learning in an authentic and meaningful way. By creating a platform for them to access materials and engage in learning with one another, even if they are apart, will be essential for the future learning process.

The ELA website will help create a more collaborative learning environment to enhance engagement, knowledge and confidence. This pedagogical view is also in alignment with Vygotsky’s (as cited in Jamarillo, 1996) sociocultural theory of learning. “[He] believed that peers arrive at a common understanding by socially negotiating meaning via *problem-solving* activities.”p. 139). Having the learning be social means that they will learn from multiple perspectives and abilities rather than just one, the teacher’s.
In this project, the researcher created a website with links to studies and activities to address the question *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?*

For this project, resources such as surveys, games, assessments, virtual classrooms, graphic organizers and reflections to measure and monitor engagement, motivation and comprehension have been created and made accessible through the literacy intervention website. Activities emphasizing mindset, and cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning strategies have been included to be used in the literacy intervention classroom, general content area classrooms and home.

This section gave an overview of the project. A brief explanation of the inspiration and purpose of the project and materials included was stated. In the next section the research paradigm and assessment of data and materials will be discussed.

**Research Paradigm, Assessment and Method**

This project draws on pragmatic and constructivist learning frameworks along with a convergent mixed methods design of research (Creswell, 2014). A pragmatic worldview fits well with the mixed methods research because it allows for freedom of choice. According to Creswell (2014), “researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes” (p. 10). By following this worldview, the researcher is allowed to use a mixture of assessment and surveys to gather, analyze and draw conclusions from the data. It also allows the researcher freedom to adapt the assessments and surveys as they see fit for the project and research and use a platform such as an internet website to house and launch these materials.
A large part of the research and project is based on engagement and motivation and therefore measureable based on a social setting. “Constructivist researchers often address the processes of interaction among individuals” (Cresswell, 2014, p. 8). The surveys will ask questions about their engagement in the material and activities. They will also help the students reflect on their social interaction and learning processes with their peers.

Through the mixed methods research design, both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. Project lessons will be standards based and aligned with the grade level’s scope and sequence. The quantitative data will comprise of the student’s formative assessments in the intervention setting and diagnostic assessments given in the fall, winter and spring.

The qualitative data will be collected from the student surveys and reflections. At the start of the school year, a survey or questionnaire will be given to determine the background knowledge and level of confidence a student has with topics and strategies. This will give valuable information to the researcher, as they can set goals, organize lessons and structure games and activities to best meet the needs of the students based on the student’s answers. The same survey or questionnaire will also be given in the winter and spring to serve as a self-reflection and assessment of growth. By having the students participate in surveys throughout the year, it will let the researcher know what skills and strategies the students feel confident in using and what areas still need support. The researcher will also track the mindset of the students by giving mindset surveys from mindsetworks.com. As Hammond (2015) points out, “students with negative mindsets are more likely to either act up or zone out in response to their internal belief that they can’t
be successful. They may put forth effort only to give up quickly when learning gets hard and they realize they don’t have the tools to complete the task (p. 109). By tracking their mindsets throughout the year it allows the researcher to have authentic conversations about intelligence and effort. If the concept of a growth mindset is talked about often and activities are designed to promote it, the student will be more likely to see the benefits of it.

A pragmatic worldview fits well with the mixed methods research and allows for freedom of choice. According to Creswell (2014), “researchers are free to choose the methods, techniques, and procedures of research that best meet their needs and purposes” (p. 10). By following this worldview, the researcher is allowed to use a mixture of assessment and surveys to gather, analyze and draw conclusions from the data. It also allows the researcher freedom to adapt the assessments and surveys as they see fit for the project and research.

A large part of the research and project is based on engagement, motivation and the ability to apply their skills and knowledge in multiple academic and social settings. “Constructivist researchers often address the processes of interaction among individuals” (Cresswell, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, a survey to assess the socialness of their academics and reading will provide valuable information for the researcher in order to change or adapt lessons. The surveys will ask questions about their engagement in the material and activities. They will also help the students reflect on their social interaction and learning processes with their peers.

This section described the research paradigm, assessment and methods used for the Capstone project. The researcher draws on pragmatic and constructivist learning
frameworks along with a convergent mixed methods design. The researcher uses quantitative data from the students’ standardized tests alongside qualitative data from student work and reflections to design an intervention program and curriculum that best meets the needs of the students. In the next section the setting and audience for the project will be discussed.

**Setting and audience**

This project is designed for a northern, suburban middle school, that services students in grades six, seven and eight. The school’s demographic is 53% white or caucasian and 47% students of color and 48% free and reduced lunch, as found on the Minnesota Report Card through the Minnesota Department of Education website.

The literacy intervention program, as designed by the district, is to provide services to tier three level students through a small-group, pull-out model. The targeted group of students will be seventh graders who are performing in the 0 - 15th% based on the MCA and MAP standardized assessments and who do not qualify for special education services in reading. The group sizes range from two to five students and are grouped with similar reading levels and abilities. The project website will be immediately accessible to students, teachers and families at the beginning of the school year and used during the twice a week pull-out sessions that begin in October and continue through the first week in June.

This section described the setting and audience for the *Capstone* project. The researcher will be using the materials and website with seventh grade intervention groups. The setting of the study takes place in a northern, midwestern suburb where the population of students are predominately white, but also has a large population of free
and reduced lunch students. In the next section, the Capstone project will be described in greater detail.

**Project Description**

**Introduction.** This project is an English Language Arts website that will be accessible to students, staff, parents and the general public through the website’s domain and researcher’s school webpage. In this section, the project will be described in great detail and accompanied by screenshots. First, information will be given on the website development process, followed by descriptions of the three priority pages and three supporting pages of the website. Details will be provided on the resources and materials that were created or linked to bring cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning to the literacy intervention students and families, no matter what setting they are in.

**Figure 1**

*Website homepage*

![Website homepage](image-url)

**Building the website.** The website platform chosen to use for the project was *Weebly.com* (Square, Inc. 2020). While building the website, it was important to keep in
mind the many individuals who might access it at any given time. Therefore, the website was broken down into six pages, three priority and three supporting. The priority pages of the website are titled: Resources for Students, Resources for Teachers and Resources for Parents & Families and are the focus of the capstone project. The supporting pages are titled: Home: Begin Your Reading Adventure Today, Mrs. Eck: My Story and Resources/Work Cited. While creating this website, it was essential to ensure that the tools available were easy to find and required minimum reading to be accessible to all readers and learners. In doing this, each page and section is accompanied with a video intro that can be viewed and used as a tour or guide.

**Priority page 1: Resources for Students.** Resources and materials that are available on this page are meant to be accessed and used in the intervention, general education or content area classroom and home setting. A guided tour of the webpage is provided for viewers under the title heading of the page. Each mini-section also provides a video introduction to the purpose and directions of the activity and links to the curriculum. The Resources for Students page includes links to The Eck’s Games menu, a virtual and interactive classroom and tips and tricks to practice comprehension and vocabulary.

**Gametized menu: The Eck’s Games.** Gametize (n.d) is a gaming platform that incorporates interactive games, socialization, competition and rewards for social learning. Some benefits of Gametize are that it is self-paced and involves personal choice. While the official Gametize website was not used for this project, it served as a guide in creating The Eck’s Games. By completing games and activities, students are able to earn and accumulate points that can yield group and individual rewards.
The Eck’s Games menu is housed in a Google Document where all the games and activities are categorized and listed. It was created in a Google Doc to allow students access to the Read&Write Extension. The extension allows students to have the document read to them and difficult or unknown words defined for them. Having these tools available allows them to read and comprehend the material based on their individual needs. Each of the four sections of the menu are linked to a video that provides directions and expectations as well. The menu sections are: Mindset, Comprehension, Vocabulary and Super Reading Challenges.

Mindset. In this section of the menu, students will assess, reflect and participate in activities that encourage and build a growth mindset. The first link available is to a survey that students will complete three times throughout the school year: fall, winter and spring, to see the progression of their learning mindset. Through the website, mindsetworks.com (2017), students access and complete a survey about their current mindset and email the results. The second activity is a reflection on their brain health called Scan Your Brain Health, also a resource from mindsetworks.com. Students are asked to reflect on their personal habits such as sleep, diet and exercise and how they can affect their overall brain health. Through a Google Form, they are to answer questions and submit a personal statement on what they will do to increase their brain health with healthier habits.

Figure 2
Mindset Menu Section
**Mindset**  Click [HERE](#) for video instructions

**Mindset survey** ................................................................. 25 points each time
This activity will be done with your ELA PIPO teacher 3 times (fall, winter & spring). An email will be sent to YOU when you complete it and must be forwarded onto Mrs. Eck to earn full points.

**Scan Your Brain Health** ......................................................... 10 points
Complete the survey on the google form and submit it to earn points. Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions on how to complete this activity.

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**Figure 3**

*Mindset Activities*

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**Take the Mindset Assessment to Learn More About Your Mindset**

Our mindsets exist on a continuum from fixed to growth, and although we'd like to always have a growth mindset, the reality is that we can only be on a journey to a growth mindset. The goal is to recognize fixed mindset elements in ourselves and then reflect on feedback and strategies for how to improve.

The Mindset Assessment is a quick diagnostic tool drawn from research-validated measures for people age 12 and over to use to assess their mindsets. It has been used in many studies to show how mindsets can change, and can be used by you and your students to identify areas in which you can work toward a growth mindset. You will be delivered personalized feedback after you submit the assessment.

[Get Started!](#)
Comprehension. As cited from the PEW Research Center (2008) in chapter two, the majority of teens in the United States have access to some sort of computer, phone or game console, concluding that many teens access and use websites and games regularly. This project provides links to websites to help middle school intervention students practice comprehension skills through online websites and games. The comprehension section of *The Eck’s Games* menu is focused on determining the main idea or central idea of a text. According to the Minnesota Department of Education English Language Arts Academic Standards (2010), a seventh grade student should be able to “Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; [and or] provide an objective summary” (p. 50). Determining the main idea or central idea of a text is also a benchmark of the *English Language Arts and History, Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects* standards as well (MDE, p. 82 and 84). The
activities listed in the comprehension section provide a scaffolded chance to practice this skill.

The websites chosen to practice how to determine the main idea or central idea of a text are Quia.com (2020) and Quizizz.com (2020). Quia.com is an IXL online instructional platform that provides many opportunities to practice skills through games and activities such as matching, multiple choice quizzes, flashcards, word searches and even Battleship. The links provided for the students are quizzes that, once completed, are instructed to take a screenshot of their score and submit it through Google Classroom or by email. Quizizz.com (2020) is a learning platform with gamified quizzes that students can take at their own pace in the classroom or a home. It is also a website that can be used to challenge each other through a live game in the classroom or independently at home. Through Quizizz, a teacher can create their own quiz for the students or use one that has been created by other website members. Once a student completes a quiz, their results and data are displayed through the teacher dashboard. The teacher is then able to review their answers and connect with them more on how and why they made their choices.

Figure 4

Comprehension Menu Section
**Main Idea**

**Quia- Main Idea** ............................................. 1 point/question (1 per sem)
Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions.
There are a total of 40 questions. **You can earn up to 40 points for this activity - but it can only be done ONCE A SEMESTER.** Take a screenshot of your progress and add it to google classroom or email me.

**Quia- Main Idea w/ Supporting details** ....................................... 5 points
Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions.
There are a total of 4 questions. **You can only complete this ONCE.** Take a screenshot of your progress and add it to google classroom or email me.

**Quizziz** ...................................................................... 15 points per Quiz
Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions.
Practice on your own or challenge a friend!

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**Figure 5**

*Comprehension Activities*
Word Work and Vocabulary. The word work and vocabulary websites chosen for The Eck’s Games menu were Quizlet.com (2020) and StudyStack.com (2020). Quizlet (2020) is an online learning platform that engages students in learning words and phrases through personal study sessions or interactive group games. While there are many uses for content specific vocabulary words and phrases, for the purpose of this project, study sets in Quizlet have been created to help students learn their Greek and Latin roots. The goal is for students to grow their skill in decoding unknown words by identifying the Greek or Latin root and apply the pronunciation and meaning while reading a new text.
There is also a classroom live game option in which students can play against each other in real time. The teacher is able to monitor progress and mastery of the terms through the teacher’s Quizlet dashboard.

*StudyStack.com* (2020) is an online learning tool that centers around activities to help practice and memorize material. By creating online flashcards, StudyStack then generates activities such as matching, Snowman (Hangman), crossword puzzles and Hungry Bug for students to practice and memorize the words or phrases and their definitions. For the purpose of this project, StudyStack flashcards have been created to practice content specific vocabulary. Once students have completed an activity they are to take a screenshot of the activity and score, then submit it to Google Classroom.

**Figure 6**

*Word Work/Vocabulary Menu Section*

**Quizlet** .................................................................10 points/ study set
Practice Greek & Latin roots and other academic language terms through Quizlet and Quizlet live. Watch THIS VIDEO with instructions on how to access and play! Make sure to join my classroom by clicking HERE. (https://quizlet.com/join/h6nxjNyuc)

**Study Stack** ..............................................................10 points/ study stack
Practice academic language terms through games and activities. Watch THIS VIDEO with instructions on how to access and play! Take a screenshot of your FINISHED activity and submit through Google Classroom or my emailing me.

**Figure 7**

*Word Work/ Vocabulary Activities*
Super Reading Challenges. Super Reading Challenges seeks to engage students with challenges and cooperative or collaborative learning activities. The website provides activities and links to sites that encourage students to be playful with their reading and increase engagement through social interactions.
The websites chosen to include in *The Eck’s Games* for *The Super Reading Challenges* are *Flipgrid.com* (2020) and *Padlet.com* (n.d). *Flipgrid* (2020) is a website in which users create short videos to engage in conversations about topics and learning. For the purpose of this project, *Flipgrid* is used for an activity called *Same-Different-Opinion-Next*. In the activity, students are encouraged to read two different texts about the same topic and then create a video response on *Flipgrid*. They can choose between articles, short stories or novels. For the purpose of this project, an example has been provided for the students. The example uses two young adult novels about World War II in which the teacher explains how they are the same, different, give a final opinion on them and mention what they will read next. Teachers are notified when a new video is posted and therefore able to track completion and progress. Additional points are earned for viewing and commenting on someone else’s video.

*Padlet* (n.d) is a collaborative, socialization website that promotes interaction through online canvases or padlets. For the purposes of this project, students are asked to participate in an on-going activity promoting reading in their daily lives. To participate in *Reading Collage*, students reflect on when and where they use their reading skills in their everyday lives. Whether it is reading the back of a cereal box in the morning, map directions on their GPS, text messages, YouTube comments, assembly directions, or homework assignments, students capture a picture of it and post it to the class canvas on *Padlet*. Teachers are notified when a new post is added, therefore, able to track completion and progress. Additional points are earned for viewing and commenting on another person’s post.

*Figure 8*
Super Reading Challenges Menu Section

**SUPER READING CHALLENGES**  Click HERE for video instructions

**Same-Different-Opinion-Next**
Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions
Complete 2 readings and post your answer to the questions below on a class flipgrid. You can read articles, short stories or novels. You need to answer these 4 questions:
1. What is the SAME or similar about the readings? (BE SPECIFIC)
2. What is DIFFERENT about the readings? (BE SPECIFIC)
3. What is your OPINION on the readings?
4. What are you looking forward to reading NEXT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Short stories (under 100 pages)</th>
<th>Novels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsela</td>
<td>Epic books Readworks</td>
<td>Ramsey County Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Edgewood Audio Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eBooksMN: Middle School Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Abdo Digital: 5-8 Grade Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Comment on someone else's video.......................... an additional 5 points each

**Links to some online resources**

**Reading Collage ......................................................... 10 points per post**
Watch THIS VIDEO for instructions
You are reading so much everyday in so many ways. Let's see how many different ways we use our reading skills on a daily basis! Click on this Padlet to record the reading you do in your everyday life. Make sure to put a title that includes your name and how you use it. Comment on someone else's post and receive an additional 5 points each.

**END OF THE SEMESTER SURVEY ........................................... 15 points**
(NOT AVAILABLE YET)
This activity will be done with your ELA PIPO teacher at the end of each semester. You will fill out the survey and reflection about your learning experience.

Figure 9

Super Reading Challenges Activities
Tips and Tricks to Help Practice Comprehension and Vocabulary. The research and authors such as Roberts, Torgesen, Boardman, Scammacca, Graves, Brandon, Duesbery, McIntosh, & Pyle, led the researcher to conclude that students who are performing below grade level, need specific and strategic small group instruction in
phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary (Roberts et al., 2008, as cited by Graves, et al. 2011). Students are provided scaffolds that include anchor charts and graphic organizers in the intervention classroom to help them analyze their texts and organize their thinking. The project website bridges access to the materials by posting them online to be used in other content area classrooms as well at home.

*Interactive Classroom Portable Document Format (PDF).* The first resource available for students under the *Tips and Tricks to Help Practice Comprehension and Vocabulary* sections is a main idea or central idea interactive classroom. The PDF displays an animated classroom with a Bitmoji (Snap, Inc. 2020) avatar. There are many elements in the classroom including a whiteboard, poster board, television and laptop computer. Each element serves as a link to materials, games or videos to learn and practice the main idea or central idea of a text. The Bitmoji avatar is at the forefront of the classroom and is linked to a video that gives students a guided tour of the tools that are available to them. The whiteboard states the standard objectives in student friendly language. The posterboard links to an anchor chart with a strategy to determine the main idea or central idea of a text. The anchor chart also has a teacher example of the strategy with a short paragraph. The anchor chart and example are housed in a Google Doc to allow use of the Read&Write Extension. Below the posterboard is a picture and link to an electronic copy of a graphic organizer that students can access and use in another classroom or at home; it is the same graphic organizer as the one used with the anchor chart and teacher example. The television is a link that connects readers to a YouTube video titled *How to find the main idea and supporting details - reading skills for beginners,* (McGraw Hill, 2014). The final interactive element is the laptop computer. By
clicking on the laptop, students are brought to a Google Doc that lists and links the students to the main idea or central idea games that are included in The Eck’s Games menu.

Further down the page is a section for word work and vocabulary building. Students are able to continue their learning and practice of Greek and Latin roots and key content vocabulary by clicking on the links to Quizlet (2020) and StudyStack (2020). These links are the same that are included in The Eck’s Games menu.

**Figure 10**

*Tips and Tricks to Help Practice Comprehension and Vocabulary*

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 11**

*Interactive Classroom PDF*
Priority page 2: Resources for Teachers. Resources and materials that are available on this page are meant to be accessed and used in a content area classroom or home setting and therefore have a subtitle of Reading in the Content Area. A guided tour of the webpage is provided for viewers under the title heading of the page. Each mini-section also provides a video introduction to the purpose and directions of the activity and links to the curriculum. The Resources for Teacher’s page includes links to state standards, reading strategies, interactive, cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning websites and a list of texts to further one’s learning about reading in the content area.

The top of the page includes a quote from Robb’s 2003 Teaching Reading in Social Studies, Science and Math, which explains the importance of all teachers modeling reading strategies:

If we want students to improve their reading and thinking, then teachers in grades 3 and above [this includes content teachers] should help students construct meaning by modeling and teaching the strategies and techniques that support learning to read while reading to learn. (p. 19)
This quote, accompanied by a personal rationale, explains the purpose of the page and how it can be used as a resource to content area teachers.

*State standards and Common Core Standards.* Links to the *Common Core* and state standards are included on the website page because it connects the learning of the ELA classroom to the learning in science and social studies classrooms as well. There are many standards, such as determining the main idea or central idea of a text, that overlap between the disciplines (MDE, p. 80-90), and therefore, serve as the guiding foundation for the rest of the page.

**Figure 12**

*Quote, Rationale, State and Common Core Standards*

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**Reading in the Content Area**

“If we want students to improve their reading and thinking, then teachers in grades 3 and above [this includes content teachers] should help students construct meaning by modeling and teaching the strategies and techniques that support learning to read while reading to learn.”


As an ELA intervention teacher, it is my goal to bridge the learning in my classroom to the learning in other content area classrooms as well. On this page, you will find links to resources that are available for you to use in order to make materials more accessible to students while learning. The resources included are: link to ELA + science and social studies standards, strategies and graphic organizers, cooperative learning strategies, links to vocabulary building websites and links to books and other materials for further reading and research.

**Standards** (Video explanation)

**MN State Standards:**

*English Language Arts*

*ELA and Social studies & Science/Technical Subjects pg. 80 - 90.*

**Common Core Standards:**

*English Language Arts Standards -- History/Social Studies -- Grade 6-8*

*English Language Arts Standards -- Science & Technical Subjects -- Grade 6-8*

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**Strategies and graphic organizers.** The next few sections of the teacher resource page, provide reading strategies as well as collaborative and cooperative learning strategies. The reading strategies are from the Serravallo (2015) book: *Reading Strategies Book: Your Everything Guide to Developing Skilled Readers* that align with the ELA and content area standards. For the purpose of this project, the focus was on how to determine the main idea or central idea of text. The section that follows provides links to
cooperative and collaborative learning strategies that can be incorporated into lessons that are especially text heavy.

**Figure 13**

*Teaching Strategies and Graphic Organizers*

Interactive learning and vocabulary links. These sections of the teacher resource page provide teachers with links to online learning platforms to make learning more interactive. The links provided are to websites that are commonly used in the researcher’s ELA classroom, but that would transfer well into other content area classrooms as well. Based on the experience of the researcher, websites such as *Kahoot*! (2020), *Mentimeter* (2020), *StudyStack* (2020), and *Quizlet* (2020) are user friendly and fun ways to bring new learning into the classroom.

*Check This Out!* The final section of the teacher resource page is dedicated to providing resources for teachers who want to learn more about reading in the content area. Links are provided to books and articles that the researcher used and referenced when creating the website and instructional materials.

**Figure 14**

*Interactive Learning and Vocabulary Links and Check This Out!*
**Priority page 3: Resources for Parents & Families.** Resources and materials that are available on this page are meant to be accessed and used by students and families in the home setting. A guided tour of the webpage is provided for viewers under the title heading of the page. Each mini-section also provides a video introduction to the purpose and directions on how to access and use the linked websites. The *Resources for Parents & Families* page includes links to intervention materials, commonly used classroom websites and platforms and resources to find online reading materials for their readers.

The top of the page includes a quote from authors that were reviewed in chapter two. The quote is from Cambria & Guthrie (2010), who said:

> There are two sides to reading. On one side are the skills which include phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary and simple comprehension. On the other side is the will to read. A good reader has both skill and will. In the *will* part, we are talking about motivation to read (p. 16).
Similarly to the Resource for Teachers page, this quote, accompanied by a personal rationale, explains the purpose of the page and how it can be used as a resource for parents and families at home.

**Figure 15**

*Quote and Rationale*

**ELA WITH MRS. ECK**

There are two sides to reading. On one side are the skills which include phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary and simple comprehension. On the other side is the will to read. A good reader has both skill and will. In the "will" part, we are talking about motivation to read.

~ Cambria & Guthrie, 2010.

As an ELA intervention teacher, it is my job to motivate students to work on strengthening their reading skills. It is my hope that through small group, cooperative learning, that they will find the "will" while growing their skills. On this page, you will find links to resources that are available for you to use at home to help encourage and motivate your reader. The resources included are: links to vocabulary building ad comprehension websites to practice their skills at home. You will also find links to files and PDFs that better explain the materials and methods we use in our classroom.

*Intervention books, classroom websites, ebooks and other materials for learning.*

These sections of the Resources for Parents and Families page are included to bring access to the parents and families of our ELA and intervention students. Along with the links, a video explanation is provided with tutorials and tips on how to navigate the sites in order to provide support for their child. Parents and families can find information on how to access learning platforms such as Google Classroom, Actively Learn (n.d), Newsela (2020) and Quizlet (2020). A list of ebook websites commonly used by the researcher’s school are linked to a Google Doc. A link and video directions for accessing the local county library is also available for parents and families.

**Figure 16**

*Intervention books, classroom websites, ebooks and other materials for learning.*
Supporting page 1: *Home, Begin Your Reading Adventure Today.* The home page is what greets readers when they visit the project website. While a home page is important, for the purpose of this project, it is not considered a major section since it’s content is more general information rather than resources needed for cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning. Similar to other pages, a guided video tour is available underneath the title heading. Visitors will also find a video or audio tour available for each subsequent section of the page. Resources on this page include links to the three priority pages, a link to the game-based learning menu, a featured read and links to information about the intervention teacher and how to contact them.

**Figure 17**

*Home Page, Begin Your Reading Adventure Today*
Supporting page 2: Mrs. Eck, My Story. This page is designed to build a relationship and make connections between the intervention teacher and students and families. The sections on this page give detailed information about the intervention...
teacher followed by current reading recommendations. As mentioned in other sections of this project description, a guided video tour is available underneath the title heading. Visitors will also find a video or audio tour available for each subsequent section of the page. One section of this page includes a brief history of the intervention teacher’s educational background, teaching experience and some fun facts about their life outside of school. In the sections that follow are opportunities for visitors to connect with and learn about the intervention teacher through book recommendations and memories of when they were in middle school.

**Connecting through books, reading and memories.** In this section of the webpage, visitors are encouraged to learn about the researcher and intervention teacher by viewing the latest books that they are reading. They can also come to this page to view personal recommendations on great books. The books listed are based on current and previous student recommendations. Each book listed is a hyperlink to a Goodreads (2020) description of the plot and reader reviews. The final section of the page includes pictures of the teacher’s time in middle school. The purpose of this is to engage the students and families in conversations around common middle school experiences.

**Figure 18**

*Mrs. Eck: My Story*
My Story

Click here for a video tour of the page.

SCHOOL
(Audio)

This is my 12th year in education and 3rd as an Edgewood Eagle. Prior to middle school, I was an elementary school teacher in a couple of different schools here in the Twin Cities as well as Colorado.

I am VERY passionate about reading and believe that EVERYONE is a reader. Whether it is a text message, email, utility bill, job application, novel, comic book, etc., reading is a skill that you need for every aspect of your life.

I love working with small groups of students to build their confidence and skills in reading.

EDUCATION
(Audio)

BA in K-6 & 5-8 social studies education
BA in History
Certification in K-12 Reading
MA in Literacy

HOME
(Audio)

I am a mother to the most adorable 17 month old boy who loves books and being read to. When I am not teaching, I go on walks, watch movies and play cribbage. My guilty pleasure is coffee and chocolate (not together though). The scariest thing I have ever done is scuba dive at night - it's like a haunted house.

I CAUGHT YA...

Reading a good book? Check here to see what I or others have currently read!
Supporting page 3: Resource/Work Cited. The final page to the website is designed to give credit to researchers, authors, organizations, and websites that influenced the creation and design of the ELA project website. Teachers, parents, or students can access this page to find out more information about the content used within the website. This page is also designed to be a reference to anyone who wants to know more and continue their learning about the research, texts, and websites used to create the project website and curriculum materials.

Figure 19

Resources/Work Cited
Project description conclusion. In this section, the researcher described the content of the ELA project website. The priority pages of Resources for Students, Resources for Teachers and Resources for Parents and Families were described in great detail as they directly related to the research question and content of the Capstone paper. Descriptions of the supporting pages of The Home Page: Begin Your Reading Adventure Today, and Resources/Work Cited were also provided. In the next section, details on the timeline for the project will be described.

Timeline

This project was completed during the capstone project class during the summer semester of 2020. The project website design and structure was completed in July 2020. Curriculum and materials made for the website were created over a period of 8 months.

from December 2019 to August 2020. All curriculum and materials were completed and uploaded to the website by the course completion date of August 21, 2020.

Implementation of the website and materials will begin in fall of the 2020-2021 school year. Since this is a resource for students, teachers and families, each group will learn about the website at different times. The website and materials are to be shared with teachers during the district’s back-to-school workshop week of August 31 - September 4, 2020. Students and families will be introduced to the website on our districts back-to-school night of September 2, 2020. The content and materials of the website will be updated frequently and therefore communication with teachers, students and families will continue throughout the 2020-2021 school year.

In this section, the researcher described the timeline in which the project was completed and when it will be communicated with the intended audiences. The project was completed in the summer semester of 2020 and will be communicated with students, teachers and families at the start of the 2020 - 2021 school year. In the next section, a summary of chapter three will be given, followed by a preview of what to expect in chapter four.

**Summary**

For the *Capstone* project, an ELA website was created to provide resources and materials for students, teachers and families. Intervention resources and materials as well as cooperative, collaborative game-based learning options are available for students to access in the middle school, reading intervention, content area classroom and home settings. Resources and materials for content area teachers and families are provided to support the intervention students in their classroom and home settings. Monitoring of the
progress and success of the materials will be done through assignment completions, student surveys and on-going communication with students, teachers and families.

Chapter four will provide a reflection of this project and will discuss major learnings, implications, limitations of the project, benefits to the profession and next steps or expansions to this project.
CHAPTER FOUR

Capstone Reflection

Introduction

The final chapter of my Capstone paper is a reflective study on the process and conclusions of my research and project. Throughout my research and project, I have been guided by the following question: How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class? In this chapter, I will discuss my process, findings and conclusions with the above mentioned question. I begin by providing information on major learnings and revisit my research and literature review. I will then continue into implications and what limitations I ran into when creating the project. I will then move into the benefits it provides to my profession, future projects and how to communicate the findings and project to others.

Major Learnings

I began my research to find a way to increase engagement and motivation in my literacy intervention classroom. From my experience, students struggled with finding value and interest in the lessons and content that they were learning. They also were having trouble connecting their learning to other content areas. That is, until I began including games into our lessons. Once I introduced challenges and competition to their learning, their engagement immediately went up. When some of those games involved topics, vocabulary or content from other classes, they began to see the connections that
can be made. Therefore, I wanted to research how to model an entire program around
game-based learning to increase motivation and engagement in my literacy intervention
program.

Throughout the Capstone process, I learned a lot about literacy intervention
programs, motivation, engagement and game-based learning. Two of my largest
takeaways are centered around the purpose of a literacy program and game-based
learning. When I began my current job, I was tasked with the challenge of creating and
implementing an intervention program for my school. I was directed to work with the
ELA teachers to create learning targets and lessons that would fill the gaps in
comprehension based on the current ELA state standards. After concluding my Capstone
research, I have determined that partnerships with other content area teachers are just as
important in implementing a successful literacy intervention program because students
are required to read in every class. Partnerships with teachers in the different content
areas are important because every teacher is a reading teacher, they just might not know it
yet.

My interactive learning website was created keeping in mind the need to bridge
the learning between other content areas and home, therefore, my website is broken down
into three priority pages: Resources for Students, Resources for Teachers and Resources
for Parents & Families. Each page provides tips and tricks to help students practice
comprehension strategies and vocabulary skills that could be applied to all content areas.
For the purpose of my project, I created a game-based learning menu that focused on the
reading strategy and the English Language Arts academic standard of determining the
main idea or central idea of a text (MDE, p. 50). Through my research I found that
determining the main idea or central idea of a text is also part of the *Literacy in History and Social Studies*, and *Literacy in Science and Technical Subject Standards* as well.

This became the basis and focus of the website: finding other ways to show the connection of literacy to other content areas that could be practiced and applied at school and at home.

I began this project as a way to increase engagement by intrinsically motivating students through game-based learning, but have found that to be more difficult than it sounds. It is very challenging to create and design game-based learning without extrinsic rewards. Most of my students are currently motivated by the thought of food or candy as a reward for their focus, attention and participation in learning in many of their learning environments. The answer I found is to incorporate cooperative and collaborative learning strategies to intrinsically motivate them and game-based learning to extrinsically motivate them. I also found that such activities and games needed to be applicable and accessible to students beyond the confines of my intervention classroom. If I truly wanted students to see the value in the games and learning activities, I had to create something that would bridge the learning to other content area classrooms and home.

This research has led me to the conclusion that an intervention program should be standards based and incorporate skills and strategies that can benefit the students in multiple educational settings. It has also led me to believe that it is possible to create a game-based learning environment where both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is present. In the next section of this chapter, I will revisit the research and literature reviewed in chapter two. I will review the key concepts that were learned from my
research. I will also highlight how the key researchers who were influential in the design of my Capstone project.

Revisiting Literature Review

The three most influential parts of my literature review from chapter two was the research on intervention programs, cooperative and collaborative learning and game-based learning. While creating my website, I wanted to pay extra attention to the accessibility of materials for students and how it could be applied in multiple educational settings. This idea came from an article written by Englert et al., 2005 and Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004. In the article, they spoke about a struggling reader’s inability to process and master information if instructional materials were inaccessible and not part of the core curriculum in multiple content areas.

When I first began researching game-based learning and how to incorporate it into my curriculum, I thought that I needed to stay clear from computer and online gaming websites to ensure comprehension. Studies by the PEW Research Center (2008) (as cited by Gee, 2008; O’Neil et al., 2005 and Mayo, 2009), brought me to the conclusion that students have a very powerful tool at their disposal on a daily basis that is used to socialize and engage with others outside of school. It would only make sense to incorporate such devices in schools as well to increase their engagement and comprehension. Especially when they can also be building 21st century skills at the same time. It was because of this realization that when I focused my game-based learning around online learning and gaming platforms instead of board or card games.

The final influential part of my literature review was research on cooperative and collaborative learning. I was worried that having game-based learning meant that I was
going to be creating students who were engaged for the sole purpose of earning a prize or reward. After further research, I came to the conclusion that creating an environment that promotes game-based learning through cooperative and collaborative learning activities, the socialization aspect of it can be the reward in itself. As Bacon (2005) stated, “Middle school children are undeniably social; they love to talk, to share ideas, and to debate” (p.418). Therefore, I made sure to create a project that had both independent gaming activities as well as cooperative, collaborative or social learning activities as well. The research also led to the understanding between cooperative and collaborative learning and how they can both be beneficial learning strategies in the classroom and in the future workforce. Cooperative learning is more teacher-directed, while collaborative learning is more student centered (Hutt, 2017).

The influential research from chapter two supports my major learnings in the sense that a literacy intervention program should include strategies and materials that are accessible to use in other content area classrooms and the home settings as well. It is also important to have a well rounded game-based learning environment that uses both cooperative and collaborative learning because they are skills to be used in school and in their future employment settings. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the implications of my research and Capstone project.

**Implications**

The implications to my project relate to literacy in the content area, game-based learning, and making the website and content as equitable as possible. In terms of literacy in the content area, I foresee this research and project being a useful tool when partnering with teachers in other content areas such as social studies and science. Many of our
struggling readers are finding it challenging to read content related material when it is presented at a level higher than their reading ability and without the proper scaffolds and supports. It is my hope to work with my administrators and the building literacy coaches to partner with content teachers to bring literacy into their classrooms.

An implication of game-based learning can be that students are only engaged in the program if there is some sort of reward attached to it. Game-based learning by itself is not enough to motivate students to learn the material, they need to find value and enjoyment in reading by itself. Therefore, while there are ways to incorporate games into the literacy curriculum, it cannot be the sole focus of the program.

The final implication of my research and project is ensuring that the content and materials provide an equitable learning experience for all students. A website is only good and usable if it is accessible, comprehensible and user friendly. In order for this to be a website that can be used by the students, staff and family of my school, I had to make sure that it consisted of district approved websites and followed all copyright laws. It also had to be created in a format that was easy for students of multiple ages, backgrounds and reading levels. With many of my students struggling with reading to begin with, I implemented video and audio tours of every website page, section and activity in my website and game-based learning menu. This is something that I believe all teachers should do with their websites in order to eliminate the inability to access information by reading ability alone. A further step I would like to explore in this process would be how to make the content material available in other languages as well.

In conclusion, it is important to partner with all teachers involved in a child’s education to ensure that the content and materials are accessible to them. Making sure
that a game-based curriculum isn’t solely about the outcome, but the process encourages motivation beyond extrinsic reward. Finally, doing what is possible to make the resources and curriculum as accessible as possible to promote an equitable experience is both kind and an educational responsibility. In the next section, I will discuss limitations I faced when conducting my research and project with special emphasis on the current state of the world.

**Limitations**

Limitations to my research and project relate to the timeline creation and implementation and Covid-19. The completion of this Capstone project is during the summer semester when there is no school. Therefore, I am unable to introduce the website to the target audience and test its usability until the fall semester of 2020 school year.

The second limitation is the impact of Covid-19 on schools and implications of distance learning. The Coronavirus (COVID-19) “is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus (WHO, 2020, para. 1). In the spring of 2020, schools went to distance learning (Startribune, 2020, April 24). meaning all educational services and needs were dependent on students having access to the internet and motivation to be independent learners. Since this is a project that is designed to bridge learning from the intervention classroom to other content areas and the home, it is challenging to do that without an in-person classroom. Motivation to engage in learning during distance learning is also a challenge, but I am hoping that interactive activities and game-based learning will increase engagement for future learning.
In conclusion, the limitations to this project are the fact that it was completed before the ability to properly analyze its impact and success. It is also difficult to bridge the intervention classroom to other areas without a physical intervention classroom to work with students in. In the next section, I will discuss the benefits my research and project bring to the profession of teaching and learning.

**Benefit to Profession**

I believe that my project is a benefit to my profession because it provides materials to students, teachers and families to increase reading and learning engagement in school and at home. My *Capstone* project encourages every teacher to see themselves as a reading teacher by providing links to specific strategies and materials that promote literacy in content area classrooms such as ELA, social studies and science. I also provide a list with links to books that promote professional development on the topics of reading in the content area, student motivation, cooperative learning strategies, culturally responsive teaching and mindset.

In conclusion, my project provides skills and strategies that can be applied in multiple settings to help students comprehend and engage in lessons and materials. In the next section, I will discuss next steps to my project and future professional development.

**Future Projects**

My Capstone project is the first step of an evolving literacy intervention curriculum and website. Determining the main idea or central idea of a text is just one of many academic standards that has crossover in ELA and content area standards. My next focus would be to develop a game-based learning menu and interactive classrooms for analyzing author’s point of view or perspective, nonfiction text structure and features and
decoding and vocabulary development that would increase comprehension in all content areas. I plan on also developing activities for game-based learning and interactive classrooms on ELA specific standards such as analyzing character development, making inferences and finding themes in a text.

I will continue building and creating materials for reading strategies that teachers can use in their classrooms. I will continue to research and develop strategies and graphic organizers in the areas of analyzing author’s point of view or perspective, nonfiction text features and decoding and vocabulary development for social studies and science related content areas.

Further research and study would be in the areas of cooperative and collaborative learning strategies that can be applied in person and online. The 2020-2021 school year will begin by offering a blended or hybrid model or distance learning to students (Startribune, July 31). The blended or hybrid approach has students learning in person 2-3 days a week and at home virtually for the remaining days. Distance learning will be 100% online learning. I would like to find more ways to bring cooperative and collaborative learning to the online classroom and or find activities that involve students at school and at home simultaneously.

In conclusion, future steps and research include expanding my online curriculum and game-based menu to other ELA and content area standards. I also plan to further my research on online cooperative and collaborative learning strategies. In the next section, I will discuss how I plan to communicate the results of my research and project to my others in my profession.

**Communicating Results**
I intend to communicate my research and *Capstone* project with my district literacy coach and school administrators, colleagues, students and families. My principal, literacy coach and I have decided that a focus for this upcoming school year is to support teachers with incorporating content specific reading strategies in their lessons where reading a text is necessary to complete a task or assignment. Therefore, my research, results and project will be communicated to teachers at the start of the school year as a resource available for them and students in their classroom. Since it is an evolving project, teachers will be notified of the changes through joint planning sessions and or by email once new materials are posted and available.

My research and materials will be communicated to students and families during the yearly back-to-school event and during the first couple weeks of school. I will also share when I have updated and made new materials available through email. My ELA website will also be linked and available to the public through our school website.

In conclusion, my research and results will be communicated to students, teachers and families at the start of the 2020 - 2021 school year and will be notified once changes are made. In the next section, I provide a summary of chapter four and my paper.

**Conclusion**

By increasing engagement in the literacy intervention classroom by motivating students with cooperative and collaborative learning strategies, game-based learning activities and partnering with other content area teachers, it is possible to see success in closing the achievement gap. The amazing thing about being a middle school student is that you have multiple teachers and multiple opportunities to learn. The literacy intervention classroom should not be seen as an added burden to students within their
school day, but a positive, and motivating tool to increase their reading engagement and bridge their learning between their teachers and classes.

Throughout the paper, my personal experience with reading and teaching have been discussed and how it led to the guiding question of *How can cooperative, collaborative and game based learning increase engagement and comprehension in a middle school literacy intervention class?* Through research of literacy intervention programs, motivation and engagement, cooperative and collaborative learning and game-based learning, one can conclude that a literacy program should be standards based and promote learning through cooperative, collaborative and game-based learning activities. Designing an ELA website is one step in making materials available to students in multiple settings. Communication and collaboration with content area teachers and families are also important when creating a literacy intervention program and curriculum. This is an evolving study and website and therefore will be able to adapt to the needs of the students now and in the future.
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