

Book Battles and Story Wars: Claiming Victory in Literature Project Summary and Reflection

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Book Battles and Story Wars: Claiming Victory in Literature was a project designed to promote both academic and recreational reading in the middle grades. Its end goal was to end the reading battle that is present in middle school by bringing students, books, and competition together. In Book Battles and Story Wars, all of my students were strategically placed in literature circles in which group members read and analyzed the same books and stories. The group members worked together to gain and show understanding of the books they read. Students were required and encouraged to read, respond, collaborate, and compete.

Surprisingly, reluctant readers still lacked motivation, despite the battle format of the program, the freedoms given in regards to book selection and response activities, and the proposed incentives. Another shocking observation from Book Battles and Story Wars was that the students who genuinely participated were not particularly interested in challenging other groups to outperform them; they were more interested in the engaging literacy activities, collaborating with each other, and just improving themselves. Students were highly interested in sharing journal writings based on the text, quizzing each other, learning new vocabulary, and creating mnemonic devices for class content. Many students were also interested in leading group and class discussions. That, in itself, shows the success of the project.

The anticipated change desired from Book Battles and Story Wars included a renewed interest in reading, increased comprehension and fluency, and academic growth, and that growth would be reflected by classroom grades, MAP scores, and state testing. Though there was no state testing, there was growth. Students were impressed by their beginning and ending Lexile levels and RIT scores on MAP. With that being said, Book Battles and Story Wars was a successful project.

On a different note, due to some changes in the schedule and the school closure due to Covid, full implementation of the program was somewhat of a challenge. Culminating readings, activities, and competitions were not held. Resources from Book Battles and Story Wars will be reused in another attempt at the project next school year. Those resources included new book sets (to name a few - *Among the Hidden*, *The Giver*, *The View From Saturday*, and *A Long Walk to Water*), an Eggspert wireless buzzer system, prizes for the winners, paper, and storage boxes.

