

The College at Brockport: State University of New York

## Digital Commons @Brockport

---

Education and Human Development Master's  
Theses

Education and Human Development

---

Spring 5-12-2017

# The Impact of Past Literacy Experiences on Perception of Motivation

Nicholas Schaller  
nscha2@brockport.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses)



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

To learn more about our programs visit: <http://www.brockport.edu/ehd/>

---

### Repository Citation

Schaller, Nicholas, "The Impact of Past Literacy Experiences on Perception of Motivation" (2017).  
*Education and Human Development Master's Theses*. 772.  
[https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd\\_theses/772](https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/772)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Education and Human Development at Digital Commons @Brockport. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education and Human Development Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @Brockport. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@brockport.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@brockport.edu).

Running head: THE IMPACT OF PAST LITERACY EXPERIENCES ON PERCEPTION OF  
MOTIVATION

The Impact of Past Literacy Experiences on Perception of Motivation

Nicholas R. Schaller

The College at Brockport

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the College at  
Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Science in Education

May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**Table of Contents**

**Abstract.....3**

**Introduction.....4**

    Topic/Problem.....5

    Rationale.....6

    Purpose.....7

    Research Question.....8

**Literature Review.....8**

    The Importance of Literacy Learning.....9

    Struggling Literacy Learners.....10

    Self-Determination and its Role in Academic Motivation.....11

    Finding Literacy Success.....13

    Literacy Learning Motivation in Elementary School.....13

    Literacy Learning Motivation in Secondary School.....15

    The Impact of Feedback.....17

    Literature Review Conclusion.....18

**Methodology.....19**

    Setting.....20

    Participants.....20

    Positionality as the Teacher-Researcher.....21

    Data Collection.....22

    Student Artifacts.....22

    Questionnaire.....23

# THE IMPACT OF PAST LITERACY EXPERIENCES ON PERCEPT

2

Semi-Structured Interview.....	23
Field Notes.....	23
Procedures.....	23
Trustworthiness.....	25
<b>Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>25</b>
Introduction.....	25
Finding One.....	26
Finding Two.....	28
Finding Three.....	29
Finding Four.....	32
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Conclusions.....	35
Conclusion One.....	35
Conclusion Two.....	36
Conclusion Three.....	37
Implications.....	38
Implication One.....	38
Implication Two.....	39
Limitations.....	40
Future Research.....	40
Closing.....	41
<b>References.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>46</b>

**Abstract**

This research is a qualitative case study that explores the impact of past literacy experiences on motivation in secondary school students. Data were collected over a period of six weeks using observation field notes, a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and student artifacts. The aim of this study is to assist secondary school teachers in understanding their secondary school students in all content areas.

### **Introduction**

Although reading and writing always came easily to me, I cannot help but imagine what it must feel like for students who have struggled with literacy learning their entire lives. For many students, struggles with literacy in elementary school may shape his/her expectations for how he/she will perform in secondary school. At the same time, some students with a well-established foundation of literacy success in elementary school may enter secondary school with a substantial amount of confidence and motivation related to literacy learning. As a classroom teacher, I wonder how literacy learning experiences in elementary school impact students' self-perception of their motivation to succeed in secondary school.

Upon entering high school, some students are able to say that they have had meaningful and successful literacy experiences without exhibiting consistent effort. At the same time, there may be other high school students for whom reading is a task that brings on an incredible amount of stress, anxiety, and confusion. These feelings of unease may begin to fill these students' minds with negative self-beliefs in regards to their own academic, or literacy learning, ability. Furnam and Bachtiar (2008) found that "self-beliefs can be powerful predictors of educational attainment" (p.613). As a teacher, I have wondered if occasionally these students stumble through the school day, doing whatever they can to avoid the feelings of discouragement when it comes to their literacy learning. As these students continue to struggle with feelings of discouragement, memories of past failure to meet high expectations may fill the minds of these students. These memories may result in a feeling of apathy, or lack of willingness to persist in the face of adversity because of negative experiences in the past.

An unwillingness to persist in the face of adversity may lead to high stakes testing failure (which may be impacted by literacy ability as determined by a test): "students who have

experienced repeated failure in high-stakes testing have a complex range of emotional and cognitive barriers preventing success” (Barker & Herrington, 2011 p.2). When students feel as though they are not meeting the standards set forth for them, this may impact their motivation negatively. As these students continue to have negative literacy experiences, sometimes their motivation to be successful diminishes (Bozack, 2011). I wonder if, sometimes, the difficult transition from elementary school to secondary school may cause a decrease in motivation related to literacy and/or academics. No matter what may be causing a student to have poor self-perception of their own motivation, these self-perceptions can have a negative long-lasting impact. My study explores how these students’ literacy learning experiences may shape their literacy learning future.

### **Topic/Problem**

This research study explored whether past literacy experiences in elementary school may have impacted students’ motivation to be successful literacy learners in secondary school. I wondered if students in high school classrooms may have lacked motivation to read and write because of the negative experiences students may have had in elementary school. This study also explored how the self-perception of literacy learning success of students may have impacted his/her motivation in a high school or secondary academic setting. For example, when students receive feedback from teachers on assignments, this feedback may impact students’ motivation levels. This study explored these research problems because studies have found that even when students have “positive self-perceptions, they may not be successful academically” (Ma’ayan, 2010 p.645). Ma’ayan (2010) explains that when students perceive themselves as successful learners, students’ own perceptions may be inaccurate. Therefore, this study explored the relationship between actual teacher feedback, and the perceptions that students may have related

to the feedback that they receive. Positive and/or negative self-perceptions developed by students may impact the level of motivation that those students have (Barker & Herrington, 2011; Bozack, 2011; Ma'ayan, 2010). For this reason, the importance of self-perception was explored by this study.

### **Rationale**

This study was important for teachers and professionals working in a secondary, or high school setting because it sought to explore how secondary school students have been impacted by past literacy experiences. Although elementary school literacy experiences occur long before a student walks into a high school classroom, high school teachers are held responsible for understanding these students and helping them to be successful literacy learners. Additionally this study was important because throughout my time working in a high school setting, I have wondered if students struggle with motivation because of potentially negative experiences in their early literacy learning. At my current place of employment, there are many students that have been identified as “struggling literacy learners.” My study explored how these students became known as “struggling” and how this status of “struggling” may have impacted students’ motivation. In a high school or secondary setting, motivation may be a factor which helps push a student to success, even if they may not be the most academically proficient literacy learner.

However, a student may not feel motivated if they have not felt successful in previous literacy learning experiences. Students may also have less motivation due to previous exertions of effort that didn’t meet the student’s expectations, “failure following effort is often viewed as compelling evidence that one lacks ability” (Byrne & Covington 2013 p.861; De Castella). In a school setting, students who continue to struggle may eventually be perceived as not yet meeting the standards or expectations set by the school. Successful academic literacy learning, or

ineffective attempts at becoming a proficient literacy learner, may have a profound impact on whether or not students are successful in their post-secondary school experiences (Allyn, 2014; Iwai, 2016). Therefore, this study sought to help teachers by identifying the cause of these negative self-perceptions that students may exhibit.

The statements made in this section relate directly to the research question noted below, and the purpose of this study because the population of participants in my study may have been perceived, or may have perceived themselves, as “struggling” at some point in their school careers. The term “struggling” may be identified as a negative characteristic by some students because this may mean that they are not meeting the standards set for them by their teachers. This study sought to explore these struggling literacy learners, and the impact that a negative self-perception may have on literacy learning motivation.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the research was to explore how elementary literacy learning experiences may impact motivation to be successful in a secondary academic setting. The purpose of this study specifically looked at how participants’ past elementary literacy learning success and experiences may impact students’ motivation to succeed in a high school, or in a secondary literacy learning setting. I hoped to find out how students in my research setting perceived their own literacy abilities, and motivation to be a successful literacy learner. I was also interested in whether or not the students participating in my study believed that they are successful literacy learners.

Studies have shown that positive self-perception does not always equate to academic success, as shown by the following excerpt from (Ma’ayan, 2010), “Erika was a failing student at

a large urban middle school in the United States...I feel like I'm good at writing, she explained" (p.646). Students who do not meet expectations in a literacy learning environment may be seen as "failing". Evidence from relevant research: (Arnone, Reynolds, & Marshall, 2009; Agbayahoun, 2016; Ma'ayan, 2010) has shown that a student may feel confident in his/her literacy learning abilities regardless of how well they perform in literacy learning. However, research has also stated that "student confidence can be tied to actual performance" (Arnone, Reynolds, & Marshall, 2009 p.115). Students who are confident in their academic ability may also be considered more motivated by teachers.

This study may provide clarity for teachers struggling to understand why a student may, or may not be a substantially motivated literacy learner, and how this relates to their confidence in their own literacy abilities. This study explored the path that twelfth grade literacy learners have taken to get to where they presently are academically. The exploration of my participants' own literacy learning experiences led to conclusions about how professionals in education may be able to boost motivation in high school students, while helping students to perceive themselves in a more positive light.

### **Research Question**

This study explores the following research question: "How do secondary students' self-perceptions of their literacy experiences in elementary school impact their reported self-perceptions of their motivation in secondary school?"

### **Literature Review**

The following literature review will explore research that has been conducted in the field of literacy relating to success, motivation, and teacher feedback in elementary and secondary school. The topics in this literature review are important to this qualitative case study because

they support and justify the research that is conducted in this study. With literacy learning being identified as a key aspect of creating successful students, it is important that students create a foundation of literacy success in elementary school (Allyn, 2014; Iwai, 2016; LaDuke, 2016). Students' self-perceptions of their own successes may be powerful factors in determining how motivated students are as they continue to go through school. The topics included in this literature review strove to help teachers understand how student self-perceptions of success in literacy learning impacts students' motivation in literacy learning.

### **The Importance of Literacy Learning**

As a result of Common Core State Standards (CCSS), literacy learning is becoming a focal point of all classrooms and content areas, "Content area literacies are embedded in the expectations of the CCS and C3" (LaDuke, 2016, p.98). These standards impact how some content is taught in literacy learning classrooms. Literacy can be defined as, "a constructive, integrative, and critical process situated in social practice" (Frankel, Becker, Rowe, & Pearson, 2016). Literacy was an important term in this study, which is why it needed to be defined. Literacy has become more than just a skill used in language arts and reading classes as Iwai (2016) notes, "Literacy is a critical aspect of students' academic learning. Literacy is being incorporated into all classrooms and content areas. Literacy skills and knowledge are essential in order for students to understand what they read in school regardless of their subjects and/or grade levels"(p.110). Frankel et al. states that literacy is "continuously developing" (p.7).

Students without a strong foundation of literacy success, built in elementary school, often need to develop the skills necessary to succeed in high school (Iwai, 2016). When students do not develop reading and writing skills in elementary school, they may feel as though they are not up to par with peers. Literacy is more than just reading and writing, as Allyn (2014) notes,

“Literacy is power, and without it, citizens have fewer opportunities to succeed in the quickly growing global community” (p.1). With great emphasis being placed on literacy, there is significant pressure on teachers of all subjects to incorporate literacy into their classrooms as much as possible. LaDuke (2016) notes the emphasis of incorporating literacy into the social studies classroom, “literacy strategies should be taught within the context of social studies instruction to ensure that the skills are authentic and purposefully used” (p.101).

**Struggling literacy learners.** Some students are able to find a path from elementary to high school without developing the skills necessary for academic success at the secondary level (Barker & Herrington, 2011). When students struggle in high school, they may still be developing the skills necessary to succeed in this demanding environment (Barker & Herrington, 2011). This case study defined the term “struggling student” as a student who is perceived as not meeting the standards and expectations set by students’ teachers. This study looked at struggling student experiences; therefore, it was important to define the term and its use in my study. Some students who struggle to meet the expectations set for them (by schools and teachers) end up feeling less successful, and in turn less motivated, “Many students struggle with reading, which hinders their academic success” (Iwai, 2016, p.111). When students struggle repeatedly, they may find it difficult to stay motivated in a literacy learning context.

Eventually, students may begin to become accustomed to falling short of goals set by teachers. When students feel as though they are not meeting the standards of their teachers, students’ understanding of success may change. As a result, students’ motivation to excel in a literacy learning environment may diminish, and their perception of the importance of school may change as well (Erisen, Sahin, Birben, & Yalin, 2016). As students continue to struggle, they may begin to feel as though success is out of reach, “In evaluative contexts in which

students are concerned with the implications of failure, they can thus seek to avoid failure by succeeding, or they can manage these fears by altering the personal meaning of failure” (De Castella, Byrne, & Covington, 2013 p.862). De Castella concludes that some struggling students begin to define success as less than their actual capability. This change in perspective, related to what success really is, may be due to past experiences in which the student has exerted maximum effort, but may continue to feel somewhat unsuccessful.

### **Self-Determination and its Role in Academic Motivation**

This study specifically explores the importance of reading and writing motivation. According to McGeown, Osborne, Warhurst, Norgate, and Duncan (2015) reading motivation is “a multidimensional construct” (p.110), and there are many things that impact reading motivation in students. Students with strong personal interest in what they are writing about, are more motivated to write (Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers, & Lawrence, 2012 p.18). When students have a strong interest in the topic that they are writing about, they may feel more motivated to create higher quality writing. On the other hand, Ünal-Karagüven (2015) states that if students are not motivated or determined to work hard and be successful in literacy learning, this may impact students’ level of achievement or success. Furthermore, self-determination theory concerns itself with examining how people grow innately and make choices based on motivation. One of the major ideas that self-determination theory examines is intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory believes that intrinsic motivation is the “most optimal type of motivation” (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste & Rosseel 2012 p.2). According to De Naeghel et al. (2012) intrinsic motivation also includes engaging in an activity for its own enjoyment, or inherent satisfaction. Although students may not always enjoy school, students may receive satisfaction from being successful in school. The pursuit of self-satisfaction and

satisfying teachers, parents, coaches etc. may motivate students because they want to make others, and themselves, happy or proud.

The desire to attain satisfaction may be based on a student's intrinsic motivation and self-determination. Guvendir (2014) states that "performing tasks based on inherent satisfaction is a common characteristic to intrinsic motivation" (p.692). Therefore students with a high level of intrinsic motivation find completing certain tasks to be enjoyable. As stated in De Naeghel et al. self-determined behavior is "optimal", or ideal because it allows a person to be self-sufficient and self-motivated. Often, students have difficulty finding this intrinsic motivation. When students are not internally motivated, they may begin to look for motivation in other places (Loima et al., 2015). Students who may be struggling in literacy learning situations may look to their teachers for motivation. Some students may only exhibit motivation so that they are able to gain attention and approval from their teachers. However, when teachers are not able to give verbal feedback right away, this may result in the student receiving attention from his/her peers, "students' motivation may be affected more by the immediate feedback that the classmates give in the lesson situation than by the teacher, who may concentrate only on the first row students" (Loima et al., 2015 p.32).

Self-determination is relevant to my study because motivation to be a successful literacy learner must, at least partly, come from within the student. As students transition from elementary school to secondary school, expectations for literacy learners become higher and more academically strenuous. According to Guvendir (2014) Teachers strive to "inculcate self-determined motivation in students" (p.693) but teachers with large classes may not always be able to reach each and every student with inspiration and stimulation, meaning that students must have a certain level of self-determination and intrinsic motivation. With that being said,

motivation may be a factor directly related to student achievement (De Naeghal et al. 2012; Unal Kuraguyven et al. 2015).

**Finding literacy success.** The ability to be persistent and persevere through literacy struggles may be a trait that some students intrinsically have, and some students have not yet developed. Academic success is something that every student may want, but it may also be something that some students may struggle to attain. (De Castella, Byrne, & Covington, 2013) At times, students may need to examine themselves to determine whether they are exhibiting full effort in accomplishing the tasks set before them in their literacy classrooms. Relevant research has found that when students consider their failures to be due to a lack of effort, they are more willing to persist in the face of adversity. Huang & Yang (2015) explain how students use strategies to prevail through reading difficulties, “in the event of comprehension difficulties, readers continue reading, attempt to identify more contextual details, reread back to the content before the problematic part, guess the meaning from the context or other clues, ask others, or look up words in a dictionary”(p.403). Although some students are able to overcome literacy learning difficulties, other students, that may have less intrinsic motivation or under-developed literacy skills, may not exhibit the effort necessary to succeed. The reading strategies mentioned may not always be explicitly taught to all students. When students are under-developed in the skills necessary to become a successful reader, this may also lead to diminishing motivation in that student (Huang & Yang, 2015; Lin-Siegler, Ahn, Chen, Fang, & Luna-Lucero, 2016).

### **Literacy Learning Motivation in Elementary School**

Literacy learning in elementary school may be crucial to the development of foundational reading and writing skills. In elementary school, students receive instruction and direct teaching related to the introductory skills of reading and writing. These skills primarily

consist of “reciting the alphabet, recognizing and writing letters, writing one’s own name, reading environmental print” (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Recognizing and writing letters are skills taught early on in students’ school careers, and are used throughout secondary school. However, after elementary school these skills may no longer be directly taught by secondary school teachers. Though early elementary school skills may not be directly taught in secondary school, these skills and experiences often help to build a foundation on which the learning experiences of secondary school can begin to take shape (Barker & Herrington, 2011).

Children who, “don’t develop age-appropriate literacy skills by the end of third grade are at high risk of school failure” (Snow & Matthews, 2016). With that being said, reading motivation may begin to flourish, or falter during these crucial elementary school literacy learning experiences, “children who are more motivated are already reporting reading more than their less motivated peers” (Cartwright, Marshall & Wray 2015 p.82). Students who are more motivated academically, are more motivated to read and become increasingly literate.

Moreover, Cartwright, Marshall and Wray (2015) examined second grade students’ experiences and perceptions regarding reading in school. Findings from this study conducted by Cartwright et al. have shown that, “facilitative effects of children’s reading motivation on comprehension may begin in the primary grades” (p.82). As stated by Cartwright et al.’s study, primary (elementary) grades may be extremely significant in helping students increase their ability to comprehend a text. If students are able to comprehend texts, even at a young age, this may lead to an increase in motivation to read (Barker & Herrington, 2011; Cartwright et al. 2015). The ability to comprehend a text continues to be a vital aspect of whether or not a student is successful as they transition to, and experience, secondary school.

Cartwright et al. (2015) have also found that when students were more motivated to read, they were more successful in comprehending what they were reading. Mazzoni, Gambrell, and Korkeamaki (1999) state that a high-level of reading motivation may lead to “higher reading achievement” in elementary school students. Students that are motivated to read in elementary school may carry highly-developed reading skills with them into secondary school. My study examined the impact that past reading experiences in elementary school had on motivation to become a successful literacy learner in secondary school.

### **Literacy Learning Motivation in Secondary School**

When students feel unsuccessful (as determined by grades and test scores) their personal expectations for themselves may lower. For some students, the lowering of their own personal expectations may cause a decrease in motivation (Barker & Herrington, 2011). Furthermore, a decrease in motivation in some students may cause them to be less likely to persevere through reading and writing difficulties. As students transition from elementary school to high school, standards are heightened, and past struggles may be amplified in response to these elevated standards of what a successful student truthfully is. Hopwood, Hay, and Dymont (2017) propose that students with low motivation are more likely to experience “negative outcomes” during their transition from elementary to secondary school.

Some professionals in education suggest that students need to develop “unconstrained skills” or skills that are “important for long term literacy success” (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Snow, and Matthews suggest that unconstrained skills, “Words rarely encountered in spoken language” are developed through a child’s experiences and the background knowledge that they are able to develop. Unconstrained skills are “more strongly predicted by children’s social class or their parents’ education, and more difficult to teach in the classroom” (Snow & Matthews,

2016). Struggling literacy students may still be developing these unconstrained skills in high school, causing them to be less prepared for the classroom than their peers with more developed unconstrained skills. Additionally, relevant research states that enjoyable reading and writing experiences at a young age have an impact on student motivation. Baker and Scher (2002) states that when students read with their parents at a young age, students had higher “value and competence” related to reading. When students value reading at a young age, this may carry over into school. As students continue to build up competence, they may develop a higher level of reading motivation.

Sometimes students with less-developed foundations of literacy skills are identified as “poor readers” in schools. Barker and Herrington (2011) state, “The problem is that when poor readers face increasingly challenging material without the necessary skills they give up” (p.4). As these struggling students move through the grade levels and school continues to get more and more challenging, giving-up or avoidance might become comforting options for these struggling students; therefore, “Their reading ability and self-confidence follows a downward spiral that negatively impacts academic achievement and self-esteem” (Barker & Herrington, 2011 p.4). However, as stated previously, there are students with the ability to persevere through academic struggles, these students concern themselves with how to focus on the task, and persevere through struggles. These students may also concern themselves with how to get better at a given literacy task even when the task becomes increasingly difficult. These students may need to work harder to achieve success, but success is not outside of their threshold (Lin-Siegler et. al. 2016).

The “downward spiral” of literacy learning shortcomings in secondary school is something that may be deeply rooted in students’ negative experiences in elementary school. These ideas were important to this qualitative case study because this study was one that

examined how the impact of negative experiences in literacy learning during elementary school may impact perception of students' motivation in high school. Motivation may be directly impacted by self-esteem, and the amount of success that students believe they have achieved in elementary school. Moreover, a lack of motivation in elementary school may directly impact the amount of motivation a student has in secondary school because the student may be already lacking intrinsic motivation.

**The impact of feedback.** Teacher feedback may be a crucial aspect of students' motivation to read and write. Agbayahoun (2016) states that teacher feedback is "an important aspect of the learning-to-write process". When students feel as though their teachers care about their reading and writing, this may lead to increased motivation. Yekta & Dafe'ian (2016) state, "...teacher's feedback is essential, either delayed or immediate" (p. 2114). The ability to write is a key aspect of being a successful literacy learner. Students with a past of receiving negative written feedback may not develop the ability to use feedback in a positive way. Teacher feedback is constructed in a multitude of different arrangements, "It can take a variety of forms: questions, error corrections, praises, suggestions, criticisms, and so on" (Agbayahoun, 2016 p.1898). For this reason, many students are able to understand that teacher feedback is not always going to be positive. However, all students may not be able to come to this conclusion on their own.

Teachers in literacy learning contexts may benefit from helping their students to use feedback as a tool, not as a confidence hinderer, "effective feedback should be suggestive rather than prescriptive in order to support students' sense of ownership of their writing" (Agbayahoun, 2016 p.1898). When students are able to take ownership of their writing, this may cause students to feel motivated. An increase in motivation may be directly related to whether or not the student is able to feel a sense of pride in their work (Agbayahoun, 2016). However, feelings of struggle

that students experience in relation to literacy may intensify as students advance from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school into high school, “the reading demands placed on all students increase dramatically in the middle grades, as reading proficiency becomes the gateway to accessing content across all academic areas” (Carlson, et.al, 2013 p.1). As expectations for students continue to increase throughout students’ academic lives, this rise in standards may cause struggling students to lose any motivation that they already had. This rise in expectations is relevant to my qualitative case study that was conducted because the study explored how students may have reached a point in which they were unmotivated secondary school students.

My study was able to explore how high school students’ motivation levels had been changed by the level of success that they had attained in the past. Each student may have been impacted differently by the experiences that they had in elementary and middle school. For instance, if teachers were not able to respond to some of these struggling students, these students may have continued to lose motivation throughout secondary school. Students that are not able to be reached by teachers in the secondary classroom may feel as though their needs are not being met, and that they are not as important as other students (Lesaux, Harris, & Sloane, 2012). I interviewed students in order to explore their self-perception of elementary school literacy learning experiences which may have involved teacher feedback, and how those experiences may have impacted his/her motivation to succeed in a secondary school literacy learning environment.

### **Literature Review Conclusion**

Literacy success, and literacy motivation in students, can be impacted by a variety of factors and experiences in students’ lives. The factors that have an impact on literacy motivation

and success for students in high school are not limited to those listed in this review of the literature. However, the ability to persevere through literacy struggles through the use of intrinsic motivation, and the ability for teachers to respond to students through the use of feedback and direct instruction may impact how successful and/or how motivated a student will become. Additionally, standards and expectations set by teachers and administrators may prove to be the most impactful forces on students' ability to stay motivated and reach success. My study sought to explore the level of impact that each of these previously stated factors had on students' motivation in high school. Moreover, this study also sought to determine which of the previously stated factors had the most substantial impact on students and their ability to be successful and motivated after the transition from elementary to secondary school. Furthermore, the research conducted in this study explored how these previously stated factors impacted students' ability to sustain motivation and reach success throughout high school.

### **Methodology**

While conducting this study I explored how literacy learning experiences in elementary school may impact students' motivation to be successful in a secondary literacy learning setting. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to find out how students in my research setting perceive their own abilities, and level of motivation. My study also explored whether or not participants in this study believed that they have achieved literacy learning success, and how that may have impacted their level of motivation (Hulya Ünal-Karagüven, 2015). My research sought to identify how I may be able to assist students in my workplace/research setting, as well as students that I will encounter in the future. In this section, I will discuss the setting of my study, the participants, and my positionality in the study. I will also discuss the methods with which I

collected data, the procedures I used, and the ways in which I was able to establish (and maintain) trustworthiness.

### **Setting**

I conducted my research at my place of employment. The research location was known as “Small Private School” for the duration of this study (all names in this study are pseudonyms). Small Private School was located in Western New York State. Small Private School was located in a suburban area about ten minutes outside of the nearest major city. Additionally, Small Private School included students in grades three through twelve from nineteen different school districts across the state. Students came to Small Private School from various locations surrounding the nearest major city. Students’ commute times to school ranged anywhere from five minutes to two hours each day.

### **Participants**

There were approximately one-hundred-and-fifty students currently attending Small Private School at the time of this study. Of those students, approximately seventy percent of them had an I.Q. level below seventy (according to statistics given by the Executive Director of Small Private School). According to Small Private School’s official website, Small Private School was founded on the idea that, “with enough time, and the right learning environment, all students can learn well.” Additionally, the majority of families with students attending Small Private School were living in poverty and received free or reduced lunch (according to statistics given by the Executive Director of Small Private School). The citation has been omitted to protect the identity of participants. Furthermore, Small Private School was designed for students who learn differently. The majority of students that attended Small Private School had auditory processing delays, Autism, and/or a learning disability. However, there was a small segment of

ESOL students as well. Additionally, there were students without disabilities attending because of poor experiences in a public school setting. Class roster sizes at Small Private School ranged from five to twelve, and at any time there were one to three educational staff members in the classroom at one time.

The student participants in my study were in grade twelve. Students chosen for this study were students I was teaching in my twelfth grade Participation in Government class. These students filled out the questionnaire, turned-in the questionnaire, and returned the proper consent forms to participate in this study.

Table 1 <i>Summary of Student Participants</i>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Student #1	Eighteen	Male
Student #2	Nineteen	Male
Student #3	Seventeen	Male
Student #4	Seventeen	Male
Student #5	Eighteen	Female
Table 1 Summary of Student Participants		

**Positionality as the Teacher-Researcher**

As a resident of a suburb, in this study it was known as “Cozy Town,” ten minutes outside of the location of Small Private School I was able to separate myself from the community surrounding Small Private School. As the teacher-researcher of this study, I was positioned in my role as a social studies teacher. My role was also positioned within the culture of the school. For this study, the location of Small Private School will be called “Cityville”.

Since students and teachers commuted from cities and towns up to two hours away from Cozy Town and Cityville, I did not find myself involved in participants' lives. This was due to the location of my own home in relation to Small Private School and the homes of my co-workers. The location of my own home was a factor because I felt as though I was able to remove myself from the research environment each day. I was able to reflect on my experiences without being influenced by participants or co-workers because I was not in contact with them outside of Small Private School.

I was a twenty-four year old Caucasian male (at the time of this study) who grew up in a rural area. I was able to receive proper schooling throughout my life without difficulty. Growing up the way I did influenced how I perceived cultures other than my own. Acceptance of other cultures was not explicitly taught, and I had to prioritize the acceptance of others through my own experiences. I was working on my Master's degree in Literacy at a local college. I was a seventh, eighth, and twelfth grade social studies teacher at Small Private School. As a teacher at Small Private School I was able to work with a diverse range of students from several different cultural backgrounds. I was able to work with these students in small classes, sometimes one-on-one. This allowed me to get to know students on a personal level. This meant that I needed to step away from how I felt about my students as people, and strictly see them as participants in my study.

### **Data collection**

My qualitative case study collected data using student artifacts, a questionnaire, a semi-structured interview, and field notes.

**Student artifacts.** Student artifacts were collected during class. Student artifacts consisted of reading comprehension questions. These artifacts were graded as part of the

curriculum that I taught. Student artifacts were not designed specifically to be used as data in this study. These artifacts are used in my class regardless of the completion of this study.

**Questionnaire.** I administered a questionnaire to the five participants in my study. This questionnaire had eight total questions related to prior and current literacy experiences. I created my own questionnaire in order to gather the data that I found necessary to complete this study. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix B.

**Semi-structured interview.** Students were interviewed individually using an interview that was created by myself. This interview included a total of nine semi-structured questions. The Interview was used as a way of following-up with students after they completed the questionnaire. The semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

**Field notes.** Student participants were observed during my twelfth grade social studies class. Field notes were taken on a specified template created by myself. Field notes were taken during read aloud time, and other reading comprehension tasks. These field notes were seeking to explore aspects of the participants' motivation, and their feelings about reading and writing. The field notes template can be found in Appendix C.

## **Procedures**

My study began by recording classroom observations. These observations were recorded throughout the entirety of the case study. These observations were recorded on a template that included date, time, and activity being completed. These observations were already a part of my daily classroom instruction and tasks. I observed student participants while reading out loud in front of the class. I also assessed students while reading by asking verbal comprehension questions. Classroom observations and field notes were taken on a specific template.

Next, I began collecting artifacts, which consisted of written answers to reading comprehension questions. Reading comprehension questions included short answer questions, multiple choice questions, and fill-in-the-blank questions. These artifacts were graded and used in my gradebook. In grading these comprehension questions I was able to assess them for accuracy, correctness and whether or not the student understood what they read. I made sure students were aware of their grade before collecting the artifact for my study. I also included feedback on answers to written comprehension questions. I then took observation notes based on how students reacted to different types of feedback.

As my study continued, I gave questionnaires to students. Students received questionnaires and were asked to complete them during class. Students were asked to then return them to me at the end of class. I gave the questionnaires to each student in my social studies class. These questionnaires allowed students to answer questions on a scale of one to five. Five was considered extremely true, one was considered extremely untrue. As the scale moves from one to five, the scale gradually progresses from untrue to true. Students circled a number for each question to show how they felt about each question. After students circled a number, students wrote an explanation for why they chose that number on each question. Students were not required to write an explanation, but they were always given the option to do so for each question. I kept a tally of how many students selected one, two, three, four, and five on the rating scale for each question.

After questionnaires were collected, I began to administer interview questions to students. These interview questions were used to gather more relevant detailed information about the participants based on what I had learned from the questionnaires previously collected. I administered interviews to one student per week over the span of five weeks. Interviews were

conducted in a private location where students could not be influenced by their peers or faculty members. Interview answers were recorded word-for-word based on student responses. Student responses were recorded on the student interview prompt and written exactly as students stated them. Interviews were conducted during academic development time (free work and club time).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was established in this study through the use of private interview locations, and private storage of data. After collecting data, and analyzing the data, I was able to member check with each participant to verify their responses to questions on the questionnaire and the student interview. I was also able to ask students about specific observations made during the observation process to verify my findings with each student. Additionally, my capstone advisor, throughout the entire process, examined my work to help me through my preconceived notions. I also used triangulation to validate and insure the credibility of my findings in this study. Triangulation is, “the process of corroborating evidence about a finding from different individuals” (Clark & Cresswell, 2015 p.364). My study used several methods of data collection to insure the validity of the data collected. Furthermore, the use of relevant literature supported the data and findings in this study.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Introduction**

After the data were collected, I began the process of coding across all data methods. I began by looking for positive responses, negative responses, and neutral responses to the questionnaire, the interview, and classroom observations. I coded responses using three separate colors to represent separate themes (Clark & Cresswell, 2015). Next, I compiled all positive responses together, all negative responses together, and removed neutral responses from my data for the time being.

My research sought to find commonalities between elementary literacy experiences, and secondary literacy motivation. My qualitative case study strove to understand how secondary students' motivation was impacted by literacy experiences in elementary school. The purpose of my research was to help teachers understand how elementary school experiences may have a lasting impact on a student. My study was driven by the idea that if teachers are able to understand how students' literacy self-perceptions are shaped in elementary school, teachers may be able to assist students in becoming more motivated literacy learners for years to come.

Through the process of data analysis I discovered that student participants that perceive themselves as strong readers in secondary school, respond positively to being asked to read aloud in class. My study also found that negative reading experiences for my student participants in elementary school resulted in a negative response during read aloud time in secondary school. Additionally, my study found that secondary student participants that perceived their reading ability as average, or below average in elementary school were motivated to become better readers in secondary school. Lastly, I found that students that didn't perceive themselves as struggling in elementary school literacy learning are less intrinsically motivated in secondary school.

**Finding one: Student participants that perceived themselves as strong readers in secondary school, responded positively to being asked to read aloud in class.** In my study I found that some students that were confident in their ability to read in secondary school responded with positive reactions when they were asked to read aloud in class. My study categorized positive reactions to read aloud time as the following behaviors or responses, students voluntarily raising their hand one or more times during a class, students verbally expressing a desire to read, high ratings on specific statements on the questionnaires given to

students during this study, and positive responses to semi-structured interview questions related to reading.

***Student Three.*** Student Three saw a high level of value in what he did as a secondary school student. Student Three responded to the questionnaire with a “five” on the rating scale for the following statement: “I am currently a strong reader” Student Three also stated that he, “reads as much as possible.” Additionally, Student Three “volunteered to read aloud in class by raising his hand.” When chosen, student number three responded with, “yes!” These previous responses portrayed a student that was motivated to improve his reading and show his classmates that he is a strong reader. Moreover, Student Three also responded with a “four” on the rating scale for the following statement “I believe that my classmates view me as a strong reader.” During read aloud time, Student Three volunteered to read frequently, and was observed raising his hand to participate at least twice during each class observation.

***Student Four.*** Student Four responded to the questionnaire with a “five” on the rating scale for the following statement: “I am currently a strong reader”. Student Four was also observed doing the following, “Raised his hand to read in class during read aloud time, and continued reading longer than was asked of him.” Moreover, Student Four raised his hand to read at least once during each read aloud observation in class, while other students sometimes didn’t raise their hands at all. Student Four stated the following during the semi-structured interview, “Anytime I’m reading in class I find it empowering to read in front of people”. Student Four also seemed to enjoy using the text in class to make connections to real-life concepts. Student Four often wanted to tell stories related to what we were reading in class, and this showed that Student Four had a genuine interest in reading and speaking to his classmates.

**Finding two: Negative literacy experiences in elementary school sometimes resulted in decreased motivation in secondary students.** In my qualitative case study I found that one student participant may have been an under-motivated literacy learner in secondary school because she reported that she had unenjoyable literacy learning experiences in elementary school. Most of the evidence to support this finding was reported through responses on the questionnaire and answers to semi-structured interview questions.

*Student Five.* One participant in my study often expressed negative perceptions of her elementary school literacy experiences. Student Five expressed these perceptions through her responses to questionnaire statements, answers to interview questions, and behaviors during classroom observations. These responses and behaviors supported finding number two. Student Five responded with a “one” on the rating scale for the following question: “I had enjoyable experiences while reading in elementary school.” This response meant that Student Five found that she had very unenjoyable experiences reading in elementary school.

Student Five was also observed as having her head down on the desk during read aloud time in class. This behavior may have been a way to avoid being called on to read aloud. Additionally, during the semi-structured interview, Student Five expressed that she had negative experiences reading aloud in elementary school. When student Five was asked the following question, “How do you feel when asked to read in front of a group? Can you think of a time when you felt that way?” She responded with, “At my old school, teachers said I gave them gray hairs in fifth grade.” Student Five perceived these teachers’ comments as meaning that she read too slow, and these comments made her self-conscious about her reading ability. Student Five

also stated, “I didn’t like reading out loud in elementary school because teachers made negative comments about my reading multiple times.”

When Student Five was asked about her reading and writing experiences in secondary school, it became somewhat evident that she was not motivated to read. When Student Five was asked, “As a high school student, how would you describe your reading motivation?” she responded by stating, “No motivation, reading doesn’t interest me.” This response from Student Five was supported by the fact that Student Five reported that she not see much value in the work that she had to complete in secondary school, “Some classes are too laid back and we do meaningless work.” These responses led me to believe that the negative experiences that student Five had in elementary school had impacted her motivation in a negative way. In examining student artifacts from Student Five, I found that Student Five did not consistently use complete sentences when asked to do so. On two different worksheets that included comprehension questions, Student Five used sentence fragments, and did not use punctuation on three out of four questions. When Student Five was asked to “Give two examples of complementary goods, and explain how these goods are used together” Student Five wrote, “Tooth Paste and tooth brush-brush your teeth”. This example showed that Student Five knew the answer, but she may not have been motivated and/or interested enough in the task. The previous example may also show that Student Five has not developed a complete understanding of grammar because she did not write this answer in a complete sentence, or use a period at the end of her sentence.

**Finding three: Secondary students that perceived their reading ability as average, or below average in elementary school were motivated to become better readers in secondary school.** Some students in my study expressed that they were not extremely strong, or confident, readers in elementary school, but they seemed to express an increased level of motivation to

become better readers in secondary school. Self-perception of average or below average reading ability in elementary school was determined through the analysis of questionnaire responses, observations made in class, and responses to interview questions. Participants also expressed that they were motivated to become better readers in secondary school through their questionnaire responses, interview answers, and actions during classroom observations.

*Student Two.* Student Two responded with a “one” on the rating scale for the following statement on the questionnaire, “I was a strong reader in elementary school.” Student Two wrote, “It was very hard for me to translate words into concepts as a young boy, and just ended up avoiding and pretending whenever I was given a mandatory book.” The responses shared by student Two that were related to elementary school show that student Two was not a strong or confident reader during his early school years. However, Student Two did not allow his early reading difficulties to interfere with his perceived level of motivation during secondary school. When Student Two was asked, “As a high school student, how would you describe your reading motivation?” Student Two gave the following response, “I feel very motivated. Mistakes are a part of the path. I want opportunity to speak out loud. I want to earn more confidence and competence.” This response showed that Student Two was motivated by his mistakes and struggles with regard to reading. He perceived himself as a motivated reader and he wanted to prove that to his peers as well.

When I looked at student artifacts from Student Two, I found that Student Two used complete sentences one-hundred-percent of the time that he was asked to do so. Student Two was motivated to create strong writing and work products overall. When Student Two was asked to, “Give two examples of complementary goods, and explain how these goods are used together”, Student Two wrote, “Milk and cereal are complementary goods because people

associate those products together. People enjoy milk with their cereal in order to make the cereal less dry.” Student Two answered the question completely, used correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. This example showed that Student Two was a motivated student who cared about his work, and wanted to produce work that earned him a good grade.

*Student Three.* Student Three responded with a “three” on the rating scale for the following statement on the questionnaire, “I was a strong reader in elementary school.” Student Three wrote, “I was not very fluent and would studder a lot.” This response showed that Student Three knew what he struggled with in elementary school, and he was able to perceive fluency as a difficulty for himself. However, when Student Three was asked the following question, “As a high school student, how would you describe your reading motivation?” he gave the following response, “I feel motivated to get better at reading. I want to get better and do it at my best.” This response showed that Student Three was motivated to become a better reader despite his struggles in elementary school. Student Three wanted to perform at his best when it came to reading, and this was evident by his responses on the questionnaire, and the semi-structured interview.

*Student Four.* Student Four expressed that although he experienced negative responses to his reading from teachers and peers, he continued to read frequently throughout his schooling. Student Four stated the following during the semi-structured interview, “I didn’t read out loud until about fifth grade...I got made fun of.” Furthermore, when Student Four was asked to elaborate on being “made fun of” he stated, “In second grade—while reading out loud I made a comment and the teacher yelled at me.” Despite reporting that he was ridiculed for his behaviors while reading in class, Student Four stated, “My dad used to make me read a lot and it stuck. I read often on my own time on my phone or laptop. I like to keep myself entertained with a good

book.” According to Student Four, throughout his childhood and young adult years he continued to show motivation to read as well as a genuine interest in reading as an enjoyable activity regardless of what others thought of him, or his ability to read. Student Four also stated, “I think they’re fun (courses that require you to read out loud in secondary school) because I enjoy to read.” He also expressed, “I read often on my own time...I think it’s healthy.” Moreover, Student Four saw the value of reading at school to learn and advance one’s self, but also at home as a leisurely activity.

**Finding Four: Students that Didn’t Perceive themselves as Struggling in Elementary School Literacy Learning Were Less Intrinsically Motivated in Secondary School.** One participant expressed a high level of confidence related to literacy in elementary school. He also perceived himself as a talented reader and writer on responses to the questionnaire, and responses to interview questions. However, his actions observed during classroom observations showed that Student One was no longer the student that he perceived himself to be in elementary school.

**Student One.** Student one’s level of intrinsic motivation was determined by analyzing responses to interview questions, questionnaire statements, and actions observed during classroom observations. Student One responded with a “five” on the rating scale for the following statement, “I was a strong reader in elementary school.” The student also stated, “I was a very high level reader.” This response showed that Student one perceived himself as being a good reader, and was confident in his reading ability during his earlier years. When Student One was asked, “How did you feel about reading out loud in class during elementary school?” he stated, “I didn’t mind reading out loud because it was easy for me.” He also said, “I didn’t understand why it was so difficult for other kids to read.” Student One perceived himself as

someone who did not have to exert maximum effort to have successful literacy experiences in elementary school. In fact, student one perceived himself as being a better reader than at least a few of his elementary school peers. As a result, student One had positive experiences reading in elementary school.

For Student One, this confidence in his reading ability carried over into secondary school. However, the observations conducted in this study found that Student One seemed to be relatively disinterested during most read aloud activities. During read aloud time in class, Student number one was observed “tipping his chair back” and “gazing at the wall while using a fidget cube.” Student One was observed as showing a genuine lack of attention and interest with the reading during class. Although the fidget cube could be used for Student One to focus on the task, it appeared as though he may not be using it to stay focused. Furthermore, when Student One was called on to read during class, he did not show any signs of being upset about this, and read without showing any displeasure.

When Student One was given a questionnaire, Student One also responded to the following statement with a “five” on the rating scale, “I am currently a strong reader.” He also stated, “I am college level reader.” When Student One was asked, “How often do you read on your own time?” he responded, “I never do. I only read if I have to for homework.” These responses portrayed a student with under developed intrinsic motivation. Student One relied more on extrinsic motivators, such as grades, to motivate him to complete school work. However, the previous response also showed that Student One had an understanding of why grades were important.

In looking at student artifacts collected from Student One, I located data to support finding number four. On each of the five student artifacts that I collected from Student One, I found that Student One did not use appropriate capitalization and punctuation consistently. Student One answered comprehension questions using only capital letters. When Student One was asked, “Give two examples of complementary goods, and explain how these goods are used together”, Student One wrote, “CHIPS AND DIP ARE COMPLIMENTARY GOODS. THEY TASTE BETTER WHEN TOGETHER.” Student One chose to answer the question using complete sentences, but he wrote his answer using only capital letters. Student One did this on all student artifacts that I collected. Although he answered the question correctly, his incorrect writing style showed that Student One was not motivated enough to write his answers properly. Even after I reminded Student One how to use capital letters appropriately, he continued to turn-in work using the same writing style (strictly capital letters). The use of only capital letters portrayed a student that did not concern himself with doing work appropriately. Student One was not motivated to create a high-quality work product, and teacher feedback did not influence him in any way.

### **Discussion**

After collecting data over a span of five weeks, I was able to draw conclusions based on the collected data. Data were collected using questionnaires, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and student artifacts. Using my data collection methods, I was able to come to three main conclusions, a) secondary student participants that perceive themselves as strong readers or writers are motivated to become increasingly better readers or writers; b) secondary student participants that didn't have enjoyable literacy experiences in elementary

school do not enjoy secondary school; c) secondary student participants are more motivated literacy learners if they struggled in elementary school literacy learning.

## **Conclusions**

**Conclusion one: Secondary student participants that perceived themselves as strong readers or writers were motivated to become increasingly better readers or writers.** During classroom observations, several students responded positively when given the opportunity to read aloud in class. Three student participants raised their hands to volunteer, or responded with a positive reaction when they were required to read. One participant expressed that he was proud of his reading ability, and wanted to impress their peers in order to become more empowered, “Literacy is power, and without it, citizens have fewer opportunities to succeed in the quickly growing global community” (Allyn, 2014 p.1). Two additional student participants expressed similar feelings through questionnaire responses, semi-structured interview responses, and actions during classroom observations. Three student participants reported that they perceived themselves as good readers regardless of their elementary school experiences, and each of these aforementioned student participants expressed a genuine level of enjoyment regarding reading as an activity outside of school. Students Two, Three, and Four each reported that they were motivated by difficulty, and that they saw the value in making mistakes. Additionally, the three student participants noted above expressed that they saw literacy learning as a way of bettering themselves, and getting themselves ready for college and/or the workplace. Student participants saw reading and writing as a powerful force that may allow them to reach their goals in the future (Allyn, 2014). These three student participants reported being somewhat motivated by struggles and mistakes that may have caused other peers to become less motivated.

**Conclusion two: Secondary student participants that didn't have enjoyable literacy experiences in elementary school did not enjoy secondary school.** On questionnaires, several student participants stated that they had negative experiences in literacy learning during elementary school. These negative experiences were expressed through low ratings on questionnaire statements, written statements on questionnaires, and answers to semi-structured interview questions. These four students were not fond of their experiences in elementary school, and one student participant reported being embarrassed in front of teachers and peers.

Embarrassing experiences in elementary school left Student Five feeling negative about her own reading and writing ability. Research has found that students' self-perceptions of their own successes may be powerful factors in determining how motivated students are as they continue to go through school (Allyn, 2014, Iwai, 2016, LaDuke, 2016). When students perceive themselves as struggling, this may cause them to feel less motivated because they feel as though they can't reach success. Students with under-developed intrinsic motivation may begin to look for gratification through extrinsic motivators such as grades or teacher/peer approval (Loima et al., 2015).

Student Five reported that she was not motivated to be a better reader and writer in school, but that she cares about what her peers and teachers think about her. At the same time, Student Five responded negatively to being asked to read during read aloud time in my twelfth grade social studies class. These negative responses to reading aloud in secondary school; may be because Student Five reported that he went through school without a strong foundation of literacy success built in elementary school, and she entered secondary school still needing to develop the skills necessary to succeed. (Iwai, 2016). If Student Five had not yet developed these necessary skills, this may be why she is reluctant to read in front of others. In this case, the

negative experiences that Student Five had in elementary school may have led to under-developed literacy skills. These under-developed skills may cause some students, including Student Five, to continue to have unenjoyable literacy learning experiences throughout school.

**Conclusion three: Secondary student participants were more motivated literacy learners if they struggled in elementary school literacy learning.** Three student participants responded to questionnaire statements and interview questions with responses that portrayed a somewhat negative self-perception of reading ability in their elementary school experiences. However, some student participants in my study also expressed the fact that they were currently motivated to get better at reading and/or writing. Several student participants expressed that they knew what they struggled with in elementary school, and they were aware that others knew about their shortcomings as well. However, the way that student participants responded to read aloud time, and their actions during read aloud time seemed to help paint a different picture of the three student participants helping to support this conclusion, and the level of motivation that they had in twelfth grade. Three student participants showed that they wanted to get better at reading aloud by volunteering several times during each class.

In addition to classroom field notes, student responses to semi-structured interview questions provided evidence that many students that struggled in elementary school were motivated to become better readers and writers. Students Two, Three, and Four expressed that they wanted to get better at reading, writing, and speaking so that they could be more prepared for life after school (college, careers etc.) The same student participants also reported that they enjoyed reading and writing outside of school. These responses showed that three of the five student participants were intrinsically motivated because they “engaged in an activity for it’s own inherent satisfaction” (De Naeghel et al., 2012). When student participants expressed that

they enjoyed reading and writing, it showed that they were motivated to read because they found satisfaction in completing the task itself. This conclusion led to the idea that students Two, Three, and Four were more motivated in literacy learning than some of their peers.

### **Implications**

The following implications were discovered after analyzing the findings and conclusions in this study. Implications were drawn by considering how the findings and conclusions of this study might be used to help teachers. These findings may help teachers motivate struggling secondary students, or help students with a high-level of existing motivation to become even more confident in their literacy abilities, and more successful students overall. This success may lead to a more successful life outside of school as well.

**Implication one: Teachers should allow elementary students to struggle with reading and writing.** When an elementary student is struggling to read or write, teachers should not always give them immediate additional help. The data in this study shows that when students struggle in elementary school, these experiences may actually make them more motivated in the long run. Also, when students build up a level of literacy confidence in elementary school that is above their peers, they become less motivated secondary students. Some students become self-satisfied with their reading and writing ability because they haven't had the opportunity to struggle.

In some cases, students have built up confidence despite their grades and the level of work that they may be producing. This may have an impact that lasts longer than secondary school. At the same time, confidence should not always be looked at as a negative characteristic. Confidence can be a very positive character trait in some cases. Additionally, if a student is struggling to the point where they feel like giving up, teacher intervention may be needed so that

the student does not give up completely (Barker & Herrington, 2011). When students continue to face increasingly challenging material without experiencing success, they may lose motivation entirely. Elementary teachers should try to find a balance between giving students tasks that are too easy, and giving students tasks that are too difficult. If students are not challenged enough, or they are challenged too much, this may result in negative secondary school experiences.

**Implication two: Confident readers and writers need to be challenged in secondary school.** When students enter secondary school with a high level of confidence in their reading and writing ability, they have gotten through elementary school without truly facing challenge. Students may enter secondary school with a high-level of intrinsic motivation, but teachers need to continuously challenge students in order for them to maintain this intrinsic motivation, and to become better at the skills necessary to be successful after secondary school. If students are not asked to read more difficult texts, or engage in higher-level reading and writing activities, they may not see the value in tasks being completed at the secondary level. When students stop seeing value in the work that they are doing, their motivation levels are likely to drop. Moreover, the skills that students acquire from having to struggle, or be challenged in secondary school, will also help them to become more motivated after graduating from secondary school. When students leave secondary school they may pursue a career that asks them to read texts that are outside of their comfort zone. By challenging these confident readers and writers in secondary school, these students may become more able to face the challenges of our quickly growing global communities (Allyn, 2014). As our world continues to see literacy as a more valuable skill, teachers need to prepare their students to face this world head on.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations that existed throughout this study. The first limitation was the amount of participants used in this study. Only five students were used in this study. A greater number of participants could have been beneficial in providing stronger evidence about the student examples in this study. Additionally, this study was conducted over a span of only five weeks. If data were collected over a larger time-span, the opportunity to complete more classroom observations and collect more student artifacts would've been present. Finally, if I was able to conduct classroom observations in other content areas, I could've had additional evidence to support my findings. As a Social Studies teacher, I am not always assigning students to complete analytical and expository writing tasks as much as English Language Arts teachers may be doing so. If I was able to observe my five participants outside of my classroom reading texts and writing essays, I may have been able to see these students from a different perspective as well.

**Future Research**

In the future, it would be helpful to see more research conducted by secondary school teachers in the field of literacy motivation. As a secondary school teacher I have found that I have a variety of motivation levels in my classroom, but I never really looked into why that was. I recommend that more secondary school teachers begin to take a look at their students and the experiences that these students have had in academic environments in the past. By the time students get to secondary school they have had several years of reading, writing, and speaking experiences that secondary teachers may know nothing about. Getting to know these students and the experiences that they have had before entering your classroom may be beneficial in

finding out why students respond to literacy learning the way they do. Qualitative case studies related to academic motivation (and experiences that have shaped academic motivation) would be advantageous for myself, as well as other secondary school teachers across the globe.

### **Closing**

In closing, this qualitative study could assist teachers in understanding students of all ages. Teachers of all grade levels have a substantial amount of influence on students' success, and preparing them for life after school. When teachers have a greater understanding of the perceptions of students in their classroom, teachers may be able to address students in the most beneficial way possible. The focus of this study was to help teachers understand how to effectively guide students into becoming successful literacy learners. Furthermore, the role that teachers play in a student's life does not always end when the student leaves that teacher's classroom.

### References

- Agbayahoun, J. P. (2016). Teacher written feedback on student writing: Teachers' and learners' perspectives. *Theory & Practice in Language Studies*, 6(10), 1895–1904.  
<https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0610.01>
- Allyn, P. (2014). Transformational literacy: How the common core can get us there. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 49(2), 1–8.
- Arnone, M. P., Reynolds, R., & Marshall, T. (2009). The effect of early adolescents' psychological needs satisfaction upon their perceived competence in information skills and intrinsic motivation for research. *School Libraries Worldwide*, 15(2), 115–134.
- Baker, L., Scher, D., educator, & Mackler, K. (1997). Home and family influences on motivations for reading. *Educational Psychologist*, 32, 69–82. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3202\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep3202_2)
- Barker, K. S. ., & Herrington, D. E. (2011). The power of play: A case study of one teacher's approach to motivating underachieving students in middle school reading classes. *National Forum of Teacher Education Journal*, 22(1/2), 2–13.
- Bozack, A. (2011). Reading between the lines: Motives, beliefs, and achievement in adolescent boys. *High School Journal*, 94(2), 58–76.
- Carlson, S., Walker-Nelson, N., Kennedy, P., Biancarosa, G., Turtura, J., Crone, D... (2013). Measuring the quantity and quality of instructional interactions for middle school literacy improvement. *SREE Spring 2013*, 1-10.

- Cartwright, K. B., Marshall, T. R., & Wray, E. (2016). A longitudinal study of the role of reading motivation in primary students' reading comprehension: Implications for a less simple view of reading. *Reading Psychology, 37*(1), 55–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2014.991481>
- Clark, V. L. P., & Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Understanding research: A consumer's guide*. Pearson Higher Ed.
- De Castella, K. & Byrne, D., & Covington, M. (2013). Unmotivated or motivated to fail? A cross cultural study of achievement motivation, fear of failure, and student disengagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(3), 861–880.
- De Naeghel, J., Valcke, M., De Meyer, I., Warlop, N., van Braak, J., & Van Keer, H. (2014). The role of teacher behavior in adolescents' intrinsic reading motivation. *Reading and Writing, 27*(9), 1547–1565. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-014-9506-3>
- De Naeghel, J., Van Keer, H., Vansteenkiste, M., & Rosseel, Y. (2012). The relation between elementary students' recreational and academic reading motivation, reading frequency, engagement, and comprehension: A self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104*(4), 1006–1021. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027800>
- Erisen, Y., Sahin, M., Birben, F., Yalin, H. (2016). Motivation levels of gifted students and their metaphorical perceptions of school. *Educational Research and Reviews, 11*(8), 553-561.
- Frankel, K. K., Becker, B. L. C., Rowe, M. W., & Pearson, P. D. (2016). From “What is Reading?” to What is Literacy? *Journal of Education, 196*(3), 7–17.
- Furnham, A., Bachtiar, B. (2008). Personality and intelligence as predictors of creativity. *Personality and Individual Differences, (45)* 613-617.

- Güvendir, M. (2016). Students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation level and its relationship with their mathematics achievement. *International Journal for Mathematics Teaching & Learning*, 1–21.
- Hopwood, B., Hay, I., & Dymont, J. (2017). Students' reading achievement during the transition from primary to secondary school. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy*, 40(1), 46–58.
- Huang, C.-T., & Yang, S. C. (2015). Effects of online reciprocal teaching on reading strategies, comprehension, self-efficacy, and motivation. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 52(3), 381–407. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735633115571924>
- Hülya Ünal-Karagüven, M. (2015). Demographic factors and communal mastery as predictors of academic motivation and test anxiety. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 3(3), 1-12.
- Iwai, Y. (2016). The effect of explicit instruction on strategic reading in a literacy methods course. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 28(1), 110–118.
- LaDuke, A., Lindner, M., & Yanoff, E. (2016). Content, disciplinary, and critical literacies in the c3 and common core. *Social Studies Research & Practice*, 11(3), 96–111.
- Lesaux, N. K., Harris, J. R., & Sloane, P. (2012). Adolescents' motivation in the context of an academic vocabulary intervention in urban middle school classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56(3), 231–240.
- Lin-Siegler, X., Ahn, J. N., Chen, J., Fang, F.-F. A., & Luna-Lucero, M. (2016). Even einstein struggled: Effects of learning about great scientists' struggles on high school students' motivation to learn science. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 108(3), 314–328.
- Loima, J. & Vibulphol, J. (2015). Learning and motivation in Thailand: A comparative regional study on basic education ninth graders. *International Education Studies*, 9(1), 31-43.

- Ma'ayan, H. D. (2010). Erika's Stories: Literacy Solutions for a Failing Middle School Student. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 53(8), 646–654.
- Mazzoni, S. A., Gambrell, L. B., & Korkeamaki, R.-L. (1999). A cross-cultural perspective of early literacy motivation. *Reading Psychology*, 20(3), 237–253.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/027027199278411>
- McGeown, S. P., Osborne, C., Warhurst, A., Norgate, R., & Duncan, L. G. . (2016). Understanding children's reading activities: Reading motivation, skill and child characteristics as predictors. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 39(1), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12060>
- Sahin, M., Secer, S., Erisen, Y. (2016). Perception of English and motivation in learning english. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 9(4), 43-60.
- Snow, C. E., & Matthews, T. J. (2016). Reading and language in the early grades. *Future of Children*, 26(2), 57–74.
- Troia, G., Harbaugh, A., Shankland, R., Wolbers, K., & Lawrence, A. (2013). Relationships between writing motivation, writing activity, and writing performance: effects of grade, sex, and ability. *Reading & Writing*, 26(1), 17–44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-012-9379-2>

**Appendix A: Secondary and Elementary Reading and Writing Experience Questions**

**Reading Questions**

1. How do you feel when you are asked to read in front of a group? Can you think of a time when you felt that way? Why?
2. What do you think about courses that require you to read out loud? Why?
3. How did you feel about reading out loud in class during elementary school? Can you think of a time when you felt that way? Why?
4. As a high schooler, how would you describe your reading motivation? Why?
5. How often do you read on your own time? Why? What types of texts do you read? Why?

### **Writing Questions**

6. How often do you write on your own time? Why? What sorts of things do you write about?

Why?

7. How do you feel when a teacher asks you to write long responses to questions (3 sentences or more)? Can you think of a time that you felt this way?

8. How would you describe your reading and writing ability? Why?

9. Do the opinions and feedback of your teachers impact whether or not you think you are a good reader and writer? Can you provide me with an example?

**Appendix B: Student Questionnaire**

**Directions:** Please answer the following questions truthfully. Please circle one number for your answer to each question. Next, you will notice there is room under each question for you to explain your response to each question. If you need more space to answer questions, I will attach a piece of paper. See the rating scale below:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**1: Extremely untrue**

**2: Somewhat untrue**

**3: Not sure**

**4: Somewhat true**

**5: Extremely true**

1. I had enjoyable experiences while reading in elementary school.

1      2      3      4      5

Please provide more details for your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---

2. I was a strong reader in elementary school.

1      2      3      4      5

Please provide more details about your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---

3. I enjoyed reading in front of my classmates in elementary school.

**1      2      3      4      5**

Please provide more details about your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---

4. I believe that my classmates in elementary school viewed me as a strong reader.

**1      2      3      4      5**

Please provide more details about your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---

5. I believe that my teachers in elementary school perceived me as a strong reader.

**1      2      3      4      5**

Please provide more details about your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---

6. I am currently a strong reader.

**1      2      3      4      5**

Please provide more details about your answer in the space below:

---

---

---

---



