Reader’s Identity: How Identity and Literacy Can Work Together for Student Success in Middle School (Project)

Tonya Kay Jesweak

Grand Valley State University, jesweakt@mail.gvsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/coeawardhonor

Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation
http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/coeawardhonor/7

This Project - Open is brought to you for free and open access by the COE Dean's Award for Outstanding Master's Project/Thesis at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honorable Mentions by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.
Reader’s Identity: How Identity and Literacy Can Work Together for Student Success in Middle School

By

Tonya Kay Jesweak

December 2014

Master’s Project
Submitted to the College of Education
At Grand Valley University
In partial fulfillment of the
Degree of Master of Education
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor at Grand Valley State University, Elizabeth Stolle, who looked at my rough drafts, saw the heart of where I was going, and steered me in the right direction. I would also like to thank my family for their encouragement, babysitting duties, and unending support.

Tonya Jesweak
Abstract

Reading is an essential skill for life. When students come to classrooms without an identity as a reader, teachers must engage and motivate students to read and take on a reading identity. This is especially true for students who have special needs or struggling readers. As teachers, we need to be able to draw on the identity of our students to engage and motivate them to read. Teachers must look at the classroom environment and ensure it is conducive to creating a community of readers. Choice must be provided to students. Being able to choose what they read, will benefit the building of an identity as a reader. Students must also be offered a variety of ways to respond to their reading. Examples of responses could include drawing, dancing, using technology to create a movie or a presentation, among numerous other examples. The use of technology should also be used to engage and motivate students, both as a way in to reading and as a means of expressing themselves about their reading. This project, which is a presentation for special education teachers, will illustrate practical and easy ways that teachers can help students develop their reading identity.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements
Abstract
Table of Contents
Chapter One: Project Proposal
  Problem Statement
  Importance and Rationale of the Project
  Background of the Project
  Statement of Purpose
  Objectives of the Project
  Definition of Terms
  Scope of Project
Chapter Two: Literature Review
  Introduction
  Theory/Rationale
    Identity
    Literacy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research/Evaluation</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement and Motivation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to Respond to Reading</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Project Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Components</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement and Motivation</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Environment</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Reading</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunity to Respond ................................................................. 30

Technology ..................................................................................... 31

Project Evaluation ........................................................................... 31

Project Conclusion .......................................................................... 32

Plans for Implementation ............................................................... 32

References ...................................................................................... 34

Appendix A- Reading Identity Presentation Slides ......................... 43

Appendix B- Identity and Literacy Presentation Slides ..................... 47

Appendix C- Student Interest Survey ............................................. 48

Appendix D- Engagement and Motivation Presentation Slides .......... 49

Appendix E- Providing Choice Examples ....................................... 53

Appendix F- Opportunity to Respond Presentation Slides ............... 55

Appendix G- Reader’s Response Resources and Examples .............. 56

Appendix H- Technology Presentation Slides .................................. 60

Appendix I- Survey of Presentation ............................................... 64

Data Form ....................................................................................... 65
Chapter One: Project Proposal

Problem Statement

In my special education class, the students face many obstacles with their reading and school success. They are students with emotional impairments, learning disabilities, and in most cases, some form of a mental illness. Add to that continued school failure, and the students crossing the threshold into my classroom each day are unmotivated and unengaged in their reading progress. Very few of my students read at grade level when they come into my classroom. Last year, one of the eight students in my classroom read at or above grade level. The vast majority of the students are two to three grade levels behind in reading. When assigned reading or told that we will be reading a novel together, I am met with groans, eye rolls, and in some cases, even violence. Couple their fear of failing with their low self-esteem and some would rather act out and face disciplinary consequences than read.

My students lack the identity of a reader. Identity arises based on the “learning experiences” that students have (Sumara, 1998). When they do not have successful experiences reading, they do not create an identity as a reader. Harste (2009) states, “You need to see yourself as a reader in order to become one” (p. 7). My students need and deserve positive experiences with reading to create an identity as a reader, both in school and outside of school. To do this, I need to motivate and engage students with books through choice, discussions, and exposure to all genres. I also need to provide them with time to read, access to books- at their reading level and through technology, and an opportunity to respond to reading in ways that engage them in the reading process.
Importance and Rationale of the Project

Reading is an essential skill. Alfred Tatum (2014) likens reading with living. Reading is required throughout our lives and throughout all environments. Tatum has completed pivotal work on reading and African American males. I contend that his findings are relevant in my own classroom, the vast majority of whom are boys. He has shown that “if reading education is not provocative, meaningful, and designed to help African American males their identity, they will be denied access to educational, economics, social, and political opportunities” (Tatum, 1999, p. 64). Reading is the gateway to opportunities, in school and outside of school. Across the globe, studies have shown that reading is critical to forming an identity and creating more opportunities post high school (Horbec, 2012; Loh, 2013).

Poor reading skills impede students’ academic success. Students spend a good deal of their time disengaging from the text in order to save face with their peers (Froiland & Oros, 2014; Guthrie & Davis, 2003; McCray, Vaughn, & Neal, 2001). Students would rather appear to be delinquent than for their peers to know they are poor readers. With this comes the “Matthew Effect” (Stanovich, 1986). The “Matthew Effect” says that students who read more become better readers. When you have students who would rather choose to save face than to read, the opposite becomes true as well, they continue to get further behind their peers.

Reading is a social activity. It occurs in many different environments for many different purposes (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012). These relationships take many forms; between the reader and the characters in the book, reader and fellow readers, and reader and teacher. Studies have shown that relationships are strengthened with reading (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).
Because of how social reading is, it becomes imperative to reach those students who are saving face and struggling with reading.

We have to move from students who save face to students who are empowered readers. Teachers desire that their students will be able to grasp and interact meaningfully with texts from all genres (Moley, Bandré, & George, 2011). Providing students with an opportunity to interact with books in a new and novel way creates an interest and motivation to learn and read more (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). Rosenblatt (1982) discusses how each person brings different life experiences to what they are reading. These life experiences shape how we understand the text. However, if a student is disengaged from the reading process, reading becomes a chore or a task and it will not have the same benefit as the student who is interacting and making meaning with the text, regardless of the genre.

From start to finish of the school day, I want to empower my students by immersing them in reading and a culture of reading, leading them to become lifelong readers. As I have a love for reading, sharing that with my students begins this process of immersion in reading. Sharing what I am reading, leads students to share what they are reading and to make recommendations. Making time in each and every day must be routine. Responding in a variety of ways to what is being read leading to deeper understanding needs to be something that all student in the classroom do on a regular basis. Through these and many more activities, reading becomes an integral part of the school climate (Daniels, Marcos, & Steres, 2011). In that, we will be fostering relationships, mitigating the Matthew effect, and improving academic abilities.
Background of the Project

Who am I? How do I fit in? Where do I belong? Questions of identity have long been contemplated by the world’s philosophers. Erik Erikson posited his eight stage developmental model in 1950 (Friedman, 2001). Friedman lists the stages as:

1. basic trust vs. basic mistrust (infancy) 2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (early childhood) 3. initiative vs. guilt (play age) 4. industry vs. inferiority (school age) 5. identity vs. role confusion (adolescence) 6. intimacy vs. isolation (young adulthood) 7. generativity vs. stagnation (adulthood) 8. ego integrity vs. despair (old age) (p. 180).

Erikson’s (1968) theory postulates that each stage is dispatched with “identity having found a form which will decisively determine later life” (loc. 1289). In the identity stage, Erikson describes adolescents as comparing themselves with how others see them and how they see themselves. So while these students so desperately try to claim their own identity, they also are clearly looking around themselves for affirmation. Their identity forms through relationships with others.

Taking into consideration Erikson’s (1968) theory of identity, my students have not passed through the first five stages in such a way as to leave them feeling secure and sure of themselves. My students have, more often than not, come down on the negative side of each of Erikson’s stages. They do not trust easily. They are full of shame and doubt, real or perceived. They often carry around guilt for events they have no control over. They struggle
academically and regard themselves inferior to their peers. And they are absolutely confused about who they are, who they want to be, and how to reconcile the two.

The Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (2013) defines emotional impairment as:

Emotional Impairment shall be determined through manifestation of behavioral problems primarily in the affective domain, over an extended period of time, which adversely affect the student’s education to the extent that the student cannot profit from learning experiences without special education support. The problems result in behaviors manifested by 1 or more of the following characteristics:

(a) Inability to build and maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships within the school environment.
(b) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
(c) General pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
(d) Tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (p. 13).

My students come to my classroom after acting out in classroom settings, often violently. They typically have no friends. They are often behind academically in all areas. They are unable to control their impulses and act without thinking. They have low self-esteem and see themselves
as having no value. These students have struggled through Erikson’s stages of development with disastrous effects on their lives, leaving them with damaging identities.

Students who receive special education services have a hard time creating a positive identity for themselves. Feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment are the norm for students with labels of emotionally impairment (Fitch, 2003). Crafting an identity happens from belonging to a community, and when a person does not belong in the community, their identity is negatively affected (Jodrell, 2010). The context around them—home, community, and school—add to the development of a negative or a positive identity based on how they are received in those contexts. A study by Fitch (2003) demonstrated that depending on the situation, students with disabilities can adapt and create a positive self-identity with school staff help. Teachers must create an environment that is conducive to creating a positive identity. Instead of humiliation and rejection, schools must generate an environment of acceptance and inclusion (Fitch, 2003).

When you pair my students’ emotional impairment diagnoses with study findings reporting that stances toward reading degenerate as students get older, my students’ chance of academic success also deteriorates (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012). To stop or at the very least slow this downward trend, I need to help my students see how important reading is to their lives, in school and out. With intention and purpose with the texts selected in the classroom, I can engage my students with reading, foster discussions, connect issues to their lives, and help students understand differing viewpoints from their own (Moley et al., 2011).
Relationship becomes key in helping these students create a new identity for themselves (Gee, 2000; Hall, 2010; Johnston, 2004). In the classroom, we work on many identities: capable student, someone who has self-control, a person who can work out their problems non-violently, a person of value. Central to becoming a capable student is building the students’ identities as readers (Skerrett, 2012).

Marginalized students need teachers to help them create an identity as a reader in order to better assist them in creating all of the other identities they also need to be successful. This is accomplished through what is read, how students read, and how they learn to talk as a group. Reading and books becomes the means through which teachers can lead students back to a positive identity.

**Statement of Purpose**

Throughout the remainder of this project, it is my intention to create a presentation for professional development for interested general education and special education teachers that focuses on engaging and motivating middle school emotionally impaired students to see themselves as readers. I will create a presentation that will lay out strategies that can be used in special education classrooms to help students gain an identity as readers and create a community of readers. These strategies include utilizing the classroom environment, providing choice, opportunities to respond to reading, and using technology to motivate and engage.
Objectives of the Project

To achieve the creation of the presentation, research will be studied and summarized on identity, engagement, motivation, and reading instruction including digital literacies.

1. Describe and highlight the importance of students having identities as readers
2. Provide information on engagement and motivation and how it relates to creating a reader identity
3. Furnish examples of how to use the classroom environment to encourage a reader identity
4. Describe how utilizing choice in the classroom creates autonomy for the students and encourages an identity as a reader
5. Illustrate examples of how students can respond to their reading, furthering the connections they are making
6. Highlight how technology can be used to engage, motivate, and be a means of response for students

Definition of Terms

Agency: taking action to meet goals (Johnston, 2004)

Engagement: reading for a purpose, effort, and goal (Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013)

Motivation: a person’s objectives and views about reading (as cited in Becker, McElvany, & Kortenbruck, 2010)

Reading Identity: the beliefs one has about their reading ability (Hall, 2012)
Scope of the Project

While this project will focus specifically on my classroom of severely emotionally impaired students in a center-based classroom, the activities that will be described and highlighted are easily generalizable for general education middle school classrooms. This project will address information and activities that highlight the importance of reading and creating an identity as a reader. It is not a curriculum, rather a presentation that will highlight information on engaging and motivating readers.

Interested audience members may include my fellow special education teachers, general education teachers, or reading teachers. This project will be unique in that it is geared towards a highly specialized special education program. There is not another classroom with the grade level I teach in the intermediate school district in which I work, this includes the local school districts. My classroom is self-contained and housed in one of the local districts. My students come from all seven of the local districts. Students typically stay in my classroom for two to three years. Therefore, I am able to develop a relationship with the students and parents that I might not be able to having them for one class a day for a year. I am also able to immerse students in books all day and throughout all subject areas.

The presentation I will create will contain information that all teachers can use in their classes if their goal is engaged students. Middle school students need occasions to exert control over their environments (Ivey, 2000). Providing students with choice in what they read, imparts the feeling that they do have control on their lives and can affect others (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Ivey and Johnston go on to say “that while constructing meaning from text,
students were also using text to construct meaning in their lives” (p. 270). Students relate to the texts, motivating them to read further. Through this presentation, teachers will be motivated to move forward with engaging their students to develop reading identities.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Middle school students who struggle with reading have a negative reading identity in the classroom (Hall, 2010). In fact, according to Hall, students will actively work to save face in the classroom to the detriment of their reading ability. Tatum (2008) also found this phenomenon in his work with African-American males. Failing in front of their peers becomes the overriding factor with these students' reading engagement. Instead of building a reading identity, they are creating identities as someone who works diligently to avoid reading. The 1994 findings of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, as summarized by Guthrie, Alao, and Rinehart (1997) states, “the typical middle school student reads less than 5 minutes a day for his or her own interest” (p. 439). Because of this negative reading identity, teachers must focus on the classroom environment (Atwell, 1998; Cambourne, 1995; Guthrie, et al., 2013), reader response (Daniels, 2010; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1995), choice (Atwell, 1998; Daniels et al., 2011; Harmon, Wood, & Stover, 2012; Ivey, 2000), and technology (Goodwyn, 2014; Spencer & Smullen, 2014; Werner-Burke, Spohn, Spencer, Button, & Morral, 2012) to move students toward a positive reading identity.

Theory/Rationale

Identity

Schachter and Galili-Schachter (2012) describe identity as understanding oneself through the world as one develops, assimilating role model personas into his or her own life. The researchers go on to say exploration is used to decide how the adolescents’ experiences
may fit in with their identity. In this stage, adolescents are questioning and looking for different ways of being in the world they inhabit (Wiley & Berman, 2013). The last step is commitment—the adolescent decides that a trait is going to be part of his or her identity (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012; Wiley & Berman, 2013).

This is similar to Erikson’s (1968) theory in which an adolescent works through stages and comes down on either side of a crisis. “The more successfully each stage is resolved, the more strengths the individual will be able to bring to the next stage and crisis” (Wiley & Berman, 2013, p. 1299). Erikson (1968) goes on to say that an adolescent searching for identity looks for adults and peers to pattern themselves after. Erikson (1968) stresses the role that community plays in this creation of identity; as role models, encouragers, and creators of positive identities. As a social institution, school has a direct effect on a student’s identity (Raphael, 1978). Teachers are able to focus on what students are able to do and maximize their talents, while lessening the damage of a negative identity (Erikson, 1968).

In each theory, a person must grapple with an issue and decide on how he or she is going to respond (Erikson, 1968; Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012). Forging an identity is a critical conflict in students’ lives at the middle school age (Begum, 2014). Adolescents, especially those with disabilities must have ample time to develop positive self-esteem and success in school (Fives et al., 2014). Accomplishments and losses are key in adolescents’ identities (Fives et al., 2014). What students do not often know or understand is that literature can help “inform” their identity (Tatum, 2008). Identity is renegotiated over and over based on life’s changing contexts (Sumara, 1998; Fitch, 2003). Sumara (1998) says, “Experiences of
Identity, then, are learning experiences” (p. 205). Identity then is not a static idea. It changes and evolves as an adolescent does.

In school, students take on an identity of belonging to a community of learners (Kaplan & Flum, 2012). Johnston (2004) tells us that students are “developing personal and social identities” (p. 22) along with literacy skills in school. “School contexts and school-work constitute central domains in students’ life experiences and sense of who they are and who they want to become” (Kaplan & Flum, 2012, p. 172). Students tell the story of who they are based on who they believe themselves to be (Johnston, 2004). If they identify as an author or as a reader, they will respond as a reader or an author (Johnston, 2004). With this knowledge, comes the responsibility of schools to help students create positive self-identities, academically and socially (Kaplan & Flum, 2012).

In order for students to create these positive identities, schools must provide opportunities for students to have agency (Johnston, 2004). According to Johnston, agency is a dominant need in all people leading to feelings of satisfaction when present, to feelings of vulnerability when no agency is experienced. Schools must provide opportunities for students to tell positive stories about themselves and support them when their attempts are unsuccessful (Johnston, 2004). According to Johnston, When students have agency, they “plan well, choose challenging tasks, and set higher goals” (p. 41). Creating an identity is at the heart of adolescence and using personal narratives and literacy to foster that development is key (Johnston, 2004; McLean, Breen, & Fournier, 2010; Tatum, 2014).
Frank Smith (2004) describes reading as “the most natural activity in the world” (p.2) and that readers make sense of the text based on their own experiences and background knowledge. Without the connection to a reader’s own experience, the text “will not come alive for him” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 77). Therefore, reading must begin with the reader being able to make connections to the text and allowing for readers to have abundant time to transact with the text (Smith, 2004). Smith also goes on to say that students “learn by relating their understanding of the new to what they know already, modifying or elaborating their prior knowledge” (p. 194).

Louise Rosenblatt describes this concept as a transaction between reader and text (1995). Rosenblatt goes on to say that the readers bring with them all of their experiences and emotions when they read a text. The text then creates new emotions and experiences leading to a two-way interaction (Rosenblatt, 1995). The meaning, therefore, is within the reader, not the text (Rosenblatt, 1995). “The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 24).

Reading is an act of relating with others and can be accomplished in numerous ways (Francois, 2013). Readers require time to talk about and discuss what they have read and how it makes them feel (Gambrell, 1996). Each reader will have a different experience with the text than his or her peers, and sharing these different experiences creates a community of readers (Thomas, 2000). “Students need opportunities to engage in authentic conversations, ask
questions, evaluate thinking, and make their own judgments as well as appreciate diverse points of view” (Moley et al., 2011, p. 252). New relationships are facilitated through discussion (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Through this interaction with the text and with other people, readers own reading identity is being strengthened (Francois, 2013).

Erikson’s (1968) theory of identity describes how school affects adolescents’ identities. He describes how children will model themselves after teachers and other students in an attempt to discover their identity. Tatum (2014) shows that “reading or encountering print texts that initiate or shape decisions significant to one’s wellbeing” (p. 36) are critical to shaping identity.

**Research/Evaluation**

In the classroom, creating a reader identity is an achievable goal. In reading books, readers become wrapped up in a world and the stories can become central to the students’ lives. Tatum (2014) calls these “touchstone texts” (p. 37). The experiences with the texts become so meaningful that students’ behavior, attitudes, and identity are affected when appropriate instructional supports are put in place (Tatum, 2008). This includes learning student interests and using appropriate and meaningful texts (McKenna et al., 2012; Tatum, 2008).

What students believe about reading must be confronted (Harste, 2009). Students must feel agency in the reading process (Harste, 2009; Johnston, 2004). To accomplish this, Johnston (2004) speaks about the choices we make with the words we say to students. Johnston posits that “language creates realities and invites identities” (p. 9). What teachers say in the
classroom sets the tone for students and the expectations of reading as a priority. As we interact with students and as students interact with texts, “they build and try on different identities” (Johnston, 2004, p. 23). How teachers speak to students about different events, affects how that student views the event and assimilates it into their identity (Johnston, 2004). This does not happen in isolation; it happens in relationship (Johnston, 2004).

Once the student feels agency and a relationship has developed between student and teacher, the teacher can guide the student to books that fit their interests and begin meaningful literacy conversations (Tatum, 2008). Engaging students with texts by way of allowing choice and exposure to many genres adds to their desire to engage (Daniels, et al., 2011). Giving students extended periods of time to read and talk with their peers engages them and develops their positive reading identity (Ivey, 2002). Also providing access to technology to assist and further their reading creates motivation to read (Lee, 2014). When putting the pieces together, a reading identity emerges for struggling readers (Skerrett, 2012).

**Engagement and Motivation**

Motivation and engagement work together to increase student success (Daniels et al., 2011; Graff, 2009/2010). Both motivation and engagement encourage relating with the text (Graff, 2009/2010). Creating connections with text and developing an identity as a reader leads to academic and social success (Horbec, 2012). Guthrie (2004) points out in *Teaching for Literacy Engagement* that “engaged readers spend 500% more time reading than disengaged students” (p. 1).
Cambourne (1995) finds that to be engaged, readers must feel proficient, have a purpose, be relaxed, and be among people they feel comfortable with. Readers who struggle with engagement have low self-esteem, tend to read only when required, and will circumvent learning opportunities (Guthrie & Davis, 2003). They become disconnected from reading and do not build on academic skills like comprehension (Guthrie, 2004). According to Barker and Herrington (2011/2012), “For many, frustration and anxiety over the inability to read are acted out in the form of persistent behavior problems or complete withdrawal” (p. 4).

Schachter and Schachter-Galili (2012) describe how identity and engagement work together: “Identity is, rather, a result of engaging with text and its meanings and can transform and transcend previous identifications and social, historical, and cultural identities” (p. 30). The interaction with the text adds to our identities (Schachter & Schachter-Galili, 2012). As we learn new things, try new things, we become engaged and motivated (Ryan, 2008).

Horbec (2012) states, “Engagement and motivation are integral to academic success” (p. 59). To increase academic success, improve engagement and motivation, and create reader identities, teachers must create a positive reader oriented environment (Atwell, 1998), use choice (Routman, 2014), attend to reader response (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007), and utilize technology (Spencer & Smullen, 2014).

**Classroom Environment.** Creating a classroom environment that showcases reading and books is critical in helping students form an identity as a reader (Gambrell, 1996; Daniels et al., 2011). Gambrell (1996) found four significant characteristics of a classroom that motivates students to be readers: “access to books in the classroom, opportunities to self-select books,
familiarity with books, and social interactions with others about books” (p. 20). Students begin to see themselves and those around them as readers (Daniels, et al., 2011). Frank Smith (2004) describes how students learn a culture, and by creating a culture of literacy in the classroom, readers are then invited into the literacy club. From there, readers will begin “to be exactly like the kind of person they see themselves as being” (Smith, 2004, p. 210). Students joining in a literacy club will become readers and take on a reading identity (Smith, 2004).

In order to make an impact on students’ reading identities, they must have access to appropriate, authentic texts and an opportunity to appreciate those texts (Schachter & Schachter-Galili, 2012). In a middle school classroom, there will be multiple reading levels and each student needs to have access to texts they can read, interact with, and enjoy (Gambrell, 1996; Ivey, 2000; Moley et al., 2011). Classroom libraries will need to be robust and labelled appropriately for ease of use (Atwell, 1998; Harmon et al., 2012; Miller, 2012).

To foster a reading identity, students need a variety of books to choose from (Damber, Samuelsson, & Taube, 2011; Tatum, 2004). The more options students have, the wider reading they will do (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). They may find themselves delving into topics they had not considered before based on a peer’s recommendation (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

**Choice.** Choice is a chief factor in engagement and motivation (Daniels et al., 2011; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Students rarely feel that they have control in school (Daniels et al., 2011). Choice in what they read presents an opportunity to put the students in charge, prompting their need to read (Daniels et al., 2011). Students need ownership over what they are reading in order for an identity as a reader to be more fully formed (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).
Students crave autonomy at the middle school level (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Mullins & Irvin, 2000). In creating their identity, students require opportunities to make decisions and choices about who they are going to be (Mullins & Irvin, 2000). Ivey and Broaddus (2004) present findings demonstrating students would be more motivated and engaged in school if they had an opportunity to make suggestions of what they would like to read and how they would like to demonstrate their learning. Teachers need to provide that opportunity as often as possible, especially with reading in order to create that reading identity (Guthrie, 2001).

Students will be much more successful at creating their own reading identity when given agency (Adodeeb-Gentile & Zawilinski, 2013; Guthrie, 2004). What students choose to read helps the teacher learn more about their reading identity (Graff, 2009/2010). These choices embody a reader’s reading identity (Buehl, 2011). Routman (2014) calls choice the “game-changer” for students who are not engaged in reading by providing the opportunity to exercise their own choices with reading (p.49). Teachers must guide students and expose them to books by surrounding them with books, using book talks, and providing ample opportunities to explore books in the classroom (Atwell, 1998; Daniels et al., 2011; Guthrie & Davis, 2003).

Exposing students to books demonstrates “that reading is worthwhile and creates interesting reading opportunities” (Smith, 2004, p. 222). Teachers also need to teach students how to choose books wisely by being a model reader (Gambrell, 1996; Harmon et al., 2012). Being a model reader involves sharing with students how the model chooses books and what impact the book has on the model’s life (Gambrell, 1996). Routman (2014) says, “Authenticity is key to everything we do and say each day when we seek to engage students” (p. 41).
Teachers are the experts and students are the novices, learning from our examples (Buehl, 2011). Harvey and Goudvis (2007) state it this way: “There is nothing more powerful than a literacy teacher sharing (his/)her passion for reading, writing, and thinking” (p. 12).

Along with allowing students choice in their reading material, teachers must also provide time for students to read (Daniels et al., 2011). This time for independent reading should be a priority (Ivey, 2000). According to a study done by Francois (2013), she found that “students and adults asserted that independent reading time shaped students’ reading experiences more than any other instructional time during the day” (p. 145). Independent reading time allowed the students an opportunity to hone their reading identity through a “common language, routines, and beliefs about reading” (Francois, 2013, p. 145). Independent reading became “the core of the school’s reading identity” (Francois, 2013, p. 145).

During independent reading time, teachers must be conferring, assisting students with book choices, and reading (Atwell, 1998; Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2009/2010; Routman, 2014). Teachers must confer with students to ensure students are reading a book they can understand and are enjoying (Atwell, 1998). Teachers will also be able to use this time to assist students in finding books that are of interest to them (Atwell, 1998). Kelley and Clausen-Grace (2009/2010) share that “finding the right book is crucial to getting students to read more, give them a chance to discover that they are more engaged when they read the right text” (p. 317).

**Opportunity to Respond to Reading**

Reader’s response calls for action from the reader (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; Rosenblatt, 1995). Readers bring their own understandings and experiences to make sense and interpret
the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). This is a transaction that takes place between the text and the reader, creating new meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995). Therefore, different readers will have different responses to the text (Buehl, 2011). This provides an opportunity for students to discuss, read more on the topic, and write about their experiences with the text (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). These exercises in response all readers to hear and see alternate explanations, which then allows the reader to inspect the transaction he or she had with the text, growing emotionally and socially (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Creating an inviting, safe classroom environment allows a reader an “opportunity and the courage to approach literature personally, to let it mean something to him directly” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 63-64). It demonstrates the value of a reader’s opinions, thoughts and feelings (Atwell, 1998). In reader response, the goal is to “deepen the experience” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 275). To do this, Rosenblatt (1982) goes on to explain, teachers must help the student “to return to, relive, savor, the experience” (p. 275). This is accomplished though drawing, writing, discussion, and even dance (Rosenblatt, 1982). The message sent to readers is that their responses, in whichever way they choose to respond, is respected and deserves to be shared (Rosenblatt, 1982).

Reader response is an opportunity to create a dialogue between the reader and the text, the reader and peers, and the reader and the teacher (Rosenblatt, 1995). Literary talk with a teacher and peers is crucial to kids’ development as readers (Atwell, 1998). Conversation about responses to reading develops students’ abilities to think critically about what they have read (Atwell, 1998). Through discussion, new ideas come to light, diverse
feelings and emotions can be shared, and students can learn to have a collegial discussion about texts (Ollmann, 1996). With dialogue as a chance to respond to text, students become more engaged in their reading; they want to share it with others (Guthrie, 2001; Routman, 2014; Trudel, 2007). Daily opportunities to engage in reading, writing, and talking creates a classroom community of readers (Skerrett, 2012). The associations that students make are the key to comprehension (Johnston, 2004).

**Technology**

Students have access to a variety of digital literacies, such as the Internet, electronic readers, and video games (McKenna et al., 2012). Technology provides an access point to the students’ home reading identity which can be utilized to expand their school reading identity (McKenna et al., 2012). Using Facebook, blogging, and instant messaging are all types of digital literacy that can be used in the classroom to respond to literacy (McKenna et al., 2012). Electronic readers, audiotapes, and creating multi-modal presentations are other ways students can engage with technology and respond to text (O’Brien, Beach, & Scharber, 2007). Technology in the classroom affords an occasion to engage and motivate students by encouraging them to use skills they already have in a way to build their identity as a reader (Alvermann, 2002; Laverick, 2014).

According to a study by Goodwyn (2014), electronic readers were proven to be beneficial for “reluctant boy readers” (p. 271), special education students, and struggling readers. Technology allows a way in for students to read independently (Goodwyn, 2014) and to express themselves (Nind, Boorman, & Clarke, 2011). Technology can be a form of
differentiation by allowing students to express themselves in non-threatening ways (Nind et al., 2011). Students can use photos, digital comic strips, videos, or music to communicate their thoughts and feelings and build relationships (Nind et al., 2011). These techniques allow voices to be heard and identities expanded (Nind et al., 2011).

Technology provides a form of scaffolding for students who struggle with reading as a way to allow them to save face (Miranda, Johnson, & Rossi-Williams, 2012). Electronic readers allow readers to access the text by changing text size and font and also by having a text to speech option (Spencer & Smullen, 2014). Many e-readers also have the ability to highlight, take notes, and utilize a dictionary (Spencer & Smullen, 2014).

Empowering readers by providing opportunities to adjust font sizes and use text to speech functions enable them to use in built features to support their reading development and therefore engage with the text in a more complex manner that with a traditional paper text (p. 28-29).

Electronic readers allow for many types of learning to occur at one time (Spencer & Smullen, 2014).

**Summary**

Identity is developed as a person goes through different stages in their lives and face decisions (Erikson, 1968). Adolescents have many opportunities to identify with people they come in contact with and with the characters in texts, allowing them to try on different identities (Erikson, 1968; Johnston, 2004). Reading in the classroom, therefore, can help a
student transact with the text, coming out with a more thorough understanding of themselves (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Students create an identity as a reader as they interact with text (Schachter & Schachter-Galili, 2012). Reading is a two way process with a reader and a text (Rosenblatt, 1995). As students begin to identify as a reader, their achievement is also impacted (Graff, 2009/2010). They also become more motivated and engaged with reading (Guthrie, 2004).

To support students in gaining a reading identity, teachers must be proactive and create a community of readers where students no longer have to save face in front of their peers, but can practice reading and take on an identity as a reader (Tatum, 2008). Teachers need to create an environment that supports and respects all learners (Gambrell, 1996). Texts need to be accessible (Ivey, 2000) and abundant (Ivey & Johnston, 2013).

Choice must also be a feature when helping students gain a reading identity (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Students crave independence and need to feel in control in aspects of school (Daniels et al., 2011). Providing choice fills this need by providing agency to the student (Abodeeb-Gentile & Zawilinski, 2013). Once students have chosen what they want to read, time must be allocated for them to lose themselves in their books (Ivey, 2000).

Allowing time for students to respond to their books is also essential (Gambrell, 1996). With reader response theory, readers work with the text, the teacher, and other students to draw conclusions, ask questions, and dive deeper into the text (Rosenblatt, 1995). Responding to text is necessary and natural as transaction occurs (Rosenblatt, 1995).
Technology use in the classroom provides an opportunity to engage and motivate students (Laverick, 2014). We are able to hook more reluctant readers and then take them further with the functionality of electronic readers (Spencer & Smullen, 2014). According to Spencer and Smullen, utilizing the functions of an electronic reader makes texts accessible and allows students to read what they are unable to read by themselves.

Together these pieces facilitate the creation of a reading identity to students who have not seen themselves as readers before. With a reading identity, students will have more academic success (Graff, 2009/2010), will experience less frustration (Barker & Herrington, 2010/2011), and will learn how to collaborate with others (Thomas, 2000). They will learn the essential skill of reading (Tatum, 2014).

Conclusion

Creating an identity as a reader is essential for future success and self-esteem. Throughout life, identities are being created, modified, and discarded. Society places a high value on reading. Teachers need to assist students who do not have an identity as a reader. Creating a community of readers through classroom environment, choice in text, an opportunity to respond to text, and using technology to access texts should be of upmost importance. As children experience success with reading, their reading identity grows, changes, and becomes internalized.
Chapter Three: Project Description

Introduction

Students with emotional impairments come to school with a negative personal identity, struggling academically, emotionally, and socially (Fitch, 2003). These students spend a great deal of time attempting to save face with their peers (Guthrie & Davis, 2003), which is counterproductive to their academic and social success. Community plays a key role in creating a positive identity (Erikson, 1968). When a student can be surrounded by a community of readers, they begin to forge a more positive identity (Smith, 2004).

With reading, teachers have the opportunity to create positive identities for students by introducing them to characters that are similar to themselves and providing them with opportunities to meaningful interact with the text (Tatum, 2014). Johnston (2004) reminds us that within that meaningful interaction, there must also be agency for the student. Students need ample opportunities to tell positive narratives about themselves and provide support when their attempts are ineffective (Johnston, 2004). Reading is an essential skill and must be a central component of the school day (Daniels et al., 2011).

Teachers need to be aware of the role that engagement and motivation plays in helping students gain an identity as a reader (Guthrie, 2004). Rosenblatt (1995) reminds us that reading is a transaction between the reader and the text; the two work together to facilitate new meaning. To engage and motivate students, teachers must concentrate on the classroom environment (Atwell, 1998; Cambourne, 1995; Guthrie et al., 2003), provide opportunities for students to respond to reading (Daniels, 2010; Lapp & Fisher, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1995), offer
choice (Atwell, 1998; Daniels et al., 2011; Harmon et al., 2012; Ivey, 2000), and use technology (Goodwyn, 2014; Spencer & Smullen, 2014; Werner-Burke et al., 2012).

**Project Components**

A presentation will be shared with teachers of students with special needs, middle school students, and teachers of students with emotional impairments. The presentation will include the following pieces: identity theory, literacy theory, engagement and motivation strategies including opportunities to respond to text and the use of technology.

**Identity Theory**

Schachter and Galili-Schachter (2012) remind us that identity is understanding oneself through the world as one develops, assimilating role model personas into his or her own life. I will start the presentation (Appendix A) by asking the audience members to describe their identities to the people sitting around them. After enough time has passed for everyone to share their identity, I will ask them if that was an easy task. This will lead to the point that they have had plenty of practice creating and honing this identity. Next, I will ask, “How have you created this identity?” As a group, we will add to and elaborate on the list I have started.

The presentation will then address how adolescents are in the midst of exploring different identities and committing to certain character traits (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012; Wiley & Berman, 2013). Literature can help inform identities (Tatum, 2008). Failures and successes both add to adolescents’ identity (Fives et al., 2014). Students need time to practice (Erikson, 1968), fail meaningfully (Johnston, 2004), and be given authentic texts (Tatum, 2008).
Literacy

The presentation (Appendix B) will continue with showing how literacy can shape identity (Tatum, 2008). Reading is a transaction between the reader and the text, with meaning being created by the reader (Rosenblatt, 1995). In order for a transaction to occur, students must have a purpose and interest in what they are reading. They must be able to make connections to their own lives. Finally, reading is a social activity and as such, students must be provided time to discuss their readings (Rosenblatt, 1995).

Engagement and Motivation

To reach the struggling readers and students who have no identity as readers, teachers must engage and motivate them (Guthrie, 2004). I will have the audience members turn and discuss with each other the engaging and motivating things they are already doing in their classroom. From there, I will ask a series of “Do you...?” questions, providing an example of a student interest survey that I use in the classroom (Appendix D). Throughout these questions, time will be provided for discussion, suggestions, and brainstorming. I then break down engagement and motivation into three sections: classroom environment, choice, and independent reading (Appendix C).

Classroom environment. Gambrell (1996) and Daniels et al (2011) have stressed that showcasing reading and books helps to form an identity as a reader. The classroom environment illustrates the priority that reading has in the classroom. Smith (2004) calls this the literacy club. When students see their peers building reading identities, struggling readers will begin to also build an identity as a reader (Smith, 2004).
Included in the classroom environment should be authentic texts on a wide variety of topics (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012). A middle school classroom library will require texts all readers can access and enjoy (Gambrell, 1996; Ivey, 2000; Moley et al., 2011). A broader variety of texts will promote wider reading by students (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). With the classroom environment, teachers are laying the foundation for engagement and motivation.

**Choice.** At this point in the presentation, I will ask the audience members to define agency. I will then give them Johnston’s (2004) definition of agency as taking action to meet goals. Once students are entrenched in the literacy club the classroom environment has created, they need to be provided ample opportunity to use agency. Their goals will be to become a reader, choice is one action they can use to meet that goal.

Choice is a chief factor in engagement and motivation (Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Choice provides control that middle school students require for their growing identities (Daniels et al., 2011). Students can begin to take ownership of their reading by making choices of what they want to read (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

An invitation to the literacy club can be extended via a book bag or an “I thought of you...” pile of books. I will share with the audience how I use these techniques to expand students reading repertoire while providing them autonomy to decide what they will read. Another technique that will be shared is a book talk which highlights a book that’s been read and provides a recommendation for who might like it. This allows peers to also recommend books and introduces readers to books they may not have otherwise found. Appendix E will provide attendees with examples of providing choice including visuals of book bags that I
currently use in my classroom, how I highlight texts in the classroom, and an example of a book talk.

**Independent Reading.** Time for independent reading is key in creating an identity as a reader (Francois, 2013). Without independent reading time, the classroom environment and opportunities to have choice will be meaningless. This section of the presentation will also highlight what the students’ roles are and what the teacher’s role is during this time.

**Opportunity to Respond**

The next portion of the presentation focuses on the importance of having time to respond to reading and the various ways in which this can occur (Rosenblatt, 1995). Rosenblatt (1995) reminds us that readers must act on what they have read in some way. Atwell (1998) also reminds us that conversation about responses to reading develops students’ abilities to think critically about what they read. As students discuss, comprehension deepens (Johnston, 2004).

After looking at the benefits and necessities of an opportunity to respond to reading, I will ask the audience members to list ways students can respond to their reading. I will compile this list on chart paper. I will then compare that list to the one I have created, showing the similarities and differences. I will also hand out a list of websites that have ideas for readers’ responses.
Technology

Technology is a tremendous way to differentiate (Nind et al., 2011) and scaffold (Miranda et al., 2012) instruction. It engages and motivates students and can be used for both reading and responding to reading. E-readers can be used to help students access text that might be difficult for them (Goodwyn, 2014), allowing them to save face (Miranda et al., 2012). I will demonstrate how I use e-readers in the classroom and the benefits they provide.

Technology also allows students to respond to their reading in various formats (Nind et al., 2011). Using websites to create original pieces of writing. They can use an IPad to create a presentation, take pictures and create a movie, or record their thoughts as they are reading. I will demonstrate the variety of opportunities that technology presents to students. I will demonstrate how the websites I will present afford students the ability to respond to text including using pictures to create descriptive writing, creating an online comic in response to text, or writing a newspaper article as a response. I will also explain how I use my blog for reader response. I will also explain how I have used Google Docs in my classroom and how I have used different IPad apps. I will also solicit other ideas from the teachers attending to add to my own knowledge bank and to the audiences.

Project Evaluation

To verify that the information I have provided was beneficial to the attendees, I will hand out a post-presentation survey (Appendix I). With the information provided, I will be able to determine if the audience members will be implementing any of the ideas presented. I will also be able to offer my support in working with them to create their own community of
readers. I will also follow up with each attendee personally approximately a month after the presentation to obtain an update on their progress and to extend my assistance in any way that they may need.

Project Conclusion

Creating an identity as a reader is an essential skill for academic and life success (Tatum, 2014). Harste (2009) says, “You need to see yourself as a reader in order to become one” (p.7). Opportunities must be afforded to students to practice taking on the identity of a reader (Johnston, 2004). By practicing taking on an identity as a reader, the student’s whole identity is influenced, leading to changes in social and emotional health (Rosenblatt, 1995). By understanding that students’ identities are evolving (Erikson, 1968), teachers can use authentic texts to engage and motivate students (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012) by creating a classroom environment that makes reading a priority (Gambrell, 1996), allows choice (Daniels et al., 2011), and offers ample time for independent reading (Francois, 2013). Students then will be given the opportunity to respond to their reading and make sense of what they have read (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007). The use of technology is important in reading (Goodwyn, 2014) and responding (O’Brien et al., 2007). Technology provides a way in for students to read independently (Goodwyn, 2014). It also allows numerous ways in which students can communicate their thoughts and feelings (Nind et al., 2011).

Plans for Implementation

At the culmination of this project, I will be sharing what I have created with my supervisor. My intentions are that I will be implementing this presentation at an Emotionally
Impaired curriculum meeting with my fellow emotionally impaired teachers. From there, I hope to then present it at a district-wide in-service day to interested special education and middle school teachers in February.
References


Reader’s Identity

Presented by Tonya Jesweak

Identity

- Describe yourself to your colleagues.
**How have you created this identity?**

- Practice
- Time
- Obstacles overcome
- Discussion with friends/family/therapist
- Tried different personas on

---

**Adolescents...**

- Are still practicing (Erikson, 1968)
- Are watching the people around them for role models (Erikson, 1968)
- Are experiencing failure in creating identities (Fives, Russell, Kearns, Lyons, Eaton, Canavan, Devaney, & O’Brien, 2014)
- Who are struggling readers do not have an identity as a reader (Willey & Berman, 2013)
Building an Identity as a Reader

- Students come to us with developing identities (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012).
- They are constantly experimenting and trying on different personas (Wiley & Berman, 2013).
- Literature can help impart wisdom about their identity (Tatum, 2008).
- Identity changes and evolves (Erikson, 1968).
- This takes TIME (Fives et al., 2014).

Struggling Readers and Reading Identity

- Will actively work to save face in the classroom
- Would rather fail than for their peers to know they don’t read well
  - (Guthrie & Davis, 2003)
- Creating an identity is at the heart of adolescence.
- Using personal narratives and literacy to foster that development is key.
  - (Johnston, 2004)
Importance of a Reading Identity

- School requires an identity as a reader for academic success (Tatum, 1999).
- Research says that students who have identities as readers and who see themselves as part of a learning community will be successful in school and life (Kaplan & Flum, 2012).
“Children learn to read by reading.” –Frank Smith

“Together we’ll enter the world of literature, become captivated, make connections to our lives, the world, and the worlds of other books, and find satisfaction.” –Nancy Atwell

Identity and Literacy

- Students must be able to connect with what they are reading—interest!
- Rosenblatt (1995) calls reading a transaction where the readers bring with them all of their experiences and emotions when they read a text, then integrate those experiences and emotions with new ones created by the text.
- The meaning is within the reader
- Reading should be a social activity—authentic discussions, questioning, and responding
  - (Rosenblatt, 1995)
Appendix C

Student Interest Survey

Name: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
Grade: ________________

What do you like to do in your free time? ___________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
What do you like to read about? ____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Who lives in your house? ____________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
What is your favorite TV show? ____________________________________________
What is your favorite type of music? ____________________________________________
What do you want to do for a career? ____________________________________________

Tell me about yourself as a reader:  Are you a good reader?  Slow reader? ______________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Do you learn best by reading, listening to someone else read, hands on activities, through
music, in a group, or by yourself?  Circle all that apply.

As a reader, what do you want to do better or improve upon? _________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
What else do you want me to know about you? _________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
Engagement and Motivation in Reading

- Engagement and motivation work together to construct a reader identity (Graff, 2009/2010)

- How do you encourage engagement and motivation for reading in your classroom currently?
- Turn and talk with a colleague about the exciting things you are doing in your classroom.

Do you…?

- Take a student interest survey
- Learn about their reading habits
- Know your students' reading levels
- Have a classroom library
- Allow ample opportunities for choice
- Have independent reading time everyday
- Organize a classroom environment that makes reading a priority
- Allow for many ways to respond to the text
- Permit reading to be a social activity
- Use technology as a way for students to respond to their reading
- Access technology to help students read
How?

- Engagement and Motivation
  - Classroom environment
  - Choice
  - Independent reading
- Opportunity to respond to text
  - Discussion
  - Writing/Drawing
- Technology
  - eReaders
  - In response

Engagement and Motivation

- Guthrie (2004) says, “Engaged readers spend 500% more time reading than disengaged students.” (p. 1)
- Work together to increase student success
- Creates connections with the text
- Interaction with the text adds to reading identity
- Vital to academic success
Classroom Environment

- Showcase reading and books (Gambrell, 1996; Daniels, Marcos, & Steres, 2011)
- Appropriate and authentic texts (Schachter & Galili-Schachter, 2012)
- Variety for wider reading (Tatum, 2004)
- Book Bags (Atwell, 1998)
- Author Studies (Atwell, 1998)

Choice

- Agency (Johnston, 2004)
- Chief factor in engagement and motivation (Daniels et al., 2011)
- Puts students “in charge” of what they read and how they respond (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001)
- Provides insight into readers’ interests (Graff, 2009/2010)
- Need to be guided by the teacher and exposed to a variety of books (Gambrell, 1996; Smith, 2004)
Examples of Providing Choice

- **Book Talks**
  - Student/teacher shares a book with class
  - Book commercial
  - Shares highlights and characters
  - Recommends for people who would like a story of survival, for example

- **Book Exploration**
  - “I thought of you…”
  - Pull several different books that student may find interesting based on what has been observed about their reading identity
  - Book talk a few of them
  - Let them explore

Independent Reading - DAILY!

- **Students will be...**
  - Reading
  - Finding new books
  - Reading
  - Conferring with peers
  - Reading

- **Teacher will be...**
  - Conferring with students
    - What are they reading?
    - What are they enjoying so far?
    - What can I help with?
  - Assist students with finding books
  - Reading

A study completed by François (2013) found that “students and adults asserted that independent reading time shaped students’ reading experiences more than any other instructional time during the day” (p. 149).
Providing Choice

“I thought of you...”

Atwell (1998) and Miller (2012) provide students with several selections of a variety of books and present them to the reader. The reader then previews the book and decides if it is one they would like to read or if they will be passing on it for now. I often use books from my classroom library and from the public library. I will choose books by authors they have enjoyed, similar books to those they have previously enjoyed, or books that center around their interests. I will use all types of books—graphic novels, picture books, short stories, poetry, and novels. I also use magazines to entice readers to read.

With some students, I will just place the pile on their desk and allow them to go through them. With others, I will sit down and tell them why I thought of them with each book and do a mini-book talk through each of them.


Once they have chosen their books, the books go in their...

Book Bags

At the start of the school year, each student picks a bag and I make a name tag for it. This is where they keep all of their books from the class. When it is time for independent reading or reader’s workshop, they grab their bag and have several books ready to go. This helps to eliminate the desire to look through the classroom library shelves every day.
Example of a Book Talk

Background: Female 8th grader- she enjoys animals, reading in prose, and short chapters

Book Chosen: The One and Only Ivan by Katherine Applegate

“I picked this book for you for lots of reasons. One reason is that it is about animals. This book’s main character is a gorilla and his best friends are a stray dog and an elephant. This book is told from Ivan, the gorilla’s point of view. That makes this book a fantasy and I know that is a genre you enjoy. Ivan is stuck in a cage and longs for freedom. He is also an artist, like you! Another reason I chose this book for you is because of how it is written: the chapters are short and it reads like poetry! You are going to love how Ivan takes a new baby elephant under his wing and saves them all from their cages! What do you think? Do you want to give it a try?”
Opportunity to Respond to Text

- Reading is an active process (Rosenblatt, 1995).
- Readers must be able to connect to what they are reading (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007).
- Readers must be able to relate with others through discussion, questions, and observations (Rosenblatt, 1995).
- All responses are respected and deserved to be shared (Rosenblatt, 1995).
- Allows for a dialogue between the reader and text, the reader and peers, and the reader and the teacher (Rosenblatt, 1995).
- Develops students' critical thinking skills (Atwell, 1998).
- These associations they are making with the text, leads to better comprehension (Johnston, 2004).
- Create a safe, inviting classroom environment where talking about literature is natural and personal (Atwell, 1998).

Opportunity to Respond to Reading

- Drawing
- Writing
- Discussion
- Dance
- Painting
- Questions
- Research an aspect of the book
- Design a board game
- Book Trailer
- Interviews
- Compare versions of a story
- Dress and act like a book’s character
- Cook up a dish from the story
- Songs
- Poetry
- Drama
- Make a movie
Reader’s Response Resources and Examples

Websites for Reader Response Ideas

- www.edutopia.org/blog/projects-engage-middle-school-readers-beth-holland
- www.ereadingworksheets.com/e-reading-worksheets/school-project-ideas/
- www.education.com/activity/middle-school/reading
Example of a Reader Response Project for the novel, *Handbook for Boys*  
by Walter Dean Myers

Name: ____________________

**Handbook for Boys**

**Final Project**

Choose one of the following projects to complete. Once you have chosen your project, see me for approval. If you come up with an idea of your own also see me for approval.

1. **Character Study**- Pick one character from the book. Your best choices would be Jimmy or Kevin and discuss how they stayed the same and how they changed throughout the novel.
2. **Character Comparisons**- Pick two characters- examples: Jimmy and Kevin, Jimmy and Bobby, or Duke and Pookie- and explain how they are alike and different.
3. **3 Drawings with a summary for each**- summary needs to be at least 4 sentences a picture. Drawings must be detailed and colored.
4. **Make a cartoon strip of the novel**. You need to have at least 15 cartoon boxes.
5. **Create a PowerPoint presentation of characters**. Example: Duke- occupation, friends, 3 rules, mentor, goals, etc.
6. **Research different mentoring programs**. Compare and contrast them, then make a recommendation. This can be done in a PowerPoint presentation as well.
7. **Write a poem about the novel**. Poem must be at least 20 lines long.
8. **Summarize each chapter in a PowerPoint or written paper**.
9. **Make a worksheet and answer sheet for the last chapter**.
One student came to me with another idea and chose to respond by creating a paper maché image of the main character, Jimmy. Along with the paper maché, he wrote up the steps he took to make his project.

**About my project**

**Steps to make my project**

First I blow up a circle balloon
Next I cover it with paper Mache
After that I make the nose and ears
Next I paint the hair
Then I paint the face, eyes, ears, and mouth
Then I let it dry

**Ingredients to make paper mace**

Water, Bowl,
Flour, Wire Wisk

**Make it**

Put flour and water in a bowl. Take the Wisk and mix it until the water and flour is runny.
Dip paper in the solution and put it on whatever you want to paper Mache
Another example of reading response utilizing the picture book *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* by William Joyce.

**Opportunities for Response**

**Directions:** Using any tool (computer, IPad, pen & pencil, PowerPoint, Prezi, Keynote, or another medium of your choosing) and choose one of the opportunities below and respond.

- Describe how this book makes the phrase “books come to life” true.
- List the instances of personification and describe why it is personification.
- Talk about the illustrations. How do they add to the story? How do they tell their own story?
- Watch the Academy Award winning short film of *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore* and compare it to the book.
- William Joyce’s writings were destroyed in Hurricane Katrina. Describe how that event impacted this book.
- Make a list of your favorite words or books.
- Keep a journal like Mr. Lessmore for a week. Write down your “joys and sorrows.”
- Write or draw about a time in your life when your world was “scattered” and nothing made sense.
- Tell me about “a good story” that you know that lifts your spirits or is like an old friend.
- Keep track of your thinking using sticky notes as you read.
- How does the use of color affect the book?
Technology

- Engaging and motivating by encouraging students to use skills they already have in a way to build their identity as a reader (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012).
- E-readers have proven to be beneficial for special education students, struggling readers, and “reluctant boy readers” (Goodwyn, 2014).
- Allows students to read independently, thereby saving face with their peers (Goodwyn, 2014).
- Differentiation - using photos, digital comic strips, videos, or music to communicate their thoughts (Nind, Boorman, & Clarke, 2011).
- Form of scaffolding - text size, font, text-to-speech, highlight, take notes, use a dictionary (Miranda, Johnson, & Rossi-Williams, 2012).

Technology Options for Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-Readers</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iPad</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindle</td>
<td>Can read independently and save face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nook</td>
<td>Form of differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobo</td>
<td>Access the text by changing font, being able to highlight the text, and using the text-to-speech option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Spencer & Smullen, 2014)
Technology Options for Response

- **Websites**
  - PicLit: [www.piclits.com/compose_dragdrop.aspx](http://www.piclits.com/compose_dragdrop.aspx)
  - Tagxedo: [www.tagxedo.com](http://www.tagxedo.com)
  - MakeBeliefsComix: [www.makebeliefscomix.com](http://www.makebeliefscomix.com)
  - Storyboard That: [www.storyboardthat.com](http://www.storyboardthat.com)

- **Benefits**
  - Engagement and motivation
  - Allows for differentiation
  - Allows for scaffolding
  - Allows students to express themselves that otherwise might not
  - Expands their reading identities
    - [Nind et al., 2011](#)

More Technology Options

- Classroom blogs or websites: [www.tjesweak.edublogs.com](http://www.tjesweak.edublogs.com)
- Photographs
- Movies/Videos
- Music
- PowerPoint
- Prezi: [www.prezi.com](http://www.prezi.com)
- Hoopla Digital: [www.hoopladigital.com](http://www.hoopladigital.com)
- Google Drive-need student emails
- Other ideas?
Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his deep and continuing needs, is good for him.

–Maya Angelou


Appendix I

Reader’s Identity Presentation

Name:

School District and Building:

Contact information (phone number/email):

Grades taught:

Why did you attend this session on reader identity?

What was presented that you are going back to try in your classroom? Why?

What are you going to change in regards to engaging and motivating your readers?

What part of this presentation would you like more information on?

How can I assist you, personally, in your classroom to create a community of readers?
NAME: Tonya Jesweak

MAJOR: (Choose only 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adult &amp; Higher Education</th>
<th>Educational Differentiation</th>
<th>Library Media</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Content Specialization</td>
<td>Education Leadership</td>
<td>Middle Level Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Impairment</td>
<td>Educational Technology</td>
<td>X Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Student Affairs Leadership</td>
<td>Elementary Education</td>
<td>School Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>Emotional Impairment</td>
<td>Secondary Level Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Developmental Delay</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>Special Education Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TESOL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TITLE: Reader’s Identity: How Identity and Literacy Can Work Together for Student Success in Middle School

PAPER TYPE: (Choose only 1) X Project

SUPERVISOR’S SIGNATURE OF APPROVAL

Using key words or phrases, choose several ERIC descriptors (5 – 7 minimum) to describe the contents of your project. ERIC descriptors can be found online at:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/Home.portal?nfpb=true&_pageLabel=Thesaurus&_nfb=true

1. Reading 6. Choice
2. Identity 7. Engagement
3. Middle School 8. Motivation
4. Special Education 9. Reading Response
5. Technology 10.