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### **Capstone Project Summary**

The purpose of my capstone project was to investigate how motivation can be affected by opportunities for student choice in second-grade writing. For this project I chose to create a writing curriculum that focuses on offering student choice throughout each lesson. In total, there are fifteen lessons. The curriculum is intended to be taught over the course of ten weeks. It is designed in this way so that the classroom teacher has time to complete a pre-curriculum and post-curriculum assessment. Beyond that, ideally, the instructor teaches three lessons per week, and allows extra time at the conclusion of lessons four, seven, thirteen, and whenever else the class or schedule requires additional time. One of the key goals for this curriculum was to offer a structure that would not only work within my own classroom, but that could be used by teachers who were unfamiliar or uncomfortable offering student choice with the resources that they need to implement it in their own classes. Each lesson includes the necessary materials, descriptions, and opportunities for the teacher to make decisions based upon individual student needs.

Each of the lessons offer a variety of choices, including Across-Task Choices and Within-Task Choices. Across-Task Choices refer to options that allow students to alter the order or format of the work they are completing. One example of this would be to provide students with what's described as a choice board or an options menu. Within-task choices are much more simple. These refer to providing students with options in a predetermined task, such as whether to use crayons instead of colored pencil, where to work, or who to work with. While within-task choices may seem simplistic, it is important to note that both styles have been shown to have a similar impact on students. The decision to focus on student choice when studying motivation in

second grade was largely tied to existing research on intrinsic motivation, and ideologies such as that of the self-determination theory. Under self-determination theory, students are more motivated as they grow in their sense of control, sense of competence, and in their ability to provide themselves with rewards and consequences. One of the key benefits of instructional choice is that the increased options shift part of the learner responsibility from the teacher to the student. When choices are presented, students are expected to be self-directed, and take part in independent learning.

The overall curriculum focuses on developing two major projects: an informative essay and a research project. The informative essay focuses on key writing goals for second grade, such as taking part in the writing process, understanding the differences between facts and opinions, and taking part in informative writing. Lessons focused on this project will take up the first seven lessons. In my curriculum implementation this took about three and a half weeks of school to complete. The research project is the focal point of lessons eight through fifteen. This focuses on second grade goals of informative writing, and the writing process from the prior lessons; while adding an emphasis on taking part in research using multimedia tools and creating projects using these different resources. In my implementation this became a highly creative process, and allowed for more opportunities for student choice than I had ever been able to offer before. In my implementation students created projects using Google Slides, making posters, science experiments, greenscreen videos, typed papers, and adding other details like drawings or costumes. Included in the curriculum are resources that teachers can use to facilitate each of them. Some of the resources are worksheets for students to use, while others are intended to be helpful examples or guides.

In order to help determine whether my project's implementation was successful and how it may best be used by other educators I put in numerous measurement tools to allow me to understand student mindset shifts, perceived motivation, and writing performance throughout the curriculum. One of these measures was a simple student survey. Over the course of the curriculum students shifted drastically in some areas, while other questions produced fairly moderate changes. Before the writing curriculum, 10 students (35%) stated that they "liked writing". At the end of the curriculum, 16 students (57%) stated that they liked writing. In response to the prompt "I like to choose what I write about, prior to implementing the curriculum 16 students (57%) responded positively, while 23 students (82%) responded positively at the end of the curriculum. Student perspectives made significant change in many more areas. 16 students (57%) responded that writing was important prior to the curriculum, while 22 students (79%) did afterward. 4 students (14%) stated that they enjoyed sharing their writing prior to the curriculum, while 14 students (50%) responded positively following the lessons.

Other measures of effectiveness included student interviews and writing assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the curriculum implementation. Student interviews were provided additional context and information to go with what the survey responses provided. In the writing assessments, students made significant progress throughout the curriculum implementation. Writing assessments were graded using rubrics that I created for the purpose of the curriculum. Over the course of the ten weeks student scores on the informative writing assessments increased from an average of 9.34 to 13.86 out of a possible 20 points.