Implementing Podcast Technology as a Method for Sparking Student Motivation to Learn and Write.

Todd J. Roth
2005-2006 First Grade Intern
Panorama Village Elementary School

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Teaching Context

During the 2005-2006 school year, I have had the pleasure of getting to know 22 first grade students while participating in the yearlong Professional Development School (PDS) internship program. Of the 22 students, 11 are boys and 11 are girls. There is one girl who has Japanese heritage, one girl who has Thai heritage, and one boy who comes from a Russian family. The remaining students are Caucasian. We have one boy with Down Syndrome who spends a majority of his time in the learning support classroom and occasional time in our classroom. We also have one student who receives speech support. Based on the community in which the school is located, the students come from a variety of economic situations. For example, there are students whose parents work in the medical field and there are students who only have one parent at home.

Academically, we have a range of skills and abilities. The students are grouped into four language arts groups based on reading and writing abilities. Six students are in a group that can read and write significantly above first grade level, ten are distributed into groups that read and write at or slightly above grade level, and five are in a group that are at or slightly below grade level. In this group, there is one girl who will probably qualify for reading support in second grade.

The culture of the school is community-based and casual. Administrators and teachers emphasize the importance of creating a classroom and school community in which students and teachers support each other in the pursuit of fun and meaningful learning. The atmosphere is casual yet professional. Several classrooms are grouped in a large space separated by movable partition walls. This creates a collaborative and open environment, which allows for high teacher interaction. The school is relatively small as
it is K-3 with three kindergarten, two first grade, three second grade, and three third grade rooms.

**Rationale**

As the school year progressed, I began to notice that several students seemed to be disinterested in the school day. They were not participating in class discussions, they were not showing enthusiasm when engaging in activities, and they were beginning to continuously write about the same topics and to have the same issues occurring in their writing journals. Issues included:

- Omitting punctuation and capitalization
- Using incomplete sentences
- Repeating sentence structure (e.g. I like …I like …I like …)
- Forgetting to write name and/or date
- Misspelling “no excuse words” (e.g. and, to, the, etc.)
- Forgetting to review a writing piece using our editing process
- Having difficulty completing assignments in a sufficient amount of time

According to my mentor teacher, these issues are typical of young writers in first grade. She believes that as the year progresses, with appropriate guidance most students will slowly move towards self-correcting and paying more attention to most of these issues with their writing. I began to wonder if a lack of motivation to write played a role with some students’ difficulties in expressing themselves clearly and effectively through writing. If it is true that “young children want to be writers” (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, XV), then what is occurring to steer them away from fun and engaging writing?
In order to be engaged with writing, Ray lists several variables that may keep children motivated to write. These include:

- “topics that matter”
- “developing the stamina for writing”
- “talk as a support for writing”
- “a clear writing vision” (Ray, 100-101)

I wondered if the way in which our writing activities and writing times were focused allowed for these variables to be included.

Similar to the idea of “topics that matter”, McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas state that “a writer needs a purpose or reason for writing, and purposes arise from all circumstances of life” (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 3). A purpose for writing extends beyond simply having a relevant and interesting topic. It reaches into the power of the written message and asks why there is a need to communicate a particular message. I wondered if our students had a purpose for writing other than to tell their teachers and families about what they do at home and at school. While this is certainly a valid and enjoyable reason for writing, is it enough to sustain motivation in certain children?

In addition to my observations about our students’ motivation to write, I also noticed that some students seemed to be lacking motivation in other areas as well. They showed the typical indicators of boredom: staring, restlessness, fidgeting, yawning, resting chins in palms, wandering eyes, lack of participation, lack of attention to detail, etc. Of course, there may have been other variables causing these symptoms, but I wondered if lack of interest and motivation might have been contributing. In Keller’s ARCS Motivation Model, he discusses four factors that should be successfully
synthesized into the instructional process in order for students to be motivated to learn.

These include attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (Keller, 1-2). A teacher should ask:

• Have I effectively gained and sustained the students’ attention?
• Have I established why this topic/concept/activity has a purpose for my students?
• Have I created opportunities or a feeling of “expectancy” for success within the students?
• Have I provided meaningful and relevant benefits and reinforcement for the outcomes of learning and performance?

I wondered if this design model could be effective in stimulating and maintaining motivation in both writing and other subject areas. Since we were set to begin a new unit in science, I thought this might be an area on which to focus a new approach in order to test whether any changes would result.

I began to consider new approaches to teaching science and writing that I might want to experiment with in the classroom. I wanted to create a new experience that flowed with enthusiasm for science and writing, as according to Calkins and Mermelstein “your confidence and enthusiasm will carry most of your children along. No matter how tentative and insecure you may feel, role-play your way into being confident of yourself and your children because they will hitch a ride on your enthusiasm” (Calkins & Mermelstein, 2). I could not help but think back to several projects I completed during my education methods courses at Penn State that effectively incorporated technology into an educational experience. I remembered our podcasting assignment, which involved creating an audio recording to present and share information through the internet about a
particular topic. I wondered if implementing this type of technology would have any effects on our students’ motivation. Shearer writes, “children are motivated by the excitement of new technology but it’s important that any activity fits into a lesson rather than acting as a one-off novelty exercise” (Shearer, 6). Technology can certainly be an effective educational tool, but my challenge would be to find a way to combine technology with our science unit in order to experiment with any potential outcomes.

All these questions I generated about student motivation to learn and to write are issues that I will deal with throughout my career as an elementary teacher. First, how will I initially create an engaging environment for learning that works to prevent ongoing lack of student motivation? Second, how will I deal with issues of student interest and motivation when I observe signs that indicate some students wish they were somewhere far away from school? Finally, how will I continue to refine and develop my skills in implementing new approaches and strategies to charge and sustain both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within my future students? The questions I raised and my inquiry into these areas will assist me in becoming a more dynamic and motivating teacher who can meet the diverse needs of my students.

Main Wondering and Sub-questions

My observations, research, and questioning led me to a main wondering about student motivation and writing in my first grade classroom:

What effect does incorporating podcast technology as part of a new teaching approach to science have on student motivation to learn and write?

I also had sub-questions related to my main wondering:
• Would incorporating this new technology have positive effects for some students and negative effects for others?
• Would this approach extend motivation into other subject areas in school?
• Would it have effects on some areas and issues with writing and not with others?
• Would it affect motivation for learning science but not for writing?
• Would it affect motivation for writing but not for learning science?
• Would it offer opportunities to differentiate instruction in order to help meet diverse student needs?
• Will students experience a change in extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, or both?
• Would a change in motivation be reflected through a change in writing?
• What other factors may contribute to any perceived changes in motivation or writing?

With my main wondering and initial sub-questions established, I developed a plan for how I was going to implement my inquiry into this world of unknowns.

**Inquiry vs. Project**

The purpose of Inquiry is to explore wonderings about a particular topic, idea, or concept in order to discover new insights into teaching and learning. It requires a systematic approach to gathering data that seeks to answer questions and objectively reveal effects of some type of intervention. The purpose of a Project is to design some type of intervention with specific goals and outcomes that drive the implementation. Typically, the goal is to improve some type of teaching or learning variable in the classroom. My
search into the possible effects of incorporating podcasting technology into the educational process seeks to answer wonderings about the possible effects it may have on student motivation. The goal of my Inquiry was to collect data about this intervention that would lead me to claims about podcasting, writing, and motivation that are backed by evidence. While I could have discover that improvement had occurred, my intention was not to have it drive and influence my approach as would be the case with a specific Project.

**Inquiry Plan**

To get started, I decided to observe the students in various situations in order to select several with what appeared to be low, moderate, and high levels of motivation according to the criteria mentioned in the Rationale section of this paper. I also reviewed one of the students’ weekly journals to select a range of writing abilities according to their language arts groups and the issues mentioned in the Rationale section of this paper. Through my observations during language arts stations, calendar and other math activities, science, and morning meetings I selected six students on which to focus. I categorized them in the following manner:

- Low motivation and low writing ability (n=2)
- Low motivation and moderate writing ability (n=1)
- Moderate motivation and moderate writing ability (n=1)
- Moderate motivation and high writing ability (n=2)

For each student I noted baseline behaviors during activities and baseline writing strengths, areas for improvement, and perceived interest in writing.
Now that I had my main group on which to focus, I developed my podcast strategy and project on which to implement into our science unit and writing activities. The plan was to create a fictional character who would communicate with the students through audio recordings. This character, named Zed, lost his treasure while “sea snooping” (a term and name of recording journal used in the Life Under the Sea Unit), and was asking for help in finding what was lost. The students would hear an initial message from Zed pleading for help, and the students would need to respond with an answer to whether they would assist. Approximately once per week, future messages would arrive with new clues as to the whereabouts of the location of the treasure based on new information Zed had acquired. Along with the clues would be questions about the ocean for the students to investigate during science experiments and activities throughout the week. To reply to Zed, students were required to write clear and detailed letters explaining what they had learned and how this might help with the quest to find the treasure. If the letters were written well, students would be able to record an audio message to “send” to Zed. These messages could also be posted to a website as part of an audio-visual podcast that would be available to other elementary classrooms to access through an iTunes subscription or individual downloads. After several weeks of exchanging messages, clues, and explanations to questions, the students would finally reach the point of having a good idea of where the treasure was located. A final message would be sent in hopes that the mission to find the treasure was successful. The culminating experience would be a visit from Zed to the classroom during which he would thank the students for helping him find his treasure. He would also answer questions and share some of his treasure as a reward for the students’ hard work and
learning that would provide them with the honor of becoming official “sea snoopers”.

During this experience, I would serve as the messenger for Zed, and act as an ignorant but enthusiastic supporter and facilitator. I planned to collect data throughout and following the process, to analyze the data for patterns and changes, and to make claims about my wonderings based on the evidence collected.

The implementation of this project component of my inquiry closely matched my plan. However, a few pieces did not go as planned due to timing and other factors. I was unable to deliver the number and frequency of clues as I had originally intended. I was only able to deliver a total of three clues over a six-week period. I also only had one opportunity to record student replies after they had written letters. Because of this, I did not create an entire website to host the replies in order to share with other classrooms. I created a mock version as a model for what could have been used, but did not have the opportunity or appropriate means of sharing with the students. I was able to conclude the project with a visit from Zed to the classroom. I assumed the role of Zed dressed in costume, and surprised the students by appearing in the room when they returned from lunch one day. The students received a gold “coin” and sea snooper ring from Zed’s treasure, and wrote thank you letters as a final correspondence with Zed.

**Data Collection**

I collected data about my wonderings using the following methods:

*Observations of student behavior prior to new approach*

Prior to implementing my new approach to teaching science, I wanted to establish what types of behaviors I was going to use as indicators of a lack of motivation. I also wanted
to identify typical behaviors that were potential signs of low, moderate, and high motivation levels of the six students on which I decided to focus. To do this I observed the six students throughout the school day to get a broad picture of their motivation levels. I also attempted to take special notice about how they engaged with science activities. These observations were informal and were occasionally written in a journal log. Sample notes included:

- “During calendar math student 1 attempting to lie down.”
- “During calendar math student 2 playing with her hair.”
- “During science experiment student 3 not listening to directions but raising hand with enthusiasm to answer questions.”
- “During science experiment student 5 focused on task and engaged in asking questions.”

**Review of journal writing prior to new approach**

Prior to implementing my new approach to stimulate writing, I wanted an indication of how the six students were writing, what issues they were having, and what their skills levels were a few weeks before the project. For each student I reviewed writing samples from one of their weekly journals. I kept notes about strengths, areas for improvement, and patterns across several writing pieces. Sample strengths included neatness, complete thoughts, and proper capitalization. Sample areas for improvement included incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, and sloppy handwriting. Sample patterns include similar topics, few details, and similar sentence structure (e.g. I like…I like…).
Observations of student reactions during initial presentation of audio message

I wanted to observe how the students initially reacted to the new approach to determine if there was initial interest and excitement. This could indicate whether the new approach had potential to motivate. Because this was a single event, I did not record notes but informally observed the eight students. The reactions varied to include some of the following:

- Student 1: enthusiastic and vocal “whoa!”
- Student 3: curious and confused “is this real?”
- Student 5: focused on listening, eyes and mouth open, quiet “oooh”
- Student 6: unenthused and quiet, blank look on face

Record of which students decide to write initial voluntary letter to Zed

After the first message, I gave each student the choice to write a letter to Zed or to finish up other work and then read a book. I wanted to get a quick glimpse into whether this message might motivate the students when given the option to write. Only one out of the twenty students present opted not to write to Zed that day.

Written letters to Zed

Following each audio message that the students heard, they were asked to investigate certain science concepts in order to answer the questions that Zed had posed in the new message. After investigating, they were required to write a letter reply to Zed that answered his questions in a clear and detailed manner. If writing improved from letter to letter, it may be an indication that the purpose and expectations of the writing may have had an effect on student motivation to write. For student writing samples see Appendix A.
**Observations of student reactions during subsequent presentations of audio messages**

After the initial message was played for the students, I presented two more audio messages. Each time I observed the behavior of the six selected students. This may indicate if motivation towards the project had changed. I recorded notes each time to include the following examples:

- Student 1: inquisitive and vocal
- Student 3: focused on listening, participated when I asked questions
- Student 5: focused on listening, sat close to the audio speaker, did not participate
- Student 6: unenthused, talking and giggling with neighbor

**Writing Workshop Topic: How do you feel about writing to Zed?**

Near the end of our project and inquiry, I facilitated a writing workshop time that focused on answering questions and adding detail to our answers. The students were asked to write a short piece that asked questions about Zed including how they felt about helping him. This might provide an indication if any students enjoyed learning through Zed or if they disliked the experience with him. It may also show application of developing writing skills. Example responses included:

- Student 2: “I am hape (happy) to hepe (help) him.”
- Student 6: “I like riteing (writing) to Zed”

**Post-experience survey**

After the students successfully completed their mission to help Zed find his treasure, I waited a week to conduct a survey with all the students about the experience. This may indicate whether they felt they enjoyed the experience of helping Zed through science experiments and if they felt excited when the had the opportunity to write to Zed. I asked
two questions: “Did you enjoy helping Zed” and “Did you get excited to write to Zed?” I read the questions orally, and had the students respond on a survey paper with three faces indicating high, medium, and low. 19 students were present to participate. See Appendix B for details and samples.

Post-survey follow-up interviews

Following completion of the surveys, I waited a few days to ask the six selected students some clarifying questions about their surveys. This might provide an indication of why they answered the ways in which they did and provide further insight into motivation during the experience. The three follow-up questions included:

- Why did or didn’t you enjoy helping Zed?
- Why did or didn’t you enjoy writing to Zed?
- What was fun about learning about the oceans and seas?

Data Analysis

One method I used to analyze the data collected was to compare behavioral observations prior to my intervention with behavioral observations during and following my intervention. I searched my written notes and thought back through the experiences in order to identify any changes in behavior that would indicate a decrease, maintenance, or increase in motivation to engage in the study of science and any related subjects. I paid close attention to any changes in behavior that occurred during the times in which audio messages were played for the students. The following is what I discovered for the six students on which I decided to focus:
• Student 1: Prior to intervention, showed signs of boredom such as talking during lessons and paying attention to other things. During intervention was initially excited to hear new messages, but near the end of the intervention was less engaged and asked fewer questions. Outcome: Showed some signs of initial interest and motivation to engage with the science unit and to write to Zed, but signs decreased as the inquiry progressed.

• Student 2: Prior to intervention, showed signs of boredom such as lack of participation and wandering eyes and talking during lessons. During intervention showed little interest in the audio messages as sign of boredom were still present. Some increased participation in science activities occurred. Outcome: Showed a few signs of initial interest and motivation to engage with the science unit and to write to Zed, but signs decreased as the inquiry progressed.

• Student 3: Prior to intervention, showed signs of boredom such as lack of participation and failing to follow directions. During intervention was initially excited to hear new messages, but near the end of the intervention was less engaged and asked fewer questions. Outcome: Showed many signs of initial interest and motivation to engage with the science unit and to write to Zed, but signs decreased as the inquiry progressed.

• Student 4: Prior to intervention, showed signs of boredom such as lack of participation, staring at the floor or ceiling, and looking around the room during lessons. During intervention was initially excited to hear new messages, but near the end of the intervention was less engaged and resumed behaviors prior to intervention. Outcome: Showed few signs of initial interest and motivation to
engage with the science unit and to write to Zed, but signs decreased as the inquiry progressed.

• Student 5: Prior to intervention, showed signs of motivation such as asking questions, joyfully participating in activities, and paying attention during lessons. During intervention was initially excited to hear new messages as the student frequently made positive comments, but near the end of the intervention was less engaged and resumed behaviors prior to intervention. Outcome: Showed signs of initial interest and motivation to engage with the science unit and to write to Zed, but signs of heightened levels of motivation decreased as the inquiry progressed.

• Student 6: Prior to intervention, showed signs of motivation such as asking questions, participating in activities, and paying attention during lessons. During intervention did not show any signs of increased motivation, but showed signs of deceased motivation as the student did not participate and was easily distracted during lessons. Outcome: Did not show signs of initial interest and motivation to engage with the science unit and to write to Zed. Signs indicate a possible decrease in motivation to engage in the science and writing activities related to Zed.

Next I reviewed journal entries written prior to the intervention and compared them to the letters the students wrote to Zed. I also looked for changes from the first letter to Zed to the final writing the students did for Zed. I analyzed for changes and patterns in mechanics, content, length, variety, and descriptive nature of the writing. The following is what I discovered for the six students on which I decided to focus based on writing prior to the experience and writing during and at the conclusion of the experience:
• Student 1 Improvements: More sentences, some details, neater, more consistent use of capitals and periods, and more evidence of editing “no excuse” words. Areas that still need improvement include more detailed sentences, consistent use of periods and capitals, correct spelling, continued evidence of editing, and continued growth in neater handwriting.

• Student 2 Improvements: Some details, neater, and more consistent use of capitals and periods. Areas that still need improvement include more detailed sentences, consistent use of periods and capitals, correct spelling, evidence of editing “no excuse” and other words, complete sentences, and continued growth in neater handwriting.

• Student 3 Improvements: More details, neater, more consistent use of capitals and periods, use of questions, and complete thoughts. Areas that still need improvement include consistent use of punctuation and capitals, correct spelling, and continued growth in neater handwriting.

• Student 4 Improvements: Fewer run-on sentences, consistent use of punctuation and capitals, and growth in neater handwriting. Areas that still need improvement include consistent spelling, evidence of editing, and more details.

• Student 5 Improvements: More sentences, consistent use of punctuation and capitals, and more sentence variety. Areas that still need improvement include consistent spelling, evidence of editing, and attention to neater writing.

• Student 6 Improvements: Consistent use of punctuation and capitals, more sentence variety, and use of questions. Areas that still need improvement include
consistent spelling, evidence of editing, more detailed sentences, and attention to neater writing.

Approximately halfway through the experience, I asked the students to write about Zed’s identity and how they felt about helping him. I reviewed these writing samples to search for anecdotal evidence about feelings, for any trends or patterns in the overall reactions from all the students, and for specific responses from the six students selected. The following is what I discovered for the six students on which I decided to focus:

• Student 1: Did not answer the question about how he/she felt about writing to Zed.
• Student 2: “I am hape (happy) to hepe (help) him.”
• Student 3: “I feel glad that I am helping Zed”
• Student 4: Answered how he/she felt about helping Zed with “Happy”
• Student 5: “it is a lot of fun riteing (writing) to Zed”
• Student 6: “I like riteing (writing) to Zed”

Overall the students responded that they were happy to be helping Zed. Some said they enjoyed writing to him, and a few replied that they were nervous they would not find his treasure.

At the conclusion of the experience, I conducted a short survey with the students asking them how they felt about helping and writing to Zed. I asked two questions:

1. Did you enjoy helping Zed”
2. Did you get excited to write to Zed?
I read the questions orally, and had the students respond on a survey paper with three faces indicating a yes, a medium, or a no. I analyzed the data in several ways, and discovered several key points about the 19 surveys I collected from the students.

- 12 enjoyed helping Zed, 6 thought it was ok, 1 did not like helping Zed
- 5 got excited to write to Zed, 5 thought it was ok to write to Zed, 9 did not like writing to him
- Every student had a more favorable answer to question 1 than question 2
- None of the students answered with the lowest response for question 1
- 5 students answered with the highest response for both questions
- 1 student answered with the lowest response for both questions
- 2 students answered with the middle response for both questions
- 4 answered with the highest response for question 1 and the lowest response for question 2
- 3 answered with the highest response for question 1 and the middle response for question 2
- 4 answered with the middle response for question 1 and the lowest response for question 2
The following are the responses I analyzed from the six students on which I chose to focus. I also conducted a brief follow-up interview with each of these students asking:

- Why did or didn’t you enjoy helping Zed?
- Why did or didn’t you enjoy writing to Zed?
- What was fun about learning about the oceans and seas?

I compared the survey responses to the interview responses to note any similarities, differences, or contradictions.

- Student 1: Replied he liked finding the treasure and getting the ring and coin. Replied that he liked writing 3 sentences to Zed instead of 4, and that he liked learning facts about the ocean. This appears to support his survey that indicates he enjoyed helping Zed but was only moderately excited to write to him. This excitement also seemed to be due to the fewer sentences required.
- Student 2: Replied she likes helping people so she enjoyed helping Zed. She did not like writing 4 sentences. She liked learning about the ocean because she likes
learning about different things, and hunting for the treasure and learning about animals was fun. This appears to support her survey that indicates she enjoyed helping Zed but was only moderately excited to write to him. This excitement also seemed to be due to the fewer sentences required.

- **Student 3:** Replied that he liked hearing about Zed, and was curious about whether he was real. He did not like writing to Zed because he likes drawing pictures but does not like writing words much. He misses the Life Under the Sea Unit as he enjoyed learning about the different animals and the other ocean facts. This appears to support his survey that indicates he moderately enjoyed helping Zed, but did not like writing to him.

- **Student 4:** Replied that she did not know why she moderately enjoyed helping Zed. She did not like writing to him because it only added more work for her to do. She enjoyed making the animal crafts during the science unit. This appears to support her survey that indicates she moderately enjoyed helping Zed, but did not like writing to him.

- **Student 5:** Replied that he enjoyed helping Zed find his treasure and enjoyed writing to him in order to help him find his treasure. He also liked learning about new animals. This appears to support his survey that indicates he highly enjoyed helping and writing to Zed.

- **Student 6:** Replied that she did not like the writing part of helping Zed as she only likes writing sometimes (usually in the morning). She enjoyed drawing the pictures to support the letter, and thought the science unit was fun. This appears to somewhat support her survey that indicates she moderately enjoyed helping Zed.
even though she could not provide a reason why she enjoyed it. She also indicated on her survey that she did not like writing to Zed.

Claims

Based on the data analysis, I was able to make several claims about my inquiry. While there is evidence to support the claims, my inquiry did not necessarily consider the numerous other factors that may have contributed to increased or decreased levels of motivation to learn and write. These claims are based on the data and evidence I collected for this particular inquiry, and may or may not result in generalized claims about using podcast technology in the classroom to support learning and motivation.

Claim 1: Implementing podcast technology and a new approach to teaching created initial excitement and motivation to write.

Evidence: A majority of students displayed signs of interest and motivation during presentation of the first audio message and explanation of their potential mission to help Zed. All but one student decided to voluntarily write an initial letter to Zed.

Claim 2: The new approach did not sustain an increased level of motivation throughout the duration of the project and the science unit.

Evidence: While initial motivation to engage in writing and science activities related to Zed was high, it dropped as students showed signs of boredom during subsequent audio messages and other writing and science activities. On surveys some students indicated they enjoyed helping Zed, but many did not enjoy writing to him. Interviews confirmed
that most students were curious and enjoyed helping Zed find his treasure, but many did not enjoy writing to him for various reasons. While the writing assignment halfway through resulted in many students indicating they enjoyed writing to Zed, this dropped as fewer students indicated on their surveys that they enjoyed writing to Zed.

Claim 3: The new approach contributed to improvement with writing skills for all ability levels.

Evidence: Over the six-week period of the inquiry, the six students on which I focused showed improvement in their writing skills in such areas as neatness, capitalization, punctuation, clarity, complete sentences, details, and variety. This occurred in the letters they wrote to Zed that I analyzed. However, it is not possible to determine whether the improvement in writing skills was directly related to the inquiry as other factors were present that influenced writing development. However, the changes from the first letter to Zed to the final letter indicate that these writing assignments contributed to the development of their writing skills.

Claim 4: The new approach did not increase motivation to write.

Evidence: After the majority of the students voluntarily decided to write an initial letter to Zed, they showed few signs of similar motivation to write subsequent letters. While some survey responses indicated an excitement to write to Zed, follow-up interviews did not confirm this but instead revealed that students were not particularly interested in writing to him for various reasons.
Claim 5: Implementing podcast technology and a new approach to teaching created a positive learning experience for a majority of the students.

Evidence: Students demonstrated initial excitement with the new approach and were motivated to write initial letters. When students are engaged and excited there is greater potential for a positive learning experience. Surveys indicated the students enjoyed the experience, as twelve indicated the highest level of enjoyment, six indicated a moderate level of enjoyment, and only one responded with a low level of enjoyment. Interviews confirmed these responses as all the students interviewed provided a range of positive answers about the experience. Student writing improved throughout the experience in terms of mechanics and content, and efficiency increased as some students completed assignments in less time while still maintaining quality.

Conclusions

This inquiry into the uses of technology in the classroom has future implications for me as a teacher. Overall, I feel it was a positive learning experience for the majority of students. The evidence I presented earlier supports this claim. Because of this, I feel with some modification I would attempt to use a similar approach to teaching a unit in this manner. However, it would need to be more carefully planned so that messages are communicated in a timely and strategic manner. Hopefully this would maintain the high levels of motivation present in many of the students at the beginning of the inquiry. This inquiry has influenced my teaching philosophy as I see what a critical role motivation can play in student learning. I hope that reflecting on this inquiry in the future will continue
to challenge me to search for new and innovative ways to create engaging learning environments that meet the diverse needs of my students.

I also want to continue to search for new ways to engage students in writing. This inquiry has prompted me to consider new approaches to teaching writing, and to explore the range of writing programs that exist for working with young writers. I now see the potential and some of the critical factors that must exist for students to continue developing into skilled writers. Throughout my teaching career, I will attempt to continuously evaluate my approaches to learning and the ways in which my students are learning, improving, and enjoying writing.

**New Wonderings**

My inquiry provided insight into some of my initial wondering, while some remain unanswered. My inquiry also led to new wondering about using podcasts in the classroom in order to stimulate motivation to learn and write. My new wondering include:

*What effect would sharing audio clues and responses with other classrooms have on student motivation to write?*

*What effect would implementing other types of technology have on student motivation to write?*

*Would creating and varying purposes for writing affect student motivation to write?*

*What other factors continue to influence motivation to learn and write?*
REFERENCES


Dear Zed, court cant eat
your treasure? nun of
your treasure Kcull
eat your treasure
Sincerely
Dear Zed, I farm
and that the scold
I friable got The
Wrens fec

Dear Zed, Snake is a fish in the ocean. He lives in the ocean. They did not eat the treasure. An eel is a fish.

Sincerely,

[Blank space]
Dear Zed,

There are schools of fish. Schools of fish live in the sunlight zone.
You can see the treasure.
Dear Zed,

Great white sharks live in the sun lite zone. They did not eat the treasure. Sharks are fish. They can see...
Dear Zed,

Dolphins live in the Sunlight Zone. They did not eat the treasure. Dolphins are Mammals. A Sunbird has a light on it.
APPENDIX B: Surveys

1.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)  
   Student 1

2.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)

1.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)  
   Student 2

2.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)

1.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)  
   Student 3

2.  
   ![Smiley](Image)
   ![Neutral](Image)
   ![Sad](Image)