Using Digital Tools To Promote Reading And Story Reflection In Grade 6 Boys

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Introduction

I often watch our boys gaming and laughing, having fun as they enjoy the interaction and challenge of a game. I wondered how I could get that passion and enthusiasm into my reading classes.

The Research Question

How can reflecting on stories through digital journals and games affect Grade 6 boys' engagement in reading?

Research Context and Participants

St Stithians Boys Preparatory is situated in Sandton, South Africa. We are one of five schools that make up St Stithians College. We are a transformative South African school, one that inspires excellence and makes a world of difference. St Stithians is grounded in values that reflect our identity as a Methodist School. Our students experience a holistic experience and we educate thinkers and leaders for the future. My participants included 28 boys from my Grade 6 English class. The boys were approximately 11 years of age.

"Video games are such fun. Fortnite is my favorite game. I can play for hours!"

The Research Action

The purpose of this study was to encourage boys to read stories and have them create story reflections through digital games and electronic journals. The intervention involved a six-week reading programme which required commitment, determination, collaborative work, and creative thinking.

"Reading isn't that bad. I'm actually enjoying this."

"We are discussing our book and creating questions for our electronic game."

"Are we creating Kahoot or Minecraft? I also found a game called 'Buzzer', it's quite cool."

Data Collection and Analysis

I used the following data collection methods:

- Surveys via Google Forms
- Videos- Flip Grid
- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Journal Entries

I analysed survey responses, Flipgrid journal reflections, my observations, and interview transcripts to see if I could identify emerging trends or patterns. I found it easiest to use a spreadsheet to highlight and code all data.

Key Findings and Discussion

- There were quite a few anxious and reluctant readers. Sadly, one of the boys was very vocal and exclaimed, "I hate reading, its super boring!"

- A digital forum motivated readers to try new things, One of the boys suggested a fellow classmate try a Kindle. He shared how he downloaded his books onto his Kindle and when he struggled with fatigue, he would set it to an audio book. This method ignited an interest in several of the boys.

- Digital games made reading fun and engaging. One student said, "We have to choose a good book if we are going to create a good game."

- Creating digital games led to some challenges and deeper thinking. In a journal entry, a boy wrote: It was challenging to come up with appropriate questions. Making a game was an experience for different types of people.

Conclusions

Reviewing data helped me understand that while some boys enjoy reading, the majority of them love gaming. Many of our students do not consider reading a quality book as entertainment, but rather gaming as entertaining. As educators, we need to review our own pedagogy and find creative ways of integrating technology into our curriculum to better cater for our boys.

Key Readings

Boltz, R.H. (2007). What we want: Boys and girls talk about reading. *School Library Media Research, 10.*

Richards, T. (1998). Infusing technology and literacy into the undergraduate teacher education curriculum through the use of electronic portfolios. *T.H.E. Journal, 25*(9), 46-50.

Standley, M. (2003). Digital storytelling using new technology and the power of stories to help our students learn - and teach. *Cable in the Classroom, 1618.* Retrieved from http://www.ciconline.org/home.

International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2018 - 2019
Boys and Stories: Pathways to Learning

Scan this QR code to watch a video taster of my research project.