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## Examining Motivation and Self-Efficacy in Reading and Writing in Seventh Grade English: An Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice

Jennifer Tuttle

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EXAMINING MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN READING AND WRITING  
IN SEVENTH GRADE ENGLISH: AN IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE DISSERTATION  
IN PRACTICE

by  
Jennifer Tuttle

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Chair: Dane Joseph, PhD

Member: Marc Shelton, EdD

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment to the Faculty of the  
Doctor of Educational Leadership Department  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of  
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EXAMINING MOTIVATION AND SELF-EFFICACY IN READING AND WRITING IN SEVENTH GRADE ENGLISH: AN IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE, a Doctoral research project prepared by JENNIFER TUTTLE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.


This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

4/2/23 

April 2, 2023

Dane Joseph, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Education  
Director of Dissertation Projects

4/2/23 

April 2, 2023

Marc Shelton, Ed.D.

Professor of Education  
Director, Educational Leadership

### **Abstract**

This Improvement Science study sought to understand and support the motivation and self-efficacy of middle school students for literacy-based tasks using the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), Burke Reading Inventory (BRI), and Burke Writing Inventory (BWI) in a pre-and post-format. This study was designed in response to observed course failings and lack of motivation for seventh-grade students in a post-COVID educational situation. The teacher researcher implemented a Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle alongside interested stakeholders to try and support students' motivation to complete literacy tasks. She also conducted class discussions to clarify and support students' understandings of motivation and self-efficacy concepts from the MSLQ. Informally, the teacher used assessments, progress reports, and rewards to support student motivation and self-efficacy. Results indicated that while students did not register different self-efficacy or motivation scores on the post-test administration of the MSLQ or Burke Inventories, anecdotal observations by the teacher researcher and NIC teams indicated students did raise their grades and increase their understanding of concepts and skills related to motivation and self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** MSLQ, BRI, BWI, motivation, self-efficacy, work productivity, and grades

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## **Chapter 1**

Middle school educators are constantly seeking ways to support their students' motivation and self-efficacy for reading and writing. Students who lack motivation to try often fail to complete assignments or maximize effort in response to instruction. Yet understanding and responding to students' reading motivation is a complex endeavor (Rosenzweig & Wigfield, 2017); accordingly, it is important to explore "whether there are meaningful patterns among the multiple motivations that affect students as they read and assess whether those patterns affect students' reading outcomes" (p. 133).

### **Purpose of Study**

This Improvement Science research study aimed to understand middle school students' motivation for literacy tasks and measure their self-efficacy in reading and writing at the beginning and end of a semester during their seventh-grade academic year. This study took place for students in my classes, where I teach seventh-grade English Language Arts. As a teacher-researcher in this study, I sought to assess and also support students' motivation to learn.

This study operated with the support of a Networked Improvement Community (NIC), an idea which aims to bring improvement science into educational settings (Perry et al., 2020). NICs are designed to discuss possible solutions to common challenges, framed as inquiries. In this study, the NIC noted the challenges of post-COVID school shutdowns on student motivation and inquired into how to more effectively motivate middle school students to complete literacy tasks and advance their literacy skills. This Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP) subsequently implemented a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) Cycle with at-risk or failing seventh grade students, in order to support their motivation and self-efficacy.

As a middle-school language arts teacher, I aimed to improve my students' motivation and self-efficacy for literacy-based tasks. In order to see whether what I was endeavoring to do as an educator was making any difference, I used assessment points in September 2022 and December 2022 to ascertain the degree to which students made changes in their motivation and self-efficacy. I used the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and Burke Reading/Writing Inventories (BRI/BWI) as data collection points on students' motivational change and self-efficacy.

### **Problem of Practice**

Teachers and administrators continue to seek ways to support students and families in a post-COVID educational world. Many families who attended our school's August 2022 Back-to-School Night indicated this was their child's first year of entirely in-person school since the spring of 2020; both students and the larger world have undergone many changes in that time. Students and teachers returning to in-person school revealed significant ongoing challenges; many students had poor grades and did not seem to want to return to school. They appeared to have a lack of motivation to learn and also did not have strong relationships with their educators after such a long time of distance learning.

Lending additional challenges were the unintended consequences of policy and legal decisions taking place in California school systems at that time. During the 2020-2022 school closures due to COVID-19, California legal teams determined that students could not be penalized for academic declines due to equity considerations. For schools, this meant an informal policy of promoting students to the next grade, regardless of their academic performance or failure to attend online classes. This informal policy led to an increased number of failing

students and fewer eligible students to participate in promotion activities. Each year, more students were failing courses and faltering in their academics.

The need for this particular study became particularly apparent in the spring of 2021 when administrators in my school sorted student grade data by department and presented it to the faculty and staff; results indicated that more than half of seventh-grade students were failing. Based on the idea that low motivation and low self-efficacy are potential indicators of low academic performance, teachers in my department began a campaign to “motivate the unmotivated.” Administrators and teachers began identifying students with low work completion rates and low productivity and began a targeted effort to support these students during the 2021-2022 school year.

Our principal requested teachers focus on several interventional responses: assess student learning, provide timely feedback to students, and connect students who needed them with learning loss tutors. As teachers implemented the requested targeted interventions, we selected students who needed help with late or missing work and allowed them to stay after school on Wednesdays for added help. Each teacher helped their own students to meet learning outcomes and improve their grades.

As a teacher researcher working in this environment, I decided to look at students’ motivation and self-efficacy using the MSLQ and Burke Interviews for Reading/Writing as a means to better understand and measure my students’ motivation to learn in my English classes. I believed these tools would provide insight into how students felt about literacy-based tasks and help me understand how to more effectively support them. My department agreed; they wanted to know the best way to help students. If it was a strategy, they were willing to implement it; if it was a learned behavior, they were willing to teach it. I decided to administer the MSLQ, the BRI,

and BWI in a pre-assessment and post-assessment structure during the fall of 2022. I wanted to ascertain students' motivation and explore whether it might change in response to my intervention efforts. Accordingly, my research questions for this study were

1. What does the MSLQ and Burke R/W Inventories reveal about middle school students' motivation and self-efficacy related to literacy tasks?
2. What changes are evident between a pre/post-assessment using these tools?

### **Overview of the Scholarly & Practical Literature**

This review of the literature is organized around the major constructs of motivation to learn, self-efficacy, and what is presently understood in educational research about what shapes students' desires to read and write.

### **Conceptual/Theoretical Framework for this Study**

Some students want to succeed on academic assignments and assessments and perform well overall; these students might also be considered highly motivated, whether intrinsically or extrinsically, to do well in school. Further, learners who are highly motivated are more effective academically; "students with [such] a motivational profile...use more effective learning strategies, are creative when performing their school tasks, adhere better to challenges, and believe that good performance is achieved through their effort, increasingly seeking their intellectual development" (Ferraz et al. 2021, p. 73). Research also suggests a correlation between reading motivation and reading proficiency levels: "motivation has been linked with reading achievement in a variety of correlational, longitudinal and experimental studies " (Klauda & Guthrie, 2014, p. 10). Findings often vary from study to study and are only sometimes reproducible, yet students who have positive mindsets about reading appear to participate in it

more frequently, although students' reading skill is another moderating factor between how well students comprehend what they are reading (Cho et al., 2021, p. 2341).

Despite such findings about the connections between motivation and performance, some students are not highly motivated (either intrinsically or extrinsically), nor do they feel enthusiastic about enacting the academic strategies that might support their learning. Many external factors shape students' motivation, such as family values for academics, their relationships with teachers (Liu et al., 2022), and social influence from peers (Wentzel, 1998). In Neugebauer and Fujimoto's (2020) study of motivation they found, "although items in each measure draw from distinct motivation theories, the items across subscales provide related information about students' feelings about their interpersonal relationships with their peers, family, and teachers" (p. 43). This suggests that one of the factors for students' motivation for academic tasks are teachers who can respond effectively to students' needs. I endeavored to be such a teacher in this study.

### ***Motivation***

Reading, motivation, and self-efficacy are interrelated; a student's ability to read is not exclusively clearly correlated to academic success since "reading competence alone will not guarantee academic success. Motivation plays a significant role in students' reading achievement" (Kelley & Decker, 2009, p. 469). Further, students who are intrinsically motivated will go on to "engage in a particular activity because of their own values and goals" (O'Connor & Samuels, 2021, p. 3).

Historically, research has pointed to two key types of motivation: intrinsic, or an internally generated willingness to try, and extrinsic motivation, which is influenced by people, circumstances, or conditions outside the learner. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation function



together for learners yet finding this balance can be difficult for teachers and students. Rather than assuming one type of motivation is superior, teachers do well to consider students' motivation as the central goal within learning endeavors:

In this way, the two theories can be seen as complementary – students may be more motivated if they are given more autonomy because opportunities to make some of their own decisions will increase the likelihood that they can align their goals with the teachers. In sum, it makes more sense to think of synergistic motivation than to maintain a division between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. (Gehlbach & Roeser, 2002, p. 41)

Pintrich's (1991) MSLQ proved to be a useful tool for ascertaining student motivation in this study. Precedence exists in the literature for using MSLQ with middle school students (Moos & Honkomp, 2011, p. 239), although the tool was designed for college-aged students.

Motivating middle school students is challenging, involving many considerations. Since students at this age are tremendously influenced by their peers' attitudes (Liu et al., 2022) supporting student motivation as a teacher means making an effort to help everyone enact more positive habits around literacy. As corroborated by Davis and Forbes (2016), supporting students' motivation begins with building an authentic culture of respect, "from listening closely to each other, to sharing pencils; it means allowing for choice from where to sit, to what to write about" (p. 18). This involves setting healthy boundaries for students to effectively enact agency and choice in their literacy tasks.

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Self-efficacy "is a self-appraisal of one's ability to master a task" (Pintrich, 1991, p. 13). This can also be viewed as a student's attitude about given tasks. When studying the intersectionality of students' self-efficacy, motivation, and ability to read, it is important to

remember how any assessment takes place in a single point in time, revealing only a portion of a student's ability. "Even when we find research specific to attitudes and the middle school population, we must be careful in our interpretation, given the varied definitions of attitudes embodied in the instruments used to study them" (McKenna et al., 2012, p. 286). Students typically use their self-perceptions of their ability as an anticipatory measure of whether or not they should pursue a particular task (McCabe & Greenwood, 2005).

The degree to which a student devotes time to reading and writing tasks depends on their value for those tasks: "in addition to self-efficacy, individuals' affect for goal related tasks can influence their motivation for engaging in and persisting with the writing process" (Soylu et al., 2017, p. 3). Further, self-efficacy research often assesses students' confidence in their ability to complete particular tasks and "examine how well these perceptions predict performance on the very tasks" (Bong, 2001, p. 24). Self-efficacy, motivation, task value, and time are all interrelated factors in students' learning: "expectancies and values themselves are influenced by children's goals and task-specific beliefs, beliefs that are perceptions of competence and perceptions of the difficulty of different tasks" (Sumners et al., 2003, p. 514). If a task is too difficult or more complex than a child's ability, they will experience feelings of frustration and may give up or quit. In a study of students' literacies, Schaefer (2017) noted students constructed understandings of themselves as readers, derived enjoyment from finding reading skills and strategies that served them and used reading to assert their own authority (p. 251).

Self-efficacy for literacy tasks is evident in students' identities as readers, or in *who they take themselves to be*. Students with a strong sense of what they like and do not like, as readers and writers, have an easier time making effective choices in their literacy tasks, in terms of choosing books they enjoy and topics they have a genuine desire to explore in writing. When

students take pleasure in developing their own reading skills and strategies, they “reconstruct notions of reading to assert authority and power” (Schaefer, 2017, p. 251). Students who do not have a strong sense of self-efficacy often fail to develop this sort of agency, and can over-rely on a teacher for ideas, or chafe against school-based tasks where they feel they are being compelled to read or write when they have no desire to do so. Indeed, Bruning et al. (2013) indicated, “one likely dimension of writing self-efficacy is writers’ beliefs about their abilities to generate ideas, their ideation” (p. 28). This points educators to several priorities in the research literature for supporting middle school students’ self-efficacy and motivation for literacy tasks.

### ***Priorities for Supporting Middle School Students in Literacy-Based Tasks***

Providing students with text variety and text choices at their reading levels is critical to fostering student motivation for literacy (Turner & Paris, 1995), since students enter middle school with varied reading levels. This is typically analyzed through comprehension measures (McGeown et al., 2014), yet “readers possess many literacy skills, [and] varying degrees of proficiency” (p. 551). This varying level of proficiency is challenging for mixed-ability classrooms where student reading levels can range from beginning readers to college level, all contained within the same class period. Text variety is vital for middle school student success and mastery in literacy tasks. Schiefele et al. (2012) state, “different aspects of reading motivation are based on different reasons for reading that are seemingly connected with different kinds of text” (p. 449). Students are varied in their interests and abilities; text variety meets these various needs in a given classroom. Text variety and the ability to choose those texts fosters student engagement with literacy tasks.

When building students’ literacy skills in ways that also motivate them, it is essential for teachers to help students navigate the differences between reading for enjoyment and reading for

required skills in content-specific literacy (Moje et al., 2008). It is also important that teachers help students consider *why* they read and write, to connect those activities with the deeper meaning that motivates learners to try. The Burke Interviews used in this study help a reader identify perceptions of themselves as a reader/writer, by eliciting their awareness of the strategies they know and use for dealing with situations where they do not readily know what to do. Questions on this inventory also help a reader/writer reflect on how they learned to do those activities, along with the inherent attitudes and messages coming from the contexts where they first learned those skills (Weaver, 2002, p. 187). These interviews support a teacher's ability to ascertain students' self-efficacy and self-perceptions about reading or writing, lending insights into their motivations for such tasks.

Educators seeking to support students' reading, should therefore "set explicit goals of fostering multiple reading motivations and literacy engagement" (Guthrie et al., 2013, p. 24). This means English teachers could support middle school students' motivational process by helping them set academic and reading goals that are both measurable and achievable. Implied in this recommendation is that teachers take a person-oriented approach to supporting students' literacy tasks. This so-called person-oriented approach is appropriate to "study achievement, motivation and performance, [enabling] a more nuanced picture of how motivation and performance manifest among middle school students" (Erentaite et al., 2022, p. 10). This idea is also referred to as "teaching the whole child," which means taking all of a students' experiences and preferences into account when supporting their literacy development. This approach helps teachers recognize and honor students' reading schemas, even as they seek to develop them further. It also helps teachers build students' academic knowledge in thoughtful ways that are connected to their interests. Such educational efforts require teachers to build good relationships

with students. Indeed, “strengthening student-teacher relationships may be a relatively low-cost, high-return lever for strengthening academic motivation and interrupting typical declines in motivation as students progress through school” (Scales et al., 2020, p. 504). Since middle school is a critical moment in students’ academic careers, teachers have important work to help students build their relational awareness in pursuit of stronger literacy skills in the classroom.

Both current and past research support connections between motivation, self, efficacy, and students’ perceived value for doing their best at literacy tasks. And yet, further research is useful to understand,

the relationship between reading related task values, self-efficacy beliefs, and achievement emotions because the interplay between motivational and emotional factors can significantly contribute to students' effort in reading tasks and to what extent they can use their cognitive resources in developing their skills. (Päivinen et al., 2019, p. 1727)

Taken together, this review of the literature pointed me to the usefulness of motivation/self-efficacy tools like the Burke Inventories and the MSLQ for ascertaining student motivation, even as I endeavored to support it in my students.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study of student motivation and self-efficacy was valuable for my particular teaching team and school given the challenges of post-COVID educational realities. In response to high numbers of failing students, my NIC and I made an effort to meet students where they were and build relationships with those identified as being at-risk. Administration of the MSLQ and Burke Inventories served as a pre-/post-assessment opportunity to see if any of our intervention efforts helped students register different levels of self-efficacy and motivation for literacy tasks.

Pursuing this study gave me an opportunity to better understand my students' motivational trends and self-efficacy related to literacy tasks. I learned a great deal about which students had a background of struggle when it came to learning how to read and write. This study also cultivated greater self-awareness in my department and school. As I brought the MSLQ and Burke tools to my colleagues' attention and initiated conversations about supporting student motivation within our professional development efforts, they found different ways to think about students and their willingness to exert effort, academically. Together, we cultivated interest and deeper conversations for motivating adolescents through an improvement study.

Use of the MSLQ and the Burke interviews gave me new views on how to motivate students, by offering new views on the means and outcomes of motivation, such as effort, effective use of study space/time, and learning strategies. As I learned, I helped students learn about these components of motivation and self-efficacy through class discussions. These conversations helped students understand their challenges with learning were shared by others, possibly helping them feel less alone.

Another aspect of this study's significance was that the MSLQ had previously limited use in research with middle school students. Having gone through this study, I view its potential for middle school learners as undervalued and believe it could effectively serve middle school teachers looking to support student motivation and self-efficacy. As a result, I believe this study could encourage other middle school teachers to use the tool as a means of gaining important background knowledge about their students. They could subsequently teach the subscales of the MSLQ as elements of motivation that could help students grow.

### **Definitions of Study Terms**

The following section offers definitions for constructs used throughout the study.

*Value Component: Intrinsic Goal Orientation* this idea relates to “the degree to which the student perceives herself to be participating in a task for reasons such as a challenge, curiosity, mastery” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 9)

*Value Component: Extrinsic Goal Orientation* is a complement to intrinsic goal orientation and relates to how much a student “perceives herself to be participating in a task for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others, and competition” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 10)

*Value Component: Task Value* refers to a learner’s “evaluation of how interesting, how important, and how useful the task is” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 11)

*Expectancy Component: Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance* “is a self-appraisal of one’s ability to master a task” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 13)

*Affective Component: Test Anxiety* is related to how anxious a learner feels about performing on an assessment task (Pintrich, 1991, p. 15)

*Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies: Rehearsal* relates to the strategies a learner uses to review material for an assessment; it often takes the form of “reciting or naming items from a list to be learned” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 19)

*Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies: Elaboration* refers to the ways learners make connections between concepts in order to “store information into long-term memory” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 20)

*Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies: Organization* refers to the ways learners “select appropriate information and also construct connections among the information to be learned” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 21)

*Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies: Metacognitive Self-Regulation* relates to a learner’s “awareness, knowledge, and control of cognition” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 23)

*Resource Management Strategies: Time and Study Environment* is a concept related to how effectively students understand the importance of and can “manage and regulate their time and their study environments” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 25)

*Resource Management Strategies: Effort Regulation* refers to a learner’s ability to “control their effort and attention in the face of distractions and uninteresting tasks” (Pintrich, 1991, p. 27)

### **Ethical Considerations**

I prioritized ethical considerations for student privacy and safety throughout this study by assigning pseudonyms to all student participants; no actual names were on any documents viewed by NIC team members or outsiders. I also omitted students whose parents did not give permission for them to participate in the study. Student grades were not dependent in any way on whether or not they participated in the study. This ethical commitment demanded I cultivate awareness of the power dynamics between myself and students and continually distinguish between my role as their teacher and my role as the primary researcher. While I needed to prioritize my role as their teacher and follow district and departmental guidelines for educational practice, I noted when my need to collect and analyze data conflicted with those goals. I brought these conversations to my NIC and asked for accountability to prioritize students’ well-being and educational outcomes over my own research priorities. This meant excluding student data I would have preferred to include, and focusing instructional efforts on students’ educational outcomes, rather than my research goals.

Since this study prioritized data collection methods that were in-line with typical school tasks, risks to student participants were low. I observed students carefully and noted that although the MSLQ survey was a longer survey instrument than students might typically take, they were developmentally able to complete the task without distress. In support of an ISDiP



structure, NIC members were invited and voluntarily submitted consent letters to "opt-in" to the study. NIC meetings occurred regardless of who was available to attend, and I conducted careful informed consent procedures. As the primary researcher, I actively led all twelve NIC meetings, and discussed my procedures at each meeting, also taking care to share this information with any members who were absent. Overall, the NIC discussed my research and helped me plan instructional modifications to move our grade level toward fewer failing students.

All NIC members were over 18, held teaching credentials, and signed voluntary consent forms informing them they could withdraw from the study at any time. NIC members did not receive any compensation for participating as members of the committee.

Motivating students to succeed academically is an ongoing aspect of all middle school educators' work. Research suggests students with high self-efficacy for literacy tasks may feel more motivated to participate in such tasks. As a scholar-practitioner, I designed this study in an effort to improve my craft and tailor learning opportunities that were both accessible and appealing to my at-risk students. I designed and implemented this study in an effort to be responsive to my students and their needs.

## Chapter 2

### Design

This research study was an exploratory ISDiP, or Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice. It was designed to incorporate principles of improvement science into educational settings, using various cycles of planning in response to data, doing something to address an issue, studying what resulted, and acting again. According to Perry et al. 2020, an ISDiP is characterized by cycles of inquiry emerging from clarity about three questions: 1) “What are we trying to accomplish?, 2) How will I know that a change is an improvement?, and 3) What changes can we make that will result in improvement?” (p. 122).

For this study, the answer to those three questions were as follows: 1) My aim was to improve student motivation and self-efficacy for literacy tasks, as a means of helping failing students enact greater academic success. 2) This proved the most challenging question to answer throughout the study, to ascertain whether the changes I witnessed were actual improvements in response to my efforts or to other factors. At the outset of the study, I expected that change in pre-/post-test scores on two key instruments used in this study would constitute improvement. I also anticipated that having fewer students failing my class by the end of the inquiry cycle in December would constitute an improvement. 3) I made multiple changes to my practice in response to these aims. The major ones I note in this chapter include using the MSLQ and Burke Inventories as teaching tools to support my students’ understanding of motivation and self-efficacy, targeted intervention for failing students with increased instructional time, supporting student motivation to try through reading rewards, extra credit opportunities, and parent/teacher conferences.

Improvement Science Research typically follows one of two types of cycles: a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) or a Strategize, Implement, Analyze, and Reflect (SIAR) (Perry et al. 2020, p.124-126). I chose the PDSA study cycle because the structure fit with the work that my department and school was already doing. This PDSA cycle took place during the fall semester of the 2022-2023 academic year in my district, Dunlap Unified (pseudonym).

### **Sampling & Participants**

Dunlap Unified (pseudonym) was a rural school district located in central California. Dunlap had one high school, one middle school, six elementary schools, an alternative education high school, and a few contracted feeder schools. There were 6,640 students enrolled in Dunlap Unified; 84.6% were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged, 33% were English Learners (ELs), and 0.8% were foster youth.

Weatherford Intermediate School (WIS) (pseudonym) was the only middle school in the district and contained just under a thousand students. Of those, 86% of students were socioeconomically disadvantaged, 32.7% were English Learners, and 0.6% were fostered youth. School administration assigned students to me, their English teacher, through a random course scheduling process. I was one of seven English teachers in the building; together, we taught sixteen sections of English Language Arts/English Language Development courses.

I put together a Networked Improvement Community (NIC) composed of my teaching peers and invited them to weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to support the improvement process. Our NIC had a teacher librarian, a learning director, four veteran teachers (individuals who had ten or more years of experience in the classroom), and two new teachers (individuals with less than ten years of teaching experience). Each NIC member was

invited based on their role in the district, school site, or department and served on the team voluntarily.

### ***Students and Teacher***

At the start of the school year, I had ninety seventh grade students (age range 12-14 years) assigned to my English Language Arts courses. By the end of August, that number had dropped to seventy-five due to attrition, which indicates the high level of transience among the WIS school population. As I began to explore which of my students was willing to participate in the study, I had eight parents opt their students out of the study. Several other students transferred in and out of my classes over the semester. Most students removed from the study opted out of their own accord or declined to complete the surveys or questionnaires on time. Ultimately, fifty students completed all aspects of data collection for the study.

During the 2022-2023 school year, I taught three double periods of English 7 for a total of three classes a day, in a structure of 1/2, 3/4, and 6/7, with a prep during period 5. In turn, students had a seven-period day, of which one was a double period for ELA. As their teacher, I found this year's group of students to be very social, with some intense behavior demands. A significant portion of them performed below grade level on the previous year's state assessment. In addition to their low academic performance, my students had numerous and complex familial problems. Many were experiencing generational poverty and its associated challenges related to shelter and food needs. Despite these challenges, I made a concerted effort to foster learning and growth in my students. I did this through responsive teaching and individualized instruction.

### **Instrumentation**

In order to understand students' motivation and self-efficacy for literacy-based tasks, I administered the MSLQ, BRI, and BWI twice during the 90-day PDSA cycle for this study. This

provided me with a pre-and post-assessment format to explore whether students shifted in their motivational factors or self-efficacy skills.

### ***Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ)***

Student participants took the Pintrich et al. (1991) Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) twice during the study; first in September 2022 and the second time in December 2022. I administered it via a Google Form link in my Google Classroom. The survey consisted of 81 questions separated into two parts. Part A: Motivation and Part B: Learning Strategies. Students ranked themselves on a 7-point Likert Scale from "not at all true of me" to "very true of me." Student participants took it during one double period.

### ***Burke Reading and Writing Interviews***

The BRI and BWI were also offered through Google Form available in our Google Classrooms. I read these questions aloud to students and asked them to respond in writing via the form. As a literacy teacher, I have used Burke interviews with younger children in a literacy-based course designed to engage readers and writers with reflection on their self-perception as readers and writers. I have found the tool offers significant insight into how children think about literacy tasks and what they view as effective reading strategies.

### **Data Analysis**

I collected, cleaned, and prepared the data, ensuring any students who had opted out of the study were not included in any analyzed data. I listed participant demographic information by response type and included it for MSLQ scoring only, in order to keep results secure and follow IRB parameters. I ensured all identifying information was removed prior to analysis so that student responses could not be traced to them.

I took training courses for MAXQDA data analysis software and began applying that knowledge by extracting data from Google Forms in preparation for coding. Initially, I used MAXQDA data analysis software to code student responses on the MSLQ according to the nine areas of focus (Task Value, Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance, Test Anxiety, Rehearsal, Elaboration, Organization, Metacognitive Self-Regulation, Time and Study Environment, and Effort Regulation). As I coded, I used the information from Google Forms to record my analytical moves in Google Sheets, which I later moved to Microsoft Excel at the recommendation of my advisor. Later, I shifted raw data from derivatives in Google Forms to MAXQDA and Excel for quantitative calculation of data sets requiring quantitative analysis. I then sorted the data by learning scales and by item questions so I could analyze each scale according to the mean, standard deviation, and percentage of students in each scale category. I created tables to include student scores, along with the mean, bottom 25%, middle 50%, and top 25% for each scale, as suggested in the scoring guide (Pintrich, 1991, p. 5).

I compared the pre- and post-test versions of the MSLQ, BRI, and BWI, looking at students' average score, mean, top, middle, and bottom percentages of the class in each of the nine motivational or learning scales. Most of the nine scales in the MSLQ had a slightly negative shift because more students ranked themselves lower in December, in each section except for two. Those two scales were ones that my class discussed in October. My NIC and I attributed this positive shift to our successful use of strategies and study skills implemented by the seventh grade English department as part of our test-preparation lessons. One of the strategies that we used was Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain, Summarize (RACES).

I analyzed data resulting from the Burke Reading and Writing interviews a bit differently, since this data was more qualitatively oriented. After collecting data via a live link in Google

Classroom, I used the response feature to gather the raw data into a spreadsheet. I cleaned it by removing students who had opted out or did not complete all of the survey items. Then, I sorted it by student response type, noting similar trends across responses, and compiled trends into table formats. Gathering and analyzing data for this study gave me further insight into students' successes and failures with reading and writing.

## **Procedures**

The PDSA Cycle proceeded through the following timeline:

*August 2022:* Administrators adjusted class rosters, and I secured IRB approval (see Appendix A) for the study. My principal granted institutional consent (see Appendix B). I also obtained informed consent from students and guardians (see Appendix C). NIC members were invited, met, and agreed to provide timely feedback to student participants in the study (see Appendix D). I adjusted my grading practices to align with my department's, moving from credit/no credit to a point value system to try and support student motivation. I noted some informal teaching strategies that I tried that worked for students. Some of those were talking to students about the importance of grades, how to calculate a Grade Point Average (GPA), and why it matters.

*September 2022:* Students took the MSLQ (see Appendix E) and Burke Reading Inventory (see Appendix F) and Burke Writing Inventory (see Appendix G) online via Google Forms. After this initial data point, I began initiating class discussions with my students to help them understand the concepts of task value, self-efficacy for learning/performance, and test anxiety. These learning scales correlated well with the Burke Interviews questions 9 and 10. Specifically, Burke asks students to identify themselves as readers and writers, which also dovetailed with the MSLQ's evaluation of self-efficacy for learning and performance. Following

another interim assessment and more assignments, I noticed that students were responding well to reading incentives and prizes. So, I introduced our first novel study after revising my grading practice; students were enthusiastic about this project, so we began a second novel at the end of the month. I led three NIC meetings during this month.

*October 2022:* Students and I discussed the rehearsal, elaboration, and organization elements of the MSLQ. These learning scales support the organizational strategies students need to improve the literacy skills necessary to grow as readers and writers. I brought in a third novel, and I also led five NIC meetings during this long month. I assessed students' literacy skills in two interim assessments, along with administering our district-mandated writing benchmark. I noticed students who had been targeted for support because of earning an F in their first part of the quarter were responding well to feedback offered during this month's parent/teacher conferences and additional reading rewards.

*November 2022:* Students and I discussed the metacognition, time/study environment management, and effort regulation elements of the MSLQ. Since students were anxious to bring their grades up before final grades were due at the end of the semester, these discussions felt relevant and timely to students. The time and study environment scales and the discussion surrounding those questions helped students take control of their learning more effectively. Even though parents and students received progress reports throughout the semester, students became aware that they needed to pass with a "C" or better. Since students responded well to extra credit, targeted support, and reading rewards, I focused on those elements in my PDSA response. I held three NIC meetings which focused on our efforts to help students improve their grades by motivating and encouraging them.



*December 2022:* I administered the post-test to explore whether any of my informal interventions with at-risk students registered changes in their motivation and self-efficacy as evidenced by the MSLQ and Burke Inventories. Students' late and missing work was also due at the beginning of the month. Students did well in adhering to the deadlines and submitting work on time. I evaluated the effectiveness of my interventions with my NIC and noted some of my attempts to improve student motivation and self-efficacy, such as offering a targeted approach to grade improvement through extra credit, were well-received by students. I continued to use what worked most effectively to engage students while improving their course grades. The NIC met for the final time, and I coded and analyzed all post-test data.

Our NIC used a driver diagram, which consisted of an aim statement, primary drivers, secondary drivers, tertiary drivers, and change ideas (Perry et al., 2020, p. 92). According to Perry et al. (2020), "in the ISDiP, the construction of the driver diagram should be collaborative in nature and involve those most affected by the problem" (p. 97). The NIC decided together that our primary driver was to improve students' motivation and self-efficacy for literacy-based tasks; we hoped such efforts would also increase students' work productivity and quality. We developed a plan to examine students' time spent reading and writing, better understand students' interests, and provide increased access to choice-based reading and writing tasks. Our initial goal was to increase student motivation and self-efficacy by twenty percent from September to December 2022, as measured by the MSLQ, which I administered to my students at the beginning and end of the Fall 2022 semester. Although we did not ultimately reach this goal, this was where we began.

Over the entire semester, we worked through a twelve-week cycle of inquiry, meeting weekly. During meetings, we discussed my research proposal, PDSA cycle, and research about

motivation and literacy strategies for middle school success. We also discussed ways to build relationships with students and particularly support our struggling English learners, which was a particularly at-risk population in this study since these students navigated motivation and self-efficacy concerns within the extra challenge of learning a second language.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The BRI and BWI provided insight into how students felt about themselves as readers and writers and how they learned to read and write. Specific questions invite students to think about and analyze themselves as readers and writers and what they would like to do better as readers and writers. Overall, across the pre-and post-data findings for the Burke interviews, findings indicated students did not have adequate self-efficacy or literacy strategies to feel successful as readers and writers. About half indicated they felt successful as readers and writers, and this showed in their responses when asked about their strengths in those areas.

**Table 1**

*Student responses to “Do you think you are a good reader? Why or why not?”*

|                | No | Yes | Maybe | I don’t know |
|----------------|----|-----|-------|--------------|
| September 2022 | 20 | 13  | 6     | 11           |
| December 2022  | 24 | 16  | 10    | 0            |

Student responses to this question seemed to indicate increased awareness of their self-efficacy to become better readers, with four more students registering they could grow in December, compared to September. It also appears significant that in December, no students indicated they “didn’t know” whether or not they were good readers; students had more

decisiveness in answering this question for themselves, suggesting they may have gained more insight into themselves as readers during the semester.

On the writing side, in response to the question about whether or not students felt they were a good writer, more students indicated they did not feel they were strong writers compared to readers, suggesting they viewed writing as more challenging. In September, 19 students answered that they were good writers, and 31 students responded “no.” By December, more than half of students indicated they were good writers, indicating students grew in their self-confidence and self-perception of themselves as capable writers (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Student responses to the questions, “Do you think you are a good writer?”*

|                | Yes | No | No Response |
|----------------|-----|----|-------------|
| September 2022 | 19  | 31 | 0           |
| December 2022  | 26  | 22 | 2           |

Overall, the Burke interviews provided valuable insight into students’ metacognitive processes as readers. Students indicated they knew good readers were people who read for fun or read a lot, but they were unable to provide many details of what it takes to become a good reader. Students offered vague responses such as, “I just learned [how to read]” or “I don’t remember.” This suggests students needed more support understanding the complex processes of what reading involves, and the particular strategies that would help them improve their self-efficacy as readers.

Similarly, students offered “thin” responses to how they learned to write, with such responses as they learned to write “from their teachers” or “with a pen or pencil.” I concluded

that I should have offered students more support during survey administration to help students reflect more carefully as they answered. This phenomenon corresponded with that noted by Kirschener et al., (2006), whose research confirmed students who experience minimally guided instruction about survey instruments performed similarly on pre- and post-tests.

Key findings from the September administration revealed students needed more coaching on how to self-assess their reading and writing abilities. Many students wanted to improve their reading and feel more efficacious in their reading efforts; I decided to prioritize this in my instruction by affirming students' sense that reading is a foundational skill to academic success in all areas. I also supported them with additional strategies to grow as readers, initiating novel studies and discussion-based interactions that fit their developmental interests and abilities. Analysis of the writing side revealed students wanted to feel more confident about their use of conventions; I made this an instructional focus that fall, as well.

In our December post-test, I noted students felt more comfortable with this administration, overall; they did not complain about taking the survey in December like they did in September, which suggested to me that they were curious to see whether their scores improved. Although the results did not shift noticeably, this second set of results led me to think more critically about my assignments and how to make more explicit connections between the skills I was teaching them and the feelings of confidence, efficacy, and motivation that I was seeking to engender in them. Overall, qualitative findings from the Burke Inventories helped me understand that I needed to teach my students they should expect challenges in their reading and writing and gain more strategies for what to do when they encountered them. Over the semester, I saw students come to a greater understanding that being able to read and write effectively was a foundational skill for all academic success.

### **Quantitative Findings: MSLQ**

The quantitative portion of my exploratory ISDiP required the use of various statistical methods. Since the exploratory study used the same set of MSLQ, BRI, and BWI questions twice, I compared the instruments' means using a Paired Samples T-Test and a Comparison of Means test. Finding a comparison of means was necessary to show that students had made motivational or self-efficacy progress with the same cluster of students.

According to Pintrich (1990), a Likert rating of 3 and above for MSLQ items is considered positive, except for the reversed questions, where a higher number would indicate a negative or low response. Identifying the uncertainty in the score of the reversed questions was possible as I inspected the raw scores. However, I thoughtfully considered the reversed questions and answer selections in the comparative analysis. Few students scored in the bottom 25% or the top 25%. The majority scored in the middle 50% on all nine scales. Only two of the nine scales experienced a positive shift between September and December; the other seven moved negatively. Despite this, all nine scales had mean scores that remained positive across both administrations.

The September and December administrations of the MSLQ produced comparable data for each of nine motivational scales suitable for a correlative analysis. The MSLQ is composed of eighty-one questions distributed across nine motivational scales (Task Value, Self-Efficacy of Learning and Performance, Test Anxiety, Rehearsal, Elaboration, Organization, Metacognitive Self-Regulation, Time and Study Environment, and Effort Regulation). Of the eighty-one questions used in this study, seven were reverse coded. The score report below includes the class mean, bottom twenty-five percent, middle fifty percent, and top twenty-five percent for each of the nine scales, in a comparative format between September and December administrations.

### ***Motivation Scales: Value Component-Task Value***

The motivation scales of the MSLQ evaluate a learner's value for learning tasks and their expectation that they can successfully perform particular learning tasks. On the Task Value Component of the MSLQ, my class average was 65% in September, meaning that a slight majority of my students felt that they were better at performing tasks than other students in a similar setting. The mean was 4.56, which would be considered positive, based on Pintrich's recommendation for an average mean above 3 (Pintrich, 1991, p. 51). This suggested that students perceived that they could complete a task that they valued or had success with doing. Table 3 indicates the spread of student scores across the top, middle, and bottom portions of the scale.

**Table 3**

#### ***Value Component: Task Value***

|                | <b>Class Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions in the Top 25%</b> | <b>Proportions in the Middle 50%</b> | <b>Proportions in the Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| September 2022 | 65%               | 4.56        | 12                                | 38                                   | 0                                    |
| December 2022  | 60%               | 4.20        | 8                                 | 42                                   | 0                                    |

This subscale of the survey inquired into students' use of course materials and content; I interpreted students' responses as indicating that they valued the content that they were learning in my class. I also think these findings suggest students felt a certain level of comfort with literacy tasks we practiced daily, like taking notes, reading novels, and responding to queries with written and spoken responses. The change in class average and mean numbers from

September to December was insignificant, suggesting our interventions did not shift students' responses on this element of the MSLQ.

***Motivation Scales: Expectancy Component-Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance.***

This aspect of the MSLQ measures to what degree a student feels learning tasks are important or significant and their ability to accomplish those tasks. September scores indicated a class average of 62% and a mean of 4.32, suggesting that students believed the learning tasks in our class were necessary for learning and could be useful to their academic progress in other settings. Table 4 indicates the spread of student scores across the top, middle, and bottom portions of the Expectancy Component. There was a slightly negative shift in student perception from September to December, with the average mean of 4.32 shifting to 4.27, but since the average means of both assessment points was above 3, this is still considered positive. These results suggest students could work through their own self-judgments about their ability to do a given task, making them more likely to be successful in their learning endeavors.

**Table 4**

***Table Title: Value Component: Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance***

|                | <b>Class Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions in the Top 25%</b> | <b>Proportions in the Middle 50%</b> | <b>Proportions in the Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| September 2022 | 62%               | 4.32        | 11                                | 38                                   | 1                                    |
| December 2022  | 61%               | 4.17        | 5                                 | 45                                   | 0                                    |

***Motivation Scale: Affective Component-Test Anxiety***

This sub-scale of the MSLQ measures the degree to which learners feel anxiety about learning tasks, giving insight into how students' affective stance shapes their learning efforts.

The September average for this subscale was 74% with a mean of 5.15, suggesting that students felt a lot of anxiety about academic tests. Table 5 offers the spread of students across the bottom, middle, and top categories. December scores indicated a negative shift, suggesting that their anxiety declined slightly from the beginning of the semester to the end.

**Table 5**

*Value Component: Test Anxiety*

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle<br/>50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom<br/>25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 74%                   | 5.15        | 24  | 26   | 0  |
| December 2022  | 65%                   | 4.58        | 14  | 36   | 0  |

Nevertheless, students' scores on this subscale indicated they had worries or cognitive challenges related to their self-perception of performance on assessments, suggesting this may have interfered with their motivation to learn. Ten students identified themselves in the top 25% in September; in December, ten students moved to the middle 50%. While I cannot say which students shifted, this shift suggests that overall, student anxiety about tests may have declined slightly over the semester, although to what extent that was related to our interventional efforts is unclear.

There are six learning scales within the MSLQ, which evaluate learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategies for learning, along with their self-awareness of how to manage their resources for learning. Overall, students indicated they had knowledge of such strategies and used them, as learners, with minimal change occurring between September and December scores. I discuss each of the sub-scales in detail below.



### ***Learning Scales: Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies-Rehearsal***

This subscale inquires into how effectively learners use rehearsal of new learning material, such as making lists and reviewing them, to learn more effectively. In September, student participants scored 53% with a mean of 3.68, suggesting they had some familiarity with this strategy but had room to grow. Student scores on this scale helped me recognize I needed to offer more direct instruction to students in this area to support them more appropriately using my course materials and notes. Table 6 indicates additional information for this subscale.

**Table 6**

#### ***Value Component: Rehearsal***

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle<br/>50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom<br/>25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 53%                   | 3.68        | 6   | 40   | 4  |
| December 2022  | 56%                   | 3.91        | 4   | 45   | 1  |

The interpretation of these data indicated that students knew and used the strategy of naming and rehearsing new learning but needed more practice with such strategies to feel more confident and motivated to use them. The percentage change between September and December was negligible.

### ***Learning Scales: Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies-Elaboration.***

This aspect of the MSLQ measures how effectively respondents can make connections between new learning and previously known knowledge. It helps learners identify the degree to which they actively pull resources from different sources in order to study and learn. In my class, this takes the form of reading strategies like rereading for comprehension or making the effort to

look up and study important vocabulary words. September scores indicated a class average of 58% with a mean of 4.50, which means that they did have awareness of how to use elaboration strategies in their learning. Table 7 indicates the spread and change from September to December, which remained above 3, suggesting a positive response.

**Table 7**

***Value Component: Elaboration***

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle<br/>50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom<br/>25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 58%                   | 4.05        | 8   | 41   | 1  |
| December 2022  | 57%                   | 4.96        | 2   | 46   | 2  |

Such scores indicate students could make new connections to what they were learning and apply them to their other courses as well.

***Learning Scales: Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies-Organization***

This subscale of the MSLQ explores the degree to which learners use organization strategies in their study efforts to make connections between core concepts. In September, on the MSLQ, the class average percent was 54% and the mean was 3.76, suggesting students did not know or utilize these cognitive strategies with as much effectiveness as those indicated in other subscales. Table 8 offers details for this subscale. Although there was a slight shift to the positive in December, it was not significant enough to make any conclusions about whether my informal interventions with students helped them grow in this area.

**Table 8*****Value Component: Organization***

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle<br/>50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 54%                   | 3.76        | 5   | 41   | 4  |
| December 2022  | 58%                   | 4.04        | 5   | 45   | 0  |

***Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies: Metacognitive Self-Regulation***

This subscale assesses a learner's self-awareness of their knowledge and the degree to which they believe they are in charge of their learning. It has more questions than the other subscales, exploring the planning, monitoring, and regulating aspects of metacognitive activity (Pintrich, 1990, p. 23). There were two reversed questions in this subscale, designed to ensure respondents think more carefully about their study habits related to focus during lectures and reading. In September, the class average was 58% with a mean of 4.08. Table 9 contains further details of the spread. There was negligible change between September and December administration.

**Table 9*****Value Component: Metacognitive Self-Regulation***

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle 50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 58%                   | 4.08        | 2   | 48   | 0  |
| December 2022  | 57%                   | 4.00        | 3   | 47   | 0  |

The interpretation of these data indicated that most students had awareness, knowledge, and learning control.

***Resource Management Strategies: Time and Study Environment***

This aspect of the MSLQ explores the degree to which respondents understand the importance of and practice time management techniques and proper learning environments to support their learning. This subscale includes three reversed questions, which I accounted for prior to scoring and calculation. The September average was 62% with a mean of 4.31; Table X contains further information related to the spread of these scores. December scores shifted slightly negatively, suggesting my informal interventions and discussions with students to help them understand the importance of study time and quiet study environments did not make much difference in their self-efficacy to do so, as measured on the MSLQ.

**Table 10**

***Value Component: Time and Study Environment***

|                | <b>Class<br/>Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle 50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 62%                   | 4.31        | 8   | 42   | 0  |
| December 2022  | 57%                   | 3.99        | 4   | 46   | 0  |

I interpret these data as suggesting students considered themselves effective managers of their time and study habits.

***Resource Management Strategies: Effort Regulation***

This portion of the MSLQ explores the degree to which respondents can stay with their learning efforts even when they experience challenges. This reflects a learner's commitment to

achieving their learning goals by committing to the strategies that serve them (Pintrich, 1990, p. 27). Student respondents scored a 68% with a mean of 4.75, which is a higher score than other subscales, suggesting they knew the importance of this and practiced it in their learning. Table 11 contains further details of this subscale's spread and shows December scores shifted negligibly.

**Table 11**

***Value Component: Effort Regulation***

|                | <b>Class Avg.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the Top<br/>25%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Middle 50%</b> | <b>Proportions<br/>in the<br/>Bottom 25%</b> |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| September 2022 | 68%               | 4.75        | 17  | 33   | 0  |
| December 2022  | 63%               | 4.40        | 9   | 41   | 0  |

The interpretation of these data suggest students could regulate distractions in their learning and manage disruptions effectively. Eight students who had previously identified themselves in the top 25% in September shifted into the middle 25% in December. This could mean that they had not encountered many learning disruptions or that they decided that their ability to manage it had changed.

In addition to the comparison of means listed above, I ran a paired t-test of the means from each motivational and learning subscale combined. My results showed that the differences between group means from September ( $M = 4.3$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) to December ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.23$ ),  $t(8) = 1.55$ ,  $p = 0.16$ ,  $CI = \{-0.07, 0.36\}$  were not statistically significant.

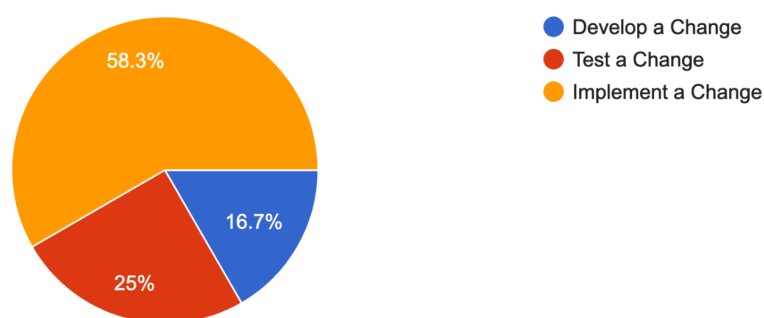
## Cycles of Analysis and Implementation

In a retrospective analysis of how the NIC spent its time, Figure 1 indicates we spent approximately 16% of our meeting time developing a change, 25% testing that change, and 58% of our time implementing change. The following chart shows the breakdown of our NIC meetings, indicating we spent the majority of our time trying to change our practice.

**Figure 1**

### *Distribution of NIC Meeting Priorities*

Objective of this Cycle  
12 responses



NIC meeting notes documented our Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time specific (SMART) goals. We wanted to increase motivation and self-efficacy through reading and writing in seventh-grade English. Our sample was from students in seventh-grade English, chosen because of the high number of failing students. The measurable and clearly stated goal was to increase the number of students passing with a C or better by December 2022; we did achieve this goal, as described further on in this chapter. Our ninety-day timeline fit both the PDSA cycle and the school schedule requiring grade reporting in December 2022 for the fall semester.

***Plan***

During the planning phase of the cycle, we planned instruction and discussion based on the results of the first administration of the MSLQ, BRI, and BWI. We also made plans to offer students extra credit assignments to see if students would take advantage of such opportunities to increase their grades.

As we evaluated and implemented our plan, we thought about what changes might best result in improved learning, motivation, and academic success. We also reviewed parent emails, grade revisions, tutoring, extra credit, and grades for progress reports, which kept us responsive to what we were noticing and informed each change. We kept count of the number of failing students, contacted their parents via email, and worked with students to help them understand how to increase their grades. As we worked with students, we noticed students addressing issues of unsubmitted work; with further support, they revisited these assignments and improved their grades.

***Do***

One of the action points I took to support my students was to hold three in-depth discussions of the MSLQ throughout the semester, to teach them about the subscales of motivation as outlined by the tool. These discussions informally enhanced my understanding of where students were in their understanding and practice of these concepts, with regard to our literacy-based tasks.

In our first discussion, which took place in September 2022, we talked about task value, expectancy, and test anxiety. Students appeared to understand and value our double period of English as a means to support them in other core subjects and indicated a value for reading class core novels as a means of reaching their academic goals. Regarding expectancy, they had doubts

they could understand the most challenging concepts we were studying, although they did feel confident in their ability to understand and apply basic literacy strategies. This discussion also revealed how frequently students compared themselves to others when taking a test, or hyper focused on the parts of a test they could not answer; as I identified that they felt worried about failing, I tried to help them put these worries into perspective related to a focus on what was in their control to do as learners.

Our second discussion took place in October, related to the first three learning scales. I was interested to notice that students did not have positive feedback about these scales, since they indicated they did not like to rehearse, study, or memorize key lists. This discussion revealed how much room there is for my students to grow in their study skills so they can feel more efficacious in their learning. Although my classes are not lecture-based, very few of my students take the initiative to take notes or combine notes from multiple sources to study more effectively.

In November, we discussed the final set of learning scales and students identified they often made-up questions to help them refocus their reading or go back and reread material that they do not understand. They also knew how to preview reading material based on their experience with elementary literacy instruction. Students acknowledged the challenge of living in spaces that were not conducive to focused study and indicated they often had other activities take their attention or had trouble being agentive in making time to study. In response to these discussions, I simplified instructions on all assignments, clarified questions that students asked, and provided structure for studying vocabulary and unknown words in a text.



### *Study*

Each month, as I took this information back to my NIC, we continued to evaluate the “plan” and “do” portions of the PDSA to answer whether or not our increased support of students through tutoring, extra credit opportunities, and more frequent communication with parents was leading to improvement. Admittedly, most of these NIC meetings occurred too early in the cycle for us to conclusively say whether there was a change and/or whether our actions were contributing to it. Our PDSA outcome of having more students pass their classes was a success. These numbers shifted significantly from the beginning to the end of the academic semester. We were unable to determine whether this was due to students actually feeling increased motivation to complete extra credit assignments, or whether students were “negatively motivated” to avoid poor reports at parent/teacher conferences.

### *Act*

As indicated above, our NIC took action through several different means in response to the initial MSLQ and Burke Interview data. This took the form of class discussions, increased contact with students and parents, extra credit assignments, reading incentives and rewards, and focused tutoring. In terms of grade results, the NIC saw the following grade transformations take place during the semester. In September, 32 of 50 student participants were failing at least one class. By October, only ten of fifty were failing. Post parent/teacher conferences later that month, only two students were failing. By the time grades were submitted in December, none of the fifty student participants in this study were failing any classes. Despite this seeming success, we were unable to observe the results of these interventions in the post-administration results of the MSLQ and Burke Inventories. As we look ahead to the second semester, the NIC agreed that the most sustainable and significant interventions appeared to be extra credit opportunities and

extrinsic reading rewards for students meeting their academic goals. These are the two strategies recommended for ongoing implementation in semester two.

Chapter 3 offers a further discussion of this study's aims and outcomes in relation to the research literature relevant to this work. It also discusses the challenges and threats to validity encountered along the way, along with some of the lessons I learned as an emergent researcher.

### Chapter 3

At the beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year, school administration noted a high number of failing students, which my NIC team and I endeavored to address by using tools to study students' motivation and self-efficacy for literacy tasks. Accordingly, I decided to explore through data and cycles of inquiry whether my informal teaching interventions made any difference for students. My data consisted of a pre-/post- administration of the MSLQ and the Burke Inventories for Reading and Writing; these tools gave me a mix of both quantitative and qualitative data.

My cycles of inquiry, or PDSA cycles, occurred between the pre-/post- administration of these instruments, and took place through conversations in two places. First, with my NIC colleagues, and second, with my students. In both places, I led conversations about the MSLQ tool to enhance our understanding of motivation/self-efficacy concepts that could be useful to understanding and enacting academic progress. My NIC also held discussions about the perceived benefit of using these tools with middle school students. I selected the MSLQ and Burke Reading/Writing Interviews because they explored and ascertained students' understanding of self-assessment, self-efficacy, and motivation. Burke interviews have students think about their thinking by identifying themselves as good readers and writers and recalling how they learned to read and write.

Within these cycles, I used my role as a teacher to enact informal support for student learning. Although I did not collect direct data on students' responses to these moves, they nevertheless constituted an important part of the context in which I undertook this larger effort to explore students' motivation. These informal moves included offering extra credit opportunities for students to improve their grades, tutoring, and grade chats, where I had short conversations

with students about ways to improve their literacy skills and English grades. Students appeared to respond particularly positively to extra credit opportunities. Few students sought out extra tutoring on their own; once I made a more specific effort to connect them with a tutor, I saw some students improve their work productivity and motivation for literacy tasks.

I was careful to manage my own bias throughout the study, by reflecting with my chair and my NIC. As I noticed students' grades improve, I monitored which students were struggling with particular assignments and targeted my instruction to support them. I also managed my bias regarding students' grades by intentionally supporting all students, not only those with failing grades. Since grading expectations are outlined by my school, I was careful to adhere to school and departmental grading by prioritizing honest and unbiased assessments of student performance, regardless of their participation within the study.

## **Discussion**

While numerous studies have used the MSLQ to understand motivation and self-efficacy issues for college-aged students, few have successfully used the tool with younger students; few have also explored how its results can inform interventional efforts on the part of a middle school teacher interested in supporting students' literacy practices. This ISDiP addressed those questions by exploring middle school students' motivation for literacy tasks using a pre-and post-administration of MSLQ and Burke Inventories at the beginning and end of an academic semester.

A NIC team of interested stakeholders made various efforts to respond to these results by creating opportunities for students to better understand and practice the skills represented in the MSLQ subscales. They also implemented various other means of supporting students' academics, such as extra instructional support, increased communication with students and

parents, and extra credit opportunities for students to raise their grades. Taken together, this study offered students multiple opportunities to deepen their understanding and practice of academic motivation and self-efficacy for literacy tasks. In consulting the research literature regarding motivation, my students confirmed the need for autonomy and choice (Moje, et al., 2008), and the support of their peers and teacher (Liu et al., 2022) as important contributors to their motivation.

Similar to findings from Gehlbach and Roeser (2002), my study confirmed that autonomy and choice enhanced student motivation toward literacy tasks. When students could choose their novels or negotiate ways to respond to them academically, they indicated more enthusiasm and self-efficacy for reading them. My study also revealed students' desires to get better at reading and writing, corresponding with findings from Soylu et al. (2017), that students who are asked to reflect academically can self-identify areas for improvement.

In line with past research by Weaver (2002), the Burke inventories gave me insight into students' deep beliefs about what it means to be a reader or a writer. Students with positive early learning experiences appeared to respond more readily to the motivational incentives I offered as a teacher than students who did not feel as confident as readers or writers. In my classroom, struggling readers also responded well to attainable extrinsic reading rewards based on their reading levels. It is important to note extrinsic reading rewards were available to any student who reached their personal goal, whether they read at a second-grade level or an eleventh-grade level.

Contrary to findings by Moos and Honkomp (2011), which found positive score shifts in pre-/post- administration of the MSLQ over a semester, this study only had minimally positive shifts in students' responses on select subscales and did not indicate a significant positive shift overall. I think this minimally positive shift might be attributable to our discussions of the

motivation and learning scales; students may have more carefully selected their answers on the second administration. But overall, it proved challenging to see statistically significant shifts in student motivation on the MSLQ and Burke Inventories.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

As an exploratory study, I learned a great deal about ensuring that collected data represents the entire population when conducting research in middle school. My sample size was smaller than average for this type of research, which limited my findings in comparison to others who have administered the MSLQ or the Burke Interviews to their middle school classes, departments, or schools. Mine only represented fifty students out of the nearly one thousand enrolled in my school. Nevertheless, this study's design aligned with the action-oriented approach of working with a manageable group of students to enact change. It fits the model of an exploratory study and is potentially useful to other teachers seeking to shape their practice around research results. The use of the MSLQ with middle school students was limited in the United States; this study filled a gap by utilizing MSLQ and Burke Interview content at the middle school level in English.

The MSLQ and the Burke Interviews provided a glimpse into what teachers need to know about their students to motivate them. Analysis of the motivation and learning scales helped me understand students' internal knowledge structures and views of literacy. Each of these offered me valuable constructs as I endeavored to meet my district's mandate to consider the whole child, particularly the realm of students' mental health in the wake of COVID disruptions (California Department of Education, 2022). It gave me specific places to connect with students' needs and enact an ethic of care in response to their particular struggles. Overall, I sought to

explore my students' motivation and self-efficacy by helping them understand that I cared about them, personally, and wanted them to succeed.

It is also important that teachers help students consider *why* they read and write, to connect those activities with the deeper meaning that motivates learners to try. The Burke Interviews used in this study helped readers identify perceptions of themselves as a reader/writer, by eliciting their awareness of the strategies they know and use for dealing with situations where they do not readily know what to do. Questions on this inventory also helped them reflect on how they learned to do those activities, along with the inherent attitudes and messages coming from the contexts where they first learned those skills (Weaver, 2002, p. 187). These interviews supported my ability to ascertain students' self-efficacy and self-perceptions about reading or writing, lending insights into their motivations for such tasks.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Recommendations for future research would include using more than just the nine MSLQ subscales. Including all of the subscales would address some of the gaps in my study such as if I had asked students to rank themselves on intrinsic and extrinsic goal motivation, control of learning beliefs, critical thinking, peer learning, and help-seeking, I would have been able to delve deeper into the why of motivation and self-efficacy. Administering a modified or well-spaced administration of questions and including a larger sample of students would also be beneficial for data collection because having a larger sample of students allows for a more precise data analysis for educational learning. Adding extrinsic reading rewards was attractive to my students. Similar to findings by Morris & Barton (2022), I discovered that giving students increased choice in their reading materials motivated them, enabling them to meet their academic goals more effectively. My study somewhat extended the work of Morris and Barton by

exploring this within the context of Accelerated Reader (AR), a required reading program in my district. With AR, students read choice books to earn points and prizes. Since students chose to read, they made time for it and ranked it higher in task value than other academic tasks.

Shezad et al. (2019) called for qualitative studies exploring middle school students' self-efficacy as a complement to their quantitative one. My study met that call; both theirs and my study could be helpfully enhanced with demographic data, enabling comparisons between groups of students who view themselves positively and also perform at a stronger academic level.

### **Research Challenges and Threats to Validity**

Several challenges and threats to validity bear mentioning. As an exploratory study, I certainly accomplished my aim to learn from the data collection/analysis process, and I know some things to try or avoid in my next research opportunity.

Post data-collection, I recognized there may have been an unaddressed language barrier for some families, which prevented some students from participating in the study. My informed consent letters were only in English, but many of my students' home language was Spanish; this may have prevented some parents from understanding and signing informed consent, thereby limiting my participant pool. In hindsight, it would have been important to know and address this language barrier beforehand.

Gathering consistent student participant data was challenging since students were not always consistent in attendance, or they withdrew from the study. As a public school in California, COVID-19 protocols were still in place at the start of the study, which meant some participants missed school due to health-related concerns that took them out of the classroom for lengthy periods. Students who were absent for long periods of time missed questionnaires, interviews or discussions, resulting in their removal from the study.



As with many studies conducted in schools, lack of time was an unfortunate limitation. Extending this study beyond a single semester would have allowed for deeper instruction on motivation and learning scales and would also provide more time to evaluate benchmarks and culminating assessments to ascertain correlations between pre/post data to see if student grades correlated with the pre-and post-questionnaire and interview data.

Protecting students' identity also meant I could not analyze the data for demographic trends. It would have been helpful to know whether the students who raised their grades or passed my classes had correspondingly higher scores on the MSLQ, compared to their peers.

After talking with parents during conferences in October, I saw some students indicate an usually high and renewed interest in their grades. Some students began to inquire how to improve their grades just before progress reports. These external factors may have resulted in false motivation for students, indicating parents were an externally motivating factor for students' efforts in my classes.

Understanding data collection/analysis methods is essential for data analysis and interpretation in a research study. Having this data for each student was a starting point for our NIC members, but we had further to learn in order to know what it meant and how to modify our instruction accordingly. Since my NIC was initially unfamiliar with the MSLQ and Burke interviews, I would have been wise to create a simple presentation or training to provide background at the outset of the study. I should also have educated NIC members on questionnaire types and experimented with practice data from the MSLQ to make better use of their educational expertise.

As noted by my NIC, the final limitation and opportunity for improving my future research efforts would be revising the MSLQ tool for better alignment with middle school

students' developmental capabilities. In future research, I would revise the order of the questions and group them by scale to further aid data analysis. I would also plan to administer the MSLQ in parts, perhaps one scale per day for nine days, rather than in a single administration. Students felt rather overwhelmed by answering 81 questions. In hindsight, I believe it would have been more beneficial to implement these scales slowly, over time.

### **Moving Forward**

At the final NIC meeting for this study, my team recommended I continue the practice of administering the MSLQ or a revised version of it at the beginning of each school year. The NIC recommended this because they were curious about how multiple groups of students might perform, along with the possible connections between such scores and students' work. It is conceivable that this work could improve student learning and ameliorate the false motivation stemming from parent/teacher conferences. Based on students' better performance in excelling academically during my study, I plan to continue similar grading practices as those implemented during this study and continue to lean into offering students increased choice.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Understanding how students learn is essential for supporting student learning, motivation, and self-efficacy. For students to experience success, they must want to do a task and feel successful doing it. While exploring motivation for middle school students, I believe I helped them experience success by offering them extra credit opportunities and extrinsic reading rewards for meeting their academic goals. Results from this study showed that several students had the necessary skills to explore and share their motivation for learning.

This study had too many limitations and threats to validity to offer a clear contribution. But it did yield positive results at the local level. One strength of the work was that my

department was able to dedicate more time to enacting college readiness and academic organization skills for students. Learners were able to further enhance their skills between the pre-/and post-administration of these instruments, even if the results did not indicate that it shifted their motivation and self-efficacy significantly..

Since the pre-/and post-test scores did not show any change, I cannot conclusively say this Improvement Study changed anything. It proved challenging to understand students' motivating factors as I saw evidence of students making sometimes passive-aggressive or half-hearted responses on the surveys. However, the MSLQ provided me with some insight into individual learners and their accessibility to learning. There was potential value in the data to inform future instructional efforts.

I also had to remind myself about the realities of helping students shift their motivational thinking about literacy when they came from home situations that left them regularly questioning when they would next eat. Asking students to come prepared to read and write, or bring their supplies when they are experiencing residential insecurity was challenging to me. In theory, I sought to improve my middle school students' motivation, and I did that for some. In reality, I did this work within circumstances that were beyond my control and I believe those challenges also affected the results.

To extend this study in the future, I would like to look at the connections between student responses on the MSLQ and Burke Inventories and students' semester grades. I want to know if students with high motivation and self-efficacy also passed my class with strong grades. In the past, parents have requested that their children be allowed to retake assessments to improve their grades. I want to know which students have the necessary study skills to increase motivation and self-efficacy on their own without these sorts of test retake options. Due to identifying

information being excluded from survey data, I did not have the opportunity to explore this. I would also like to examine other MSLQ scales (Intrinsic and Extrinsic Goal Motivation, Control of Learning Beliefs, Critical thinking, and Peer Learning) to explore possible connections between motivation, self-efficacy, work productivity, and completion.

The MSLQ and Burke interviews could provide a unique study of individual students. Teachers with a smaller sample of students would benefit more from using this information based on sample size. A case study using these methods would be ideal. Case studies support typical classroom observations and accentuate a student's ability over an inability. Intermediate elementary teachers might be interested in using the MSLQ or a modified version coupled with the Burke interviews. Burke interviews are more widely used at the elementary level already.

Teaching students how to become better learners may support increased academic success but motivating them along the way will make this process easier for teachers and parents, as well. As a result of this study, our NIC has clearer ideas of how to support students. We also have a higher priority for helping students cultivate self-awareness as learners, and strengthen their study skills like notetaking, studying for tests, and making connections between academic subjects to enhance their learning.

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**Appendix A**  
**IRB Approval**

2221004

## GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY HSRC INITIAL REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Page 11

Title: Increasing Motivation Through Self-efficacy in Reading and Writing in Seventh Grade English: An Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice (ISDiP) \_

Principal Researcher(s): Jennifer Tuttle

Date application completed: July 31, 2022

**(The researcher needs to complete the above information on this page)**

**COMMITTEE FINDING:**

✓ (1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

(2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the **HSRC** on a \_\_\_\_\_ basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

(3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

(4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved.



Chair or designated member



Date

I

**Appendix B**  
**Institutional Approval**



# Washington Intermediate School

Home of the Thunderbird

Kevin Thomas · Brian Cox · Sandra Chavez · Lisa Montejano · Rafael Alejandre · Rosa Carreon  
Principal Assistant Principal Learning Director Learning Director Counselor Counselor Counselor

George Fox University  
414 N Meridian Street  
Newburg, OR 97132

Dear Jennifer Tuttle,

Based on my review of your proposed research, I give my permission for you to conduct the research for your Improvement Science Dissertation in Practice for your Doctor of Educational Leadership Program with Instructional Design and Development Concentration within Washington Intermediate School. As part of this study, I authorize you to observe, collect data, assess, and interact with your students. Individuals' Participation will be voluntary and at their own direction.

It is understood that Dinuba Unified's responsibilities will be limited and only include: the use of a classroom, English program, and technology for student and teacher use. I reserve the right to withdraw for the study at any time if circumstances change.

The research will include typical classroom instruction, pre-tests, post-tests, observations, data collection, and various forms of classroom-based assessments and assignments. This authorization covers the time from August 11, 2022 to May 31, 2023.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and must not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from George Fox University.

Sincerely,

Kevin Thomas  
Principal  
Washington Intermediate School  
1150 N. Hayes Ave  
Dinuba CA 93618  
(559) 595-7252

**Appendix C**  
**Informed Consent**



414 N. Meridian St. | Newberg, OR 97132 | [georgefox.edu](http://georgefox.edu)

July 31, 2022

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to for me to engage in empirical research in collecting data for the purpose of writing my dissertation. I am studying the area of Educational Leadership: Instructional Design and Development. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Doctorate (Ed.D.) program at George Fox University, and I have attended online courses and three summer residency institutes to obtain this advanced degree. As part of my coursework, I am learning about my own teaching as well as how to provide the most effective reading and writing instruction for all my students. As I work with your child, and the rest of the class, I will keep written notes, and collect data to help guide my instruction. This data will help me to analyze my teaching and gain insights into the type of assignments that I give. When I share what I am learning with the Professor of Doctoral coursework in my dissertation, I will change your child's name and the name of the school, so your child cannot be identified at all. All work is intended only for educational purposes (my own). They are not required to participate, and they may withdraw their interest in being observed at any point in time. Again, the primary purpose of my work with your student is to advance my own deep understanding of literacy instruction. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact me at Washington Intermediate School or via email at [jtuttle@dinuba.k12.ca.us](mailto:jtuttle@dinuba.k12.ca.us). You may also contact my program director, Dr. Dane Joseph at 503-554-2855 or via his email at [djoseph@georgefox.edu](mailto:djoseph@georgefox.edu).

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| My child may participate     | Please Circle One of the Following<br>Yes or No |
| Signature of Parent/Guardian |   |

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tuttle

Doctor of Educational Leadership Program

George Fox University

414 N. Meridian

Newberg, OR 97132

**Appendix D****NIC Consent**



414 N. Meridian St. | Newberg, OR 97132 | [georgefox.edu](http://georgefox.edu)

July 31, 2022

Dear NIC Members,

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to for me to engage in empirical research in collecting data for the purpose of writing my dissertation. I am studying the area of Educational Leadership: Instructional Design and Development. I am currently enrolled in the Educational Doctorate (Ed.D.) program at George Fox University, and I have attended online courses and three summer residency institutes to obtain this advanced degree. As part of my coursework, I am learning about my own teaching as well as how to provide the most effective reading instruction for all my students. As I work with you, and the rest of my the NIC Members who choose to participate, I will keep written notes, and collect data to help guide my instruction. This data will help me to analyze my teaching and gain insights into the type of assignments I give. When I share what I am learning with the professor in the course and in my dissertation, I will change your name and the name of the school, so you cannot be identified. All work is intended only for educational purposes (my own) and will not benefit you or my students in anyway. You are not required to participate and may withdraw your interest at any point in time. Again, the primary purpose of my work within the context of this Network Improvement Community (NIC) is to advance my own deep understanding of literacy instruction. If you have any questions about this, please feel free to contact me at Washington Intermediate School or via email at [jtuttle@dinuba.k12.ca.us](mailto:jtuttle@dinuba.k12.ca.us) . You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Dane Joseph at 503-554-2855 or via his email at [djoseph@georgefox.edu](mailto:djoseph@georgefox.edu).

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| I wish to participate | Please Circle One of the Following<br>Yes or No |
| Signature             |   |

Sincerely,

Mrs. Tuttle

Doctor of Educational Leadership Program

George Fox University

414 N. Meridian

Newburg, OR 97132



## **Appendix E**

### **Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire**

**Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual**

**VI. THE MOTIVATED STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE**

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

Part A. Motivation

The following questions ask about your motivation for and attitudes about this class. Remember there are no right or wrong answers, just answer as accurately as possible. Use the scale below to answer the questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.

- |  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
|  | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |
| 1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.           | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.                | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.                   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer.                   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|  | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 12. I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.                                      | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|   | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 20. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 21. I expect to do well in this class.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 22. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.                          | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 23. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 24. When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 26. I like the subject matter of this course.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 27. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 28. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 29. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 30. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.                  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 31. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.                            | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

Part B. Learning Strategies

The following questions ask about your learning strategies and study skills for this class. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Answer the questions about how you study in this class as accurately as possible. Use the same scale to answer the remaining questions. If you think the statement is very true of you, circle 7; if a statement is not at all true of you, circle 1. If the statement is more or less true of you, find the number between 1 and 7 that best describes you.

|            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |
| not at all |   |   |   |   |   | very true |
| true of me |   |   |   |   |   | of me     |

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 32. When I study the readings for this course, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts.          | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. During class time I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. When reading for this course, I make up questions to help focus my reading.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 37. I often feel so lazy or bored when I study for this class that I quit before I finish what I planned to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in this course to decide if I find them convincing.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 39. When I study for this class, I practice saying the material to myself over and over.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |



Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|  | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 40. Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone.                        | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 41. When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out.                                       | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 42. When I study for this course, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas.                         | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 43. I make good use of my study time for this course.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 44. If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 45. I try to work with other students from this class to complete the course assignments.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 46. When studying for this course, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 47. When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in class or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 48. I work hard to do well in this class even if I don't like what we are doing.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 49. I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course material.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |

## Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|   | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 50. When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class.     |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 51. I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.                                     |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 52. I find it hard to stick to a study schedule.  |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 53. When I study for this class, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions. |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 54. Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.                                    |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 55. I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class.                             |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 56. I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructor's teaching style.                  |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 57. I often find that I have been reading for this class but don't know what it was all about.                                    |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 58. I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don't understand well.   |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 59. I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts in this class.  |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 60. When course work is difficult, I either give up or only study the easy parts.   |                          |   |   |   |   |   |   |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |



Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|   | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |
|---|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 61. I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 62. I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 63. When I study for this course, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 64. When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 65. I have a regular place set aside for studying.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 66. I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 67. When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.                                 | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 68. When I can't understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 69. I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.                 | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 70. I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |
| 71. Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                  |

Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire Manual

|  | not at all<br>true of me |   |   |   |   |   |   | very true<br>of me |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 72. I make lists of important items for this course and memorize the lists.                                    | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 73. I attend this class regularly.   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 74. Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.            | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 75. I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary.                             | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 76. When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don't understand well.                   | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 77. I often find that I don't spend very much time on this course because of other activities.                 | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 78. When I study for this class, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period. | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 79. If I get confused taking notes in class, I make sure I sort it out afterwards.                             | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 80. I rarely find time to review my notes or readings before an exam.  | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 81. I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.        | 1                        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |                    |  |  |  |  |  |  |

## **Appendix F**

### **Burke Reading Interview**

**Burke Reading Interview**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Level \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Setting \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you are reading and come to something you don't know, what do you do?

Do you ever do anything else?

2. Who is a good reader you know?

3. What makes \_\_\_\_\_ a good reader?

4. Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ ever comes to something she/he doesn't know?

5. "Yes" – When \_\_\_\_\_ comes to something he/she doesn't know, what do you think he/she does?

"No" – Suppose \_\_\_\_\_ comes to something he/she doesn't know. What do you think he/she would do?

6. If you know someone is having trouble reading, how would you help that person?

7. What would a/your teacher do to help that person?

8. How did you learn to read?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

10. Do you think you are a good reader? Why or Why not?

## **Appendix G**

### **Burke Writing Interview**

**Burke Writing Interview**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Educational Level \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Setting \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you are writing do you encounter difficulty, what do you do?

Do you ever do anything else?

2. When your writing is interrupted, what do you do?

3. Who is a good writer you know?

What makes \_\_\_\_\_ a good writer?

4. Do you think \_\_\_\_\_ ever encounters difficulty when writing?

If Yes: When \_\_\_\_\_ encounters difficulty when writing, what do you think he/she does about it?

If No: Suppose \_\_\_\_\_ encounter difficulty when writing, what do you think he/she would do about it?

5. If you know someone is having difficulty writing, how would you help that person?

6. What would a teacher do to help that person?

7. How did you learn to write?

8. What would you like to do better as a writer?

9. Do you think you are a good writer? Why or Why not?