

Creating the Perfect Storm for Personalized Learning with Buncee



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Abstract:

Personalized Learning, Genius Hour, 20% Time: could giving students complete control over their learning really have a positive impact on student engagement? Could second graders really take charge and be responsible for their own learning? Joining forces with Sally Whitley and her eager class of 2nd graders, we set out to investigate. Beginning with the natural curiosity of seven and eight year olds, we began our journey with a Wonder Wall. Two weeks into a science unit on weather, students were curious about many weather-related topics. They had just been introduced to Buncee the week before, and were eager to dig deeper and explore this tool further. Steve Jobs said it well, “If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don’t have to be pushed. The vision pulls you.” Our students were motivated and engaged. Their learning was astronomical.

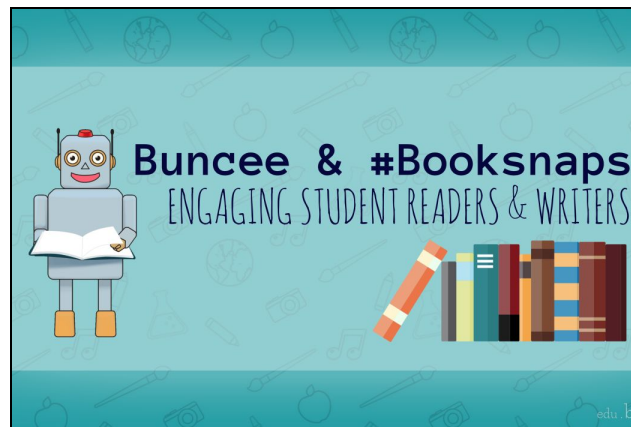
Introduction:

Ms. Whitley teaches a class of nineteen curious, energetic second graders and has created a learning environment where “wonders” are celebrated. She has a Wonder Wall up in her classroom where students routinely record questions about topics that stir their curiosity. These are the topics that they would like to explore more in depth. Up until the week of this project, the wall has been just that, a place to record curiosities. Ms. Whitley explains, “It’s been exciting to see how their ‘wondering’ has deepened and grown from ‘I wonder if I’ll learn how to multiply this year?’ or ‘I wonder where we’ll go on field trips?’ to ‘I wonder how the monarch butterfly knows to

migrate to Mexico each year?' and 'I wonder how clouds form?' and 'I wonder how hurricanes form?'"

Ms. Whitley and I have both been hearing a lot about personalized learning at local EdCamps and workshops. The stage was set and I asked the question to my colleague: "What if I were to work with you and support your class with personalized learning projects?" Her response was overwhelmingly positive, and our collaborative journey began.

The schedule is tight, the demands of the curriculum are heavy, and the students have not learned how to research just yet. A modified 20% Time was going to be the way to go. We decided to dive in feet first. Working together, we developed a plan for a six day cycle. Since the class had not yet learned research skills, we decided to compile a set of video and text resources into a Bunceee Research Hub. These resources would be where students would begin their research. We also created a planning template that would be available for note taking, if desired. We reserved computers in the media center and dedicated towards an hour a day for students to research and create. Students were encouraged to take notes and record their thinking in the template or with [#Booksnaps](#). Students would learn to research and take notes along the way as they worked with learning partners using Bunceee as a springboard for research, as a tool for taking notes and creating final presentations.



<https://www.bunceee.com/blog/bunceee-booksnaps-engaging-student-readers-writers/>

William Butler Yeats' famous quote of "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." is fitting to connect here. The creative aspects of Bunceee as a presentation tool coupled with students' choices for topics lit fires in the hearts of our second grade students. They were eager to explore, research and create. Ms. Whitley and I would both be available to support students along the way as they take their first steps towards becoming empowered learners on a quest for answers.

Background:

Do learner agency and personalized learning have an impact on student engagement and learning? Howard Gardner states that “you learn at your best when you have something you care about and can get pleasure being engaged in.” This is true for students of all ages. Opportunities to explore, wonder and create are as essential to learning as is oxygen for breathing. Gone are the days when the teacher stands at the front of the classroom dispensing knowledge while students sit quietly in rows and take notes. Thank goodness! Today’s students have access to answers to their questions at the blink of an eye. They have Siri, Google, Alexa, Smart Phones and YouTube. Teachers today are tasked with supporting learners as they learn to think, to explore and to solve problems. We, as 21st Century Educators, are embracing the role of Learning Facilitators.

In classrooms where students are grouped flexibly about the room in small collaborative groups, there is a hum and energy that comes from learning. Personalized Learning, Genius Hour, 20% Time can all be vehicles for teaching the [Reading Informational Text Standards](#) in elementary grades through authentic literacy tasks around self-selected topics. As teachers in classrooms empower young learners to take charge of their learning, they are not taking time away from teaching the curriculum. They are providing authentic learning opportunities for students to expand their thinking and their knowledge in areas of interest. This also creates an opportunity for teachers to engage academic standards with authentic rigor. Over the course of this project, as science instruction about weather continued, there were multiple occasions where students became the teachers by sharing their research with the class.

In order to prepare today’s students to solve tomorrow’s challenges, we must teach them to collaborate in small groups effectively, to think critically about a problem to develop multiple possible solutions, and to communicate effectively. It is no longer enough to think outside the box. In order to successfully create solutions for tomorrow, we need drive, determination and the flexibility for students to believe there is no box to limit their thinking.

Personalized learning is a step in this direction, and Buncee proves to be a presentation tool that students gravitate towards. The ease of use and multitude of features including stickers, animations, audio and video capabilities and integration across sharing platforms make Buncee the perfect choice for student work.

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Results:

Student groups were formed around common curiosities with several unlikely pairings. During the project, students would discover how much they enjoyed working with 'new' friends as they began to research and find the answer to their "I wonder" questions. Working in collaboration the media specialist and classroom teacher, we gathered print and digital research materials for the students. Ms. Whitley created a Buncee with links to books in Big Universe and Videos from Study Jams, YouTube and Discovery Education. Students used these resources to start their research and then used the search features in Big Universe to locate additional reading materials. The entire class was completely engaged in the digital research.

On Day 1, students were able to quickly and easily navigate the Buncee to locate materials, and all time was truly time on task for our students. Taking notes using the planning template was difficult for the students, as they wanted to copy everything on the page. At this point, we decided to have them use #Booksnaps in Buncee for note taking. They were charged with reading the material and selecting the page or pages they felt were most important in answering their question. They then summarized the most important parts in their own words and supported their words with stickers and animations using the Buncee Creation Canvas. Students talked with their learning partners and collaborated throughout the process. Conversations were deep as they debated which Buncee stickers were the most relevant that would support their thinking.

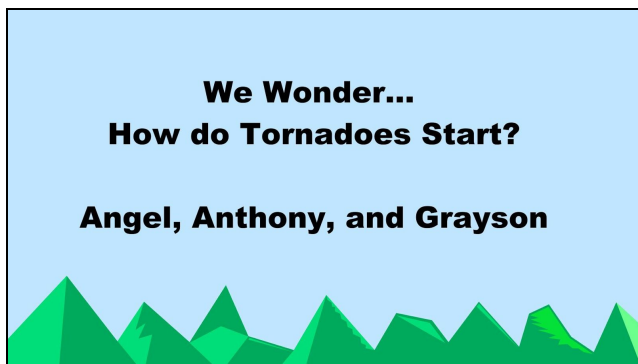
I even overheard a student have a critical conversation with his team. He had missed a work session, and upon returning he noticed that the group had placed Buncee stickers of super heroes, frogs, crazy eyes and the White House on their Buncee Creation. Without a second thought, he pulled out the [rubric](#) and asked his team if the stickers they had chosen were adding to the value of their work. His teammates stopped and reevaluated over their work. Without any pointing of fingers or arguing they agreed with him that they needed to make changes to the slide so that it would reflect their thinking. Together, the three boys created slides of which they were proud. They did this as empowered learners without any prompting or guidance from adults in the room. When we provide students with an effective tech tool, like Buncee, for success and opportunities to stretch their wings, they soar.

As students read through the [rubric](#), teams quickly determined that they wanted to score 3s and 4s. On days two through five, students continued their digital research and Buncee creations. Students easily used the search bar to locate stickers and animations. They were able to easily upload files they had saved to their home directories and add pictures to their creations. It was amazing to watch as they intuitively utilized the duplicate and set to front/back features. The one lesson I repeated with several groups by using Buncee was showing them how to put a colored shape behind their text to make it easier to read on the page. This too, they picked up quickly, and I saw students experimenting with lots of color combinations. They were eager to see their text "pop" on the page.

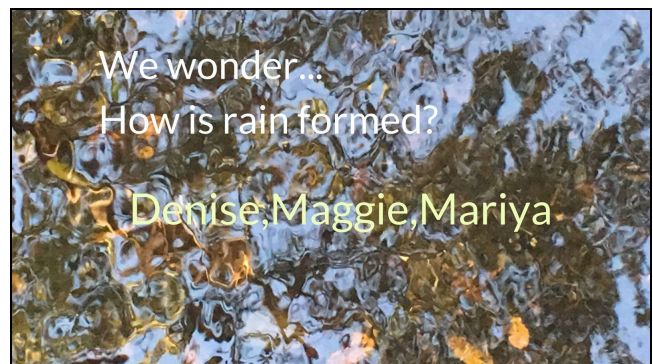
The students became very animated as they shared their excitement over their creations. The room was filled with smiles on the faces of some very engaged learners. When asked about their learning, they were quick to use their hands and gestures to explain the weather concepts they were investigating. At this point, I began collaborating with our Instructional Technology Facilitator. The students had done such a great job of learning the material. The option of writing a short summary seemed too stagnant for the energy behind their learning. Using green screens, Lego Story starters, and hands on experiments, students were able to add another dimension of life to their projects, personalizing their learning and bringing their projects to life. The camera, audio and video capabilities in Buncee were able to capture the excitement.

[Click the titles below to see samples of students' Buncees:](#)

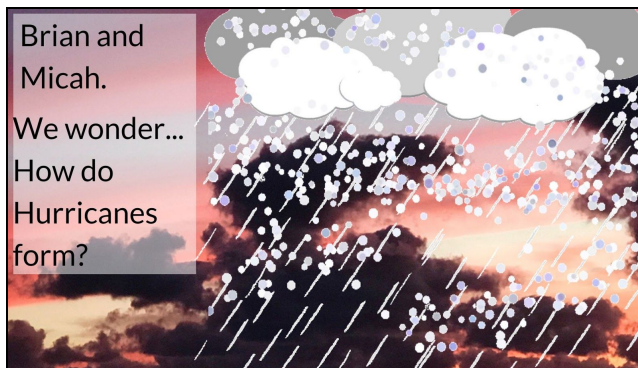
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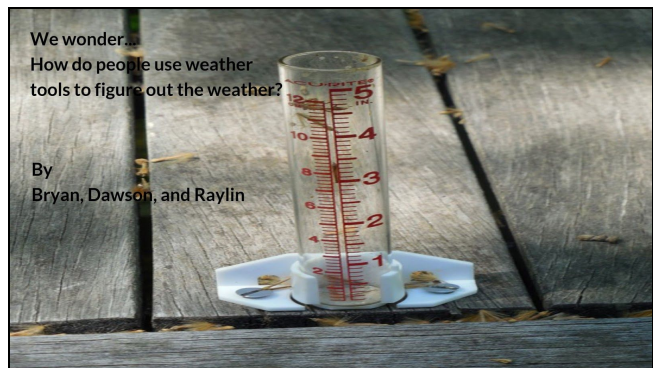
[How do Tornadoes Start?](#)



[How is rain formed?](#)



[How do Hurricanes form?](#)



[How do people use weather tools to figure out the weather?](#)

100% of the students who participated in the project expressed a desire to complete another "I wonder" project and felt that Buncee was a great tool to showcase their learning. Students shared statements like these in the post project survey:

“I liked (it) best when I could use the pictures and words to show my thinking.”

“I think it was a good app to share my learning because I could tell people with the text and I could add some pictures about what I was saying.”

“Buncee was good because when we had to take notes we could use booksnaps.”

“Buncee made me think me because there are so many things I can learn to do on Buncee.”

Post-project survey data indicated that the percentage of students who feel like Buncee Pros who could teach other students to use the Buncee Creation Platform increased by 100% . The percentage of students who realized that they can use Buncee at school increased from 50% while the percentage of students who realized they could also use Buncee at home increased 100% . Students overall found Buncee to be engaging and easy to navigate.

Conclusion:

Personalized learning is empowering for students and for teachers. During the course of this five day project I watched second graders take charge of their own learning for the first time. This confidence carried over into the classroom. As science instruction continued, the students were excited to share with and teach their classmates. Ms. Whitley stated that she

“Really liked empowering them to become student leaders and experts encouraging them to share what they'd learned with classmates.”

We generally planned for work sessions to last 35-45 minutes. On multiple occasions, work sessions lasted an hour and a half because everyone was engaged, on-task, and learning. Students were reading and interacting with nonfiction texts for an authentic purpose. They quickly understood the real life applications of the glossary and table of contents. Students referenced headings and sidebars to quickly locate information. Photographs, charts and graphs were analyzed for information. When asked probing questions by the teachers, students were quick to dig into the text and locate information. This was learning at its best driven by student interest.

The fun of creating in Buncee played a large part in the success of the projects. #Booksnaps made note-taking fun. There is something about adding an animated rain cloud to your notes that brings them to life. After students added their notes to the slide, they spent just as much time or more thinking critically and searching for the perfect stickers and animations to support their words. Using both linguistic and nonlinguistic representations aided the students in remembering the material. Marzano's research shows nonlinguistic representations to have an average effect size

of .75 on student achievement. (From ~~7 Uj fca sbgfi Mjcbh UK of gas FYUW6LUX6HUMJYs~~
~~ZfsbWUj b[Si Xyb5WjY Ya YbWb~~ Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock
ASCD, 2001. Copyright 2001, McREL '15 he stickers and animations were the students' favorite
parts of the platform.

Students were also able to very easily use the Web Image and YouTube features in Buncee to safely search and locate images and videos on their topics. Buncee provided students with a safe way to research online.

Creating a Buncee of research materials filled with links made it easy for the teacher to differentiate research materials for each group. Furthermore, providing them links to texts and videos on their topics and within the appropriate text complexity bands. It was very easy to create the assignment in Buncee and share with all of the students. The students appreciated that they had their own copy of the resources and the rubric at their disposal throughout the project.

As Albert Einstein stated, "Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think." Buncee is much more than a presentation tool. It is the perfect tool box for empowered learners to use as they explore and learn new content.

