LANGUAGE LEARNING WITH A PURPOSE: PROMOTING READING MOTIVATION THROUGH FUN ACTIVITIES.

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Abstract

Idaho Literacy Explorers (ILE) is a joint project Karla Lyus and I are working on together for our capstone course. This is a reading project that will motivate young students to discover the joy of reading and positively impact their reading skills. Karla is a graduate of Boise State University and she is currently completing her Master’s in Education and is enrolled in the Literacy Department. Since both of us live in Caldwell we decided to develop a program that will constructively affect our community of learners. We put together a project where the reading experience would be fun, while increasing the literacy skills of elementary students using quality after school reading sessions. We also wanted to provide a venue for the Caldwell High School seniors to complete their community hours in a safe, positive, and rewarding environment. With the support of Caldwell High School and Sacajawea Elementary School’s Staff we were able to hold the reading sessions that will impact students from both schools; one by receiving reading time and the other by giving of their time. A positive reading motivating cycle starts when students have an enjoyable reading experience that will increase their literacy skills, their reading skills, and their desire to read.
Introduction

Idaho Literacy Explorers is an after school reading project that focus in serving elementary students in the third and fourth grades who are struggling with reading and ELL students who are learning the English language. ILE also aims at supporting Caldwell High seniors in achieving their community service hours by inviting them to participate in the reading session as mentors to the Sacajawea Elementary students. The premise of ILE reading project is that a positive reading cycle starts when students have an enjoyable reading experience that will increase their literacy skills, their reading skills, and their desire to read. This is important for all students and it is especially important to introduce a reading project like ILE to ELLs because the focus is to read for fun, to read books they like, and to provide for them another opportunity to read in English and through other activities practice their writing skills as well.

In order to bring the reading project into reality we pursued the cooperation of our local schools and the involvement from our community’s leaders in education. During the summer Karla and I started working on ideas on how to make Idaho Literacy Explorers reading project possible. We create ILE with the understanding that a Capstone project entail an element of promoting education and an end product of establishing a reading program that will continue to serve students who are struggling in reading and ELLs who are acquiring the English language. First of all we needed to talk with school principals and to find out who was willing to work with us or let us work within their schools. It was the middle of summer vacation, not really the easiest time to set up meeting with school principals and teachers. Our first choice was Sacajawea Elementary School, Paul Webster is the principal and he and his staff are very pro volunteers. He welcomes parents, Mentoring members, BSU students, and high school students to volunteer in his school. Sacajawea School is both participating in and is hosting the 21st Century Program.
The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program is authorized under Title IV, Part B, of the No Child Left Behind Act. The program is designed to provide academic enrichment opportunities, art, music, recreation, sports, drug and violence prevention, and youth development activities to students during non-school hours (21st CCLC, 2002); its focus is on students that are behind in class and those struggling with learning the English language.

Sacajawea School has a high percentage of students that are Hispanic and English language Learners (ELLs). The 21st Century Program is an after school program that provides academic help to students from all six elementary schools and the two middle schools in Caldwell (21st CCLC, 2002).

We first approached Mr. Webster with our plans to start a reading project that will assist third graders who are struggling with reading and writing skills. The goal of ILE is to present to students reading material that is at their grade level, that is instructional, and that it is fun. The main focus for Idaho Literacy Explorers is, like its name says, to explore literacy thru books that the students will enjoy, become motivated to read, and in turn find books that will awake the love of reading. Two of the many positive components of reading are that it has a visual and hearing components that are very helpful to young students and especially ELLs because they can see the written word, hear the correct pronunciation, and sounds of the English language. If ELLs are reading aloud they will have their mentor to guide them and help them to break down the words into phonemes to be able to put unknown words together. After hearing about our reading project Mr. Webster told us about the 21st Century Program and invited us be part of it and asked us to contact Kathleen Vadapalli the 21st Century Program director.
Review of Literature

In the article “Students’ self-perception of reading ability, enjoyment of reading and reading achievement”, the authors have studied the relationship among reading self-efficacy, enjoyment for reading, and reading achievement in a variety contexts of 20 years. One of the facts that they found, which is a very well-known fact, is that the more children read, the better their reading abilities become (J. Smith, L. Smith, Gilmore, & Jameson 2012). The authors continue explaining that achievement is influenced by the amount of reading one does, which in turn is influenced by one’s motivation to learn. It is a positive engaging reading cycle which promotes students to read for fun. This is the main focus of Idaho Literacy Explorers reading project to help students discover the enjoyment in reading by helping them in their reading journey. An example would be activities like Mad Libs where students make up a story by adding adjectives, nouns, verbs, and adverbs in the blanks without knowing the story beforehand. The result is a funny, silly story which makes for a fun activity that the elementary students enjoyed reading after the story is “put together”.

This article also touches in something I stumble upon concerning my son. My youngest son was not interested in reading for fun when he was in elementary school. I pushed the Harry Potter series but he didn’t like them, I couldn’t understand why since his brother and I were hooked on them. It took me a long time to understand, as the article explains, that the development of reading ability is closely linked to extensive engaged reading (J. Smith et al., 2012, p. 202). In other words the reading has to be what the reader wants to read, a subject that is interesting to the reader, …and promotes motivation on the part of the reader (p. 202). It was the Lighting Thief series that motivated him to read and to discover the genre of reading he enjoys. With this in mind, during the reading sessions we let our students pick books in the library that
are interesting to them. Our mentors promote and support SES students’ choices. Some of the students liked their choice of books so much that they asked if they could write a book report.

The research has found that engagement is associated with reading achievement, and unfortunately there is work that indicates that the levels of engagement decline during the adolescent years (J. Smith et al., 2012, p. 202). Furthermore this loss of engagement is particularly problematic as students head into high school years. It seems like a lot of education’s “fun learning” vanish as students continue advancing to higher grades. We often hear as parents and educators from students that the class is boring, that elementary classes were more fun. So, it makes us wonder if it is that the classes are getting more difficult for students, the reading requirement are tougher and have increased in volume or if it is how the material is presented. There are a lot factors that obviously, we as parents and educators are not aware of. As this article implies the period of promoting a love for reading becomes very short, very fast. Educators are not only battling against time but also in this day and age are battling against the lure technology has and the fun it offers for students from Kindergarten to twelfth grade. This study did not include students who faced physical or cognitive challenges that according to the article would prohibit their participation from being a positive one. Students who did not speak English and who have been in the country less than one year were also excluded from this study. The article does not explain the reason why these students were left out. Could it be because they did not have bilingual teachers who spoke the students’ native language? Perhaps, they missed a valuable data by not including students whose first language is not English. As studies continue to dismiss Ells who are at their early stage of learning English; it will rob them of the opportunity for researchers to gain more insight of Ells’ language acquisition needs at an early stage. The authors stated in their article that gender and socioeconomics also play a role on the reading
engagement (J. Smith et al., 2012, p. 203). The socioeconomics will definitely play a role on the reading engagement on students who come from lower income classes and different cultures; they may not be able to discover that they like reading if books, appropriate to their reading level and age, are not present in their homes due to economic situations and language difference, making reading inaccessible. Unfortunately, as a result many students from low income families and from different cultures and languages may not have the opportunity to discover the joy of reading, the adventures they can find in books, nor the personal rewards of being able to read and to do it well.

**Method**

ILE was initially conceived of as a reading project apart from the 21st Century Program, with a goal of serving those students struggling with reading and not already being served through an existing after school program. Due to a time constraints in coordinating the elementary school students, transportation, location, and volunteers; ILE morphed into an exercise in observation, by coordinating the reading sessions with the 21st Century Program. Something that could be improved upon after a pilot semester. CHS’ students have volunteered with the 21st Century Program in the past, but not specifically with a focus on literacy, and not with an expectation or tight relationship between the high school volunteer coordinator and the 21st Century Program.

The ILE reading project success in providing after school reading hours depended on having reading mentors for the elementary students; the idea was to have a type of buddy system for each of the SES students attending the reading sessions and for that reason working with the Caldwell High School students became our goal. The Caldwell High School has a requirement
for senior students that they have to work ten hours of community service per semester to
graduate. Being aware of this need, we decided to approach Mrs. Anita Wilson, the Caldwell
High School principal, to propose our plan. On the second week of the beginning of the school
year, we met with Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Adams to present our reading project. Mrs. Adams is in
charge of the high school seniors’ community hours’ program. They both were enthusiastic to
learn about ILE reading project and how it may impact students from the Sacajawea Elementary
school and the high school seniors. Karla and I were thrilled to be part of assisting and fulfilling
the needs of both schools in regards to contributing to the after school program and providing an
opportunity to earned community hours.

At the Sacajawea Elementary school, the librarian gave us full use of the library, and the
children have been excited to have extra time to look at books and talk about what they enjoy
reading and what types of books they like. Mentors work closely with the SES students in
reading and in the literacy activities of the day, like creating stories, making posters, and in
encouraging students to self-select reading periods. Above all the main focus is on keeping the
activities fun, as we are operating from a “A positive reading cycle starts when students have an
enjoyable reading experience, that will increase their literacy skills, their reading skills, and their
desire to read” perspective. Because we are not doing assessments, and not trying out new tactics
to increase literacy skills, we are not using student data to measure outcome. Our main goal is to
increase reading motivation, and our measure for success is observing engagement and
excitement, as well as using the Garfield Reading Inventory to let the students demonstrate their
feelings toward reading.
Community Support

Both school principals were very welcoming and willing to work with us. At the Caldwell High School, Mrs. Adams started to work with us as soon as she began her community service program for seniors. We coordinated a first meeting with the high school seniors to present the Idaho Literacy Explorers reading project. We had 21 students that showed up on September 6th. All of the student volunteers were recommended by Mrs. Adams and have signed an agreement with their school volunteer coordinator to be on time for the reading sessions, notify if they will miss a session, and to protect the privacy of the children they will work with. They have also signed a waiver giving ILE reading project permission for photos and data to be used in our website and Capstone presentation. This group of students excel in class, are seniors, are committed to education, enjoy reading, and some are interested in pursuing a teaching degree in college.

We introduced ourselves and presented our project and talked to them about rules and expectations in participating in ILE. We discussed and stressed the importance of the elementary students’ right for privacy and confidentiality. The high school students understood their responsibilities in the reading project. We were happy to be able to provide for these students a project where they will fulfill their community hours’ requirement in an environment that is safe, positive, and will impart an empowering experience. Even though this is the pilot semester for ILE reading project the expectations are that this cooperation between Sacajawea Elementary school and Caldwell High School continues providing a reading program which will benefit students who are struggling with reading and offer another venue for high school seniors to complete their community hours. It is our hope that the 21st Century Program continues to be a bridge for this cooperation to take place.
We met with Mrs. Vadapalli on October 1st to talk about ILE and to learn more about the 21st Century Program. She liked the idea of having CHS students as mentors for the elementary students. She shared that she has worked with the 21st CCLC for several years and that she probably had some of the high school seniors in her program in previous years. We told her that when we mentioned to them that we would be working with the 21st CCLC, several of the CHS seniors said that they knew and had participated in the program. Mrs. Vadapalli was excited that her program has had a positive impact on the students, in a way she was seeing the positive results that an extra curriculum program has on students. It will be wonderful to know that ILE has this kind of influence on the lives of the students we are working with. She asked us what grade were we interested in working with, we replied that we were looking to work with 3rd graders. She wondered if we were willing to work with 4th graders also, since there is a high number of 4th graders in the program. We happily agreed to work with both groups. Mrs. Vadapalli proposed to start on October 13th and asked if we had a handout to give out to parents with information about our project, ourselves, and a permission slip for their children to participate in ILE. We had a handout prepared, both in English and Spanish for parents with a brief information about us and the Idaho Literacy Explorers reading project which was sent to her via e-mail. She said that she will make copies and distribute them to students in her program.

**Evaluating Students**

We met with the high school students at Sacajawea School for ILE for the first time on Tuesday, October 13th. It was chaotic to start with since Karla and I were planning on sitting down with the CHS students, also referred as mentors, and the 21st Century teachers for an overall introduction to their program. Well that was not the case. Twenty one Sacajawea students were brought to us at the school’s library to start the reading project. Mentors and students were
paired up together. Since we had more students that mentors some tables were in a ratio of two to one. We distributed the Student Profile questionnaire and the Garfield Reading inventory for the mentors to ask each of their students. Please see Appendix A and B. As some students were done with their questionnaires and reading inventory, they started going around the library pulling books to read. The library has a reading corner that looks more like a set of stairs where children can sit, read, and grab a blanket to get comfortable. The silent reading turned out to be loud, the quiet corner turned into a gym of climbing stairs up and down, the blankets were flying around. It got to the point that the librarian gathered us adults to tell us that this kind of behavior was not approved in the library. Immediately, we asked the students to sit down and to listen. This is when we realized that we needed to have rules down on expectations concerning behavior during our reading sessions.

On October 20\textsuperscript{th} we met at Sacajawea School for ILE but there was no 21\textsuperscript{st} Century Program that day due to teachers’ conferences. We took this opportunity to talk to the CHS seniors, review strategies, and to plan activities for future reading sessions. Library rules was a topic we discussed and came up with ideas for the next reading session with the SES students. CHS seniors reviewed the Student Profile questionnaire and the Garfield Reading assessment from the SES students’ portfolios and collected data of their responses. The data showed a split between liking reading and disliking it. Questions aroused if the students understood the questions, were they just answering because they like the cartoon of a happy Garfield, or if they really like to read. Some of the CHS seniors shared their experiences of working with the elementary children; most of them had a good first time experience working with the third and fourth graders in the reading project.
We held the second reading session on October 27th. Mentors and students worked on making posters outlining the school’s library rules. This activity proved to be very helpful and successful. Students were asked to tell their mentors the library rules they knew. Either the mentor or the student could write down the rules on the poster. Students were encouraged to decorate their poster by drawing and coloring. To finish the activity we asked students at each table to tell us their most important rule for the library. We had answers from no running, speaking quietly, to no eating at the library. Mentors and students signed their poster as part of a contract of behavior at the library. The second activity was to do Mad Libs, which consists of filling in the blanks on a story by adding either adjectives, nouns, adverbs, or verbs. Without reading the story to the SES students, mentors asked them to provide parts of the speech to fill in the blanks, if the student did not know what was a noun or an adjective, etc., the mentor explained the meaning to them or the purpose of that part of speech. Mentors filled in the blanks as the students gave them the answers. After filling out all the blanks, they read their stories which turned out to be very silly and goofy. Karla and I went around the room listening to their stories which were read for the most part by the elementary students. The students participating in the reading session are elementary students from Caldwell’s School District. We have students participating in ILE reading sessions from several schools. Fifty percent of the students are Hispanics and most of them qualify as ELLs.

Curriculum

In the ILE’s reading sessions that we have on Tuesdays, the majority of the students are Hispanics and all of them speak English, so far we have not encountered a student that doesn’t understand English or seems like he/she is not understanding us. Nonetheless, according to the “Preparing Linguistically Responsive Teachers: Laying the Foundation in Preservice Teacher
Education”, quoting Cummins in 2000, states that the language of school is fundamentally different from conversational language (Lucas & Villegas, 2013 p. 105) this reminds me of what Mrs. Pleuger said. Mrs. Pleuger is a teacher from Garfield Elementary School in Boise, ID; she teaches English to ELLs. She said that her students want to learn English so they can go into the playground to play during recess. She added that students are quick to learn the language of the playground because they want to play and make friends and it is easy, but academic English besides being different, is more challenging. Because we only had three reading sessions with Sacajawea students it may be too early to pin point the level of English proficiency in the Hispanic students. At this point in the reading sessions we have not seen a difference in their reading levels compared to their native speakers’ peers. ILE reading sessions aims to provide a pedagogy that is motivating and exciting towards reading and to achieve it, different reading and writing activities have been presented to the students. One activity that promotes thinking strategies and a pattern of subsequent steps is the making up a story which includes pictures, dialogue, and narrative. For this activity we asked the students to draw pictures of their stories and then develop the story using their drawings. Some of the students were linear in their stories and clearly presented their thoughts. A fourth grader ELL came to us and asked if she could read her story. She showed us her pictures and read the story. Her story was simple, she had some problem reading it out loud and her grammar showed that at her grade level she ought to be in a higher level of writing and reading proficiency for her story. Thinking about this student’s desire to read and learn English, reminds me of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that impacted schools nationwide due to the federal mandate that requires all states to identify languages other than English spoken in all public school students’ home (Why are ELLs tested annually for English language proficiency?); it seem to jump start states to pay attention to an old oversight
need that is very much alive in schools across United States. The current, 2015-16 school year will be the first year that Idaho will administer WIDA’s English proficiency assessment, the ACCESS 2.0, which will become Idaho’s English language assessment. As Idaho embraces WIDA’s approach of assessment for ELLs it will promote a straight forward method in assessing and teaching more accurately to ELLs.

**Common Core Standards**

Last week I worked closely with three student because we were short on mentors; one of them is Hispanic. They picked books they wanted to read and they each took turns to read their books and shared what they liked about the book they had selected. Estefany, a second grader, read aloud struggling at time with hard words but was able to put the word together as we broke down the word into syllables and sounded them out. She was able to read most words without help. The Common Core State Standards for English language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical has under Subjects Reading Standards: Foundational Skills (K–5) a section that describes the expectations of the student in their English reading fluency. It describes a second grader as one that reads grade-level text with purpose and understanding. Also states, that the student reads grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successively (CCSSO, 2010). Estefany read her book with conviction and eagerness, she had chosen a book that was interesting to her. The book was about dolphins and it had some scientific vocabulary that might have been a for a grade level higher than hers; however, she was eager to read the book. As she encountered challenging words, we were able to break down these words together. This is what Common Core standard stands on with regards towards second graders reading with fluency,
Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension. a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding. b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings. c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding rereading as necessary (CCSSO, 2010).

As a whole, it seemed that Estefany fulfilled most of the Common Core Standards for second graders regarding Reading Standards: Foundational Skills under fluency as she read her book out loud.

Cultural Support

Some of our CHS mentors did not come for the reading session in October 27th and some new mentors were there for the first time. David was a new mentor for that day. It turned out to be that three SES boys were without their mentors for that day so we asked them to go with David. We noticed that David and the three boys were cooperatively working on making the poster on the library rules. The boys were hugging David and were happy to be with him. David and the boys are Hispanic, of course all of them are males. As we noticed the dynamics at that table; we had an opportunity to ponder if gender and culture plays a role on learning. As humans do we work better, learn better with those individuals that share similarities with us? Does culture play a role in our sub-consciousness? All of these boys come from Mexican families where the male has the role as the leader, as authority. Were the elementary students working well with David because he is a male, and have different concept of him? One fact for sure was evident that they were having a good time while they were reading and working on their poster. There is a connection among individuals who share similar values in culture, language and perspectives. Naturally we are attracted and feel comfortable with others who speak our own language and share our ethic background. As the article on “Preparing Linguistically Responsive
Teachers: Laying the Foundation on Preservice Teacher Education” indicates that it is important that educators have knowledge of the ELL students’ culture and language to develop a sociolinguistic consciousness, value for linguistic diversity, and the inclination to advocate for ELLs (p. 102). We connect with other as we get to know them better and if we shared similar experiences. It further states that, “Because the norms and values of a cultural group are passed on from one generation to the next through language, a person’s language is deeply entwined with his or her sense of identity and affiliations with social and cultural groups (Valdés, Bunch, Snow, & Lee, 2005)” (p. 102). Students have the language and culture integrated in their view of the world around them and they bring these views to their schools, ELLs need educators to support them and advocate for the right to maintain their language and culture.

In most cases Mexican immigrants have an average of third grade level of education and most of them do not learn to speak English. However, their children learned English and continue speaking Spanish at home. According to an insert from “The Fence to Nowhere” it affirms, “Indeed what becomes “endangered” in the second generation is the capacity to speak Spanish with fluency. Studies of the Hispanics second generation show that while over 98% of its members are fluent in English only about a third (35%) retain fluency in Spanish” (p. 27) It accurately presents the tensions of perception versus reality that

Knowledge of Spanish is valuable resource in the modern world that many educated American painstakingly strive to acquire. Mexican-American children have this skill as a birth right, yet the majority lose it to the pressure of conforming to a monolingual culture (p. 27).

Nonetheless, speaking in Spanish in American public school has been prohibited for generations. However, studies show that children can learn a new language and maintain their first language.
In fact it is easier to learn a new language if the first is well established and can be used as a scaffolding in learning the new language.

As Cummins (2000) states: "Conceptual knowledge developed in one language helps to make input in the other language comprehensible." If a child already understands the concepts of "justice" or "honesty" in her own language, all she has to do is acquire the label for these terms in English. She has a far more difficult task, however, if she has to acquire both the label and the concept in her second language. (Cummings)

**Tesol Standards**

Standard 3.b. Implementing and Managing Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction

Rubric for Standard 3.b. Implementing and Managing Standards-Based ESL and Content Instruction. 3.b.3. Provide activities and materials that integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Tesol, 2010) this Tesol Standard is the most appropriate for our Capstone project. As stated before the main goal for Idaho Literacy Explorers reading project is to motivate students into reading. The goal is to inspire in the elementary students the joy and desire for reading thus the reading sessions are tailored to do activities that involve reading, creativity, and fun. Students have worked on making posters that listed the school library rules. This has been a successful activity, it has provided the students with a sense of responsibility and commitment due to their involvement in writing down the rules and signing their names to the poster. As described before, SES students enjoyed making up funny and quirky stories with the Mad Libs exercise, in which they had to come up with adjectives, verbs, nouns, and adverbs to fill-in the blanks. Their mentor without disclosing the main story will fill-in the blanks to complete the sentences in the story and then she will read it to them and/or have them read it. In this activity students reviewed parts of speech in a fun way and without realizing it practiced their proper use. We had several
SES students asked us if they could read a book during some of the activities, it was decided that the next reading session will be entirely reading. Mentors and SES students decided on what books they wanted to read. The time flew when we just read for the reading session. The library had a calming semi-quiet atmosphere, at their tables students read books with their mentors. At my table two third grade students decided on their own to write a paragraph about what they had just read. I was thrilled and surprised to hear their request. The most recent activity for the reading session was the drawing and writing a story. Students drew pictures and then wrote a story about the pictures. In this activity they could write a dialogue, a narrative or both. The purpose was for them to put their thoughts and imagination down on paper. They really liked this activity, and asked if they could do this again.

Discussion

Our hope is that the reading sessions will become an ongoing relationship between the Caldwell High School student volunteer coordinator and the 21st Century Program, and that eventually a reading program will be built based around the activities that the children seemed the most engaged in. I definitely have learned strategies of working with young students and ELLs I didn’t realized that empowering students to read could be so fulfilling and enjoyable. Some may ask or wonder how can reading motivation be so important as to hold after school reading sessions for the main purpose of motivating elementary students to read; the answer is “Yes! Reading is that important”. In fact our society is more and more focused on knowing how to read and write since the advent of the Internet more people are reading websites, seeking knowledge, or just perusing the Internet for plain curiosity. Elementary students are involved in texting, they don’t talk on the phone any more, they text. Even if this is not an academic type of reading, young people are reading. As stated before motivation and engagement, and may I add
need, in reading brings forth the willingness to read, by reading more students improve comprehension and ability to read more fluently and this give them a sense of fulfillment thus the positive circle around reading continues.

I learned different methods of promoting reading for students. At the beginning I had no idea how this reading project was going to work. Karla and I planned to provide books either from the public library, or online from the We Give Books website. At that time our plans for the reading project were at the very beginning stages. However, our goal was to provide books that will be at the students reading and grade level and that they would be fun to read. Our preference was to have actual books instead of electronic books. As I look back to the beginning I realized that ILE reading project would not have existed without the help and support of Mr. Webster, Mrs. Anita Wilson, Mrs. Kathleen Vadapalli, and Donna Shines from the Mentoring Program who gave us insight and guidance by giving us questions to consider.

It is definitely true that man is not an island. Without the collaboration and support of our Boise State professors we would have missed insightful information on how to create a reading program that will provide academic skills to our focus group. My experience in working with in this project has given me a glimpse of how it would be to teach in a school setting. There is the preparation of lessons, the openness to accommodate the lesson to the needs and perhaps the mood of the students, though providing that the lesson delivers a challenge to their academic skills, that it is engaging, and fun. And I learned that there is never enough copies to give out. I have learned to work with school administrators keeping our lines of communication open and finding our common goal as we work together. During this experience I learned to wear different hats the hat of a researcher as I looked for information on motivation as it relates to reading, definitely as a student as I learned about Common Core Standards, Tesol, and explored more
about ELLs programs and their experiences, I wore the hat of an instructor/teacher assistant as I asked students and mentors to work on making posters and check on them to see if they need further instructions, I wear a hat of a mentor as I support and encourage our the CHS students. With all these little bits of experiences I grow in my understanding of the value of education and more specifically on the value that the joy of reading could have in our students. It is our desire that ILE reading project conveys to the students that reading is an enjoyable and delightful part of life. Because the more they read, the more they will want to read, and enjoying reading is an immeasurable step forward into their future in education.

If I were to change something it would be my participation in the reading sessions. I would like to be more involved in the one on one with the elementary students. Karla and I have decided to continue providing the ILE reading sessions during the spring semester. This will give us an opportunity to be more interactive with the SES students and make changes from our experience, accordingly. Currently, it feels more like observation sessions for us. We administer the activities and monitor and observe how the students and mentors complete them. I would also like to have a reading circle or reading time where I could read bilingual books to SES students and encourage our bilingual mentors to do the same. “Another principle for teaching English learners involves teacher and peer modeling within a “communicative context” (Long 1991) (Reutzel and Cooter Jr. p.71). This will give us an opportunity to introduce a different level of the Spanish language to ELLs and to English speakers’ students. Having held this reading sessions for one school semester, I have experienced some of the classroom dynamics, and have become aware that there is a lot of room to grow in my education and most definitely as an educator. Consequently, I wish that I have more to offer to the students in regards to a deeper
literacy knowledge and possibly be able to implement a reading strategy that will provide activities including phonics, syllables, and phonemic awareness.

ILE reading project is an after school project that is partnering with the 21st Century Program which promotes services for students that are struggling in class as well as for ELLs. Our main focus is on keeping the activities fun, as we are operating from a “When students have an enjoyable reading experience, they will increase their literacy skills, their reading skills, and their desire to read” perspective. With the support of Sacajawea Elementary School, Caldwell High School, and the 21st Century Program Karla and I were able to hold the ILE reading sessions at the Sacajawea library. This reading project fulfilled two needs in our school community it gave an opportunity for elementary students and ELLs to have an extra hour of reading after school and it assisted the Caldwell High school seniors to fulfill their ten hour of community service per semester.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper I have stated the importance of reading motivation for young children. The authors of “Students’ self-perception of reading ability, enjoyment of reading and reading achievement” illustrate that “Reading engagement, or the time that students spent reading for pleasure, has been found to be a strong correlate of reading achievement in a variety of studies,…” (J. Smith et al., 2012, p. 202). For this reason, ILE reading project has presented different reading activities to the SES students that without them realizing they are practicing reading and writing skills in a fun way as they work on Mad Libs, make up stories, and write down the library rules. This same journal piece tell us that we don’t have very much time to plant the seed in our students that reading is fun and that the more they read the more they will enjoy
it. Our reading project serves twenty students from the Caldwell District and the majority are ELLs students, for them reading in English brings extra benefits. When ELLs are reading they can see the words, their spelling, and if it is being read to them they will be able to put together the sound to the words. CHS seniors who are working on achieving community hours for their semester have volunteered their time and become mentors to the SES students this combination has worked wonderfully.

This Capstone Project has been a good experience, we have learned to seek out assistance from educators in our community, learned to research in depth and take action in what we found to be one of many needs in our local elementary schools. By doing research we learned that there are programs in place that are already providing extra curriculum activities to service students to improve their learning and in the case of ELLs to increase their English acquisition. There are several things about this project we would like to do different like working more one on one with the elementary students, provide a reading time where a book is read to the group and give the opportunity for students to discuss it, do more fun reading activities, and of course more reading.

For the immediate future we plan to continue offering the reading sessions during the last school semester. I plan to continue being active in supporting elementary students thru mentoring and giving of my time where is the most needed in order to serve better students who need extra support in their classes and serve ELLs who are learning English.

The City of Caldwell has a 34.5 percent of Hispanics and according to the infoplease website on demographic statistics, Caldwell has a total of 4,299 of Hispanic children between the ages of 5 to 14 years old (data.com). This number of school age children impact the number of Hispanic students in our schools. Therefore, it makes the need to serve ELLs students who are at
different level in their English acquisition, so much greater. Our reading project serves twenty
students from the Caldwell District and the majority are ELLs students. With this information,
I envision for a future project to have a reading program dedicated to ELLs who are at different
stages in their English language acquisition. A program that will have as its guide the
WIDA five levels of language acquisition that will assist teachers and program leaders to
recognize the different levels of language acquisition of the students. As educators serving ELLs
we are called to know more about our students, as we developed a close relationship with
students and their families we will have a better understating of their language, their culture, and
the dynamics of the family.
References


Appendix A

Student Profile – Start

1. Favorite books, genres, authors

2. At home reading habits

3. Main purposes of reading and writing (ex: I read for fun, I write to communicate or I read to learn, I write because I have to)

4. Does he or she enjoy reading/writing games and activities (crosswords, board games, word searches, etc.)

5. Ask the student to describe reading and what it means to him or her
Student Profile – End

1. Favorite books, genres, authors

2. At home reading habits

3. Main purposes of reading and writing (ex: I read for fun, I write to communicate or I read to learn, I write because I have to)

4. Does he or she enjoy reading/writing games and activities (crosswords, board games, word searches, etc.)

5. Ask the student to describe reading and what it means to him or her

Idaho Literacy Explorers 2015
Appendix B

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School ___________ Grade _____ Name __________________

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat #1</th>
<th>Cat #2</th>
<th>Cat #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat #1</th>
<th>Cat #2</th>
<th>Cat #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat #1</th>
<th>Cat #2</th>
<th>Cat #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat #1</th>
<th>Cat #2</th>
<th>Cat #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

<p>| | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>How do you feel about going to a bookstore?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Page 3

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Survey designed by Dennis J. Kear, Wichita State University
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>How do you feel about reading in school?</td>
<td>![Garfield Expressions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>How do you feel about reading your school books?</td>
<td>![Garfield Expressions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>How do you feel about learning from a book?</td>
<td>![Garfield Expressions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?</td>
<td>![Garfield Expressions]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?</td>
<td>![Garfield Emotions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?</td>
<td>![Garfield Emotions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. How do you feel about using a dictionary?</td>
<td>![Garfield Emotions]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. How do you feel about taking a reading test?</td>
<td>![Garfield Emotions]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>