

LEANLAB
EDUCATION

Classcraft

Implementation Findings
Research Report



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About LEANLAB Education

LEANLAB Education is a nonprofit research organization that helps schools understand and solve their biggest problems. We listen to parents, educators, and students to help them pinpoint specific problems that hinder student achievement. Then, we match those schools with education entrepreneurs. Together, they develop the next generation classroom tools through research and direct, community feedback.

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OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to identify and verify conditions of Classcraft implementation that would yield sustained engagement from teachers and students in an urban, under-resourced school context. The goal is to have established implementation fidelity among all teachers, which is a critical component to sustained use over time and a necessary component to conduct efficacy research in the fall. To that end, qualitative data was gathered from teachers and students at Longfellow Elementary School and George Melcher Elementary School - schools within the Kansas City Public School District in Kansas City, Missouri.

LEANLAB Education facilitated a co-design research process that included the voices of teachers, administrators, and parents from the school alongside the voices of the founders of Classcraft to develop the above research goals and processes of this study. The intent of co-design research is to elevate the voices of those most impacted by education tools being used in the classroom in order to help create a tool that is responsive to the needs of school communities and provide evidence-backed data to those responsible for adoption decisions.

The following research questions emerged from the first collaborative research design meeting:

Implementation Questions:

- What conditions of use and ways of product implementation yield greater teacher and student engagement with the solution?
- What are the barriers to classroom implementation?
- What features and/or functionalities should be added to provide additional utility to teachers and students?



Longfellow Elementary School
School Type: Public Elementary School
Location: Kansas City, MO
Grades: PK-6

Demographics: Longfellow

Total Number of Students	224
Gender: % Females	46%
Student-teacher ratio	11:1
% Free or Reduced Lunch	99%
Race/Ethnicity	
% African American	75%
% White	12.9%
% Hispanic	8.5%
% Multiracial	2.7%
% Native American	0%
% Pacific Islander	0.4%
% Asian American	0.4%



George Melcher Elementary School
School Type: Public Elementary School
Location: Kansas City, MO
Grades: K-6

Demographics: Melcher	
Total Number of Students	322
Gender: % Females	43%
Student-teacher ratio	12:1
% Free or Reduced Lunch	99%
Race/Ethnicity	
% African American	82.9%
% Hispanic	8.1%
% White	6.8%
% Multiracial	1.2%
% Native American	0.6%
% Asian American	0.3%
% Pacific Islander	0%

STUDY METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

All teachers - including specials teachers - across both school systems participated in this study. Administrators and teachers had decided in December that they would like the whole school to participate as they were interested in finding an all-school solution and wanted to see how implementation at the building level would work. The table below describes the distribution of teacher participants across grade levels at both schools.

TEACHER Participant Data	
Grade Level	# of Teachers
Longfellow Elementary School	
Kindergarten	1
1st Grade	2
2nd Grade	2
3rd Grade	1
4th Grade	1
5th Grade	1
6th Grade	1
Specials	3

George Melcher Elementary School	
Kindergarten	4
1st Grade	3
2nd Grade	2
3rd Grade	2
4th Grade	2
5th Grade	2
6th Grade	2
Specials	5
Total Teachers at Both Schools	34
Total Students at Longfellow	181
Total Students at Melcher	324
Total Students at Both Schools	505

ONBOARDING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

All teachers across Kindergarten to 6th grade attended a 90-minute overview and training session led by the Classcraft team in early February. Implementation was delayed as KCPS took the month of January to get Classcraft integrated with Clever. Teachers at both schools began using Classcraft in the middle of February in a virtual format. Teachers began using Classcraft in an in-person learning environment at the end of March. During the two-week transition in the middle of March from virtual to in-person, Classcraft was not used with much consistency across both school systems. Both schools continued to use Classcraft in the physical classroom through the beginning of June.

DATA COLLECTION AND MEASUREMENT

Implementation Design

The goal of the implementation study was to assess barriers to full teacher and student engagement and to identify ways of use that increased engagement. To that end, teachers were asked to use Classcraft with all their students for the full spring semester in both the virtual and in-person setting. The recommended use of Classcraft was daily and to have teachers start by just giving points to students for positive behavior. Teachers were encouraged to try out other features of Classcraft as they became more familiar and interested, but the emphasis was on giving out points.

The following tools and processes were used to collect data on implementation barriers and successes.

1. Implementation Survey (1): One survey was sent to teachers in the end of February to solicit feedback on the training and onboarding process as well as to identify the features of Classcraft that teachers were using and with what frequency.
2. Focus Groups with Teachers (12 total): Two 60-minute, virtual interviews were conducted with teachers by grade level in March and May respectively across both schools. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain deeper insight into the ways teachers were using Classcraft with students and to identify the barriers and successes teachers were having with implementation. The time was also used to learn more about the perceived value-add of Classcraft and to solicit teacher feedback on product modifications.
3. Focus Groups with Students (2 total): In the middle of May, one 30-minute focus group was conducted with three students from each grade from 3rd to 6th grade at Longfellow Elementary School. Melcher did not have enough consistent student use to warrant fruitful focus groups. The purpose of the student focus groups was to learn more about what students liked and disliked about Classcraft, to identify barriers to their engagement, and to solicit their feedback on product modifications.

FINDINGS

IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASSCRAFT

Implementation Successes and Challenges

The results in the tables below summarize key successes and challenges with implementation from the teacher and student perspective. Unless otherwise noted, the results pertain to findings from both schools. The intent of these tables is to give Classcraft insight into ways they can enhance their onboarding and implementation guidelines and to provide evidence-based support and recommendations for these guidelines that can lend more credibility to the guidelines when presented to school partners in the future.

Despite the difficult learning environment over the semester and the transitions and uncertainty as a result of changing covid cases, the findings in these tables provide a lot of insight into the realities that teachers face even in “normal” times as teachers constantly face competing priorities and busy schedules. These findings also provide Classcraft insight into the realities of implementation in under-resourced, urban schools.

The table below summarizes the key implementation successes and challenges as gathered through qualitative focus groups with teachers and students.

Implementation Findings Teacher Direct Quotes in <i>italics</i>	
Successes	Challenges
Training & Support* * Also see the Classcraft Onboarding Report from March for more detail on this section.	

Classcraft supplies extensive training materials including start-up guides, teacher checklist, and student intro videos

Some teachers were overwhelmed by the one longer training style of Classcraft and requested more, shorter

that all teachers found to be valuable. The teacher checklist, in particular, was seen as extremely useful.

Teachers spent less than 1 hour setting up Classcraft, with most spending about 30 minutes on setup, which they thought was reasonable.

(20-30 minute) training sessions over the first month to six weeks.

All teachers found the initial training hard to follow as it was the first time they were seeing Classcraft and hadn't had an opportunity to access it or play around with it first. All teachers said the training would be way more effective if they had access to their account so they could follow along.

Recommendation on Training & Support

1. Offer more frequent and shorter PD/training sessions in the first month to six weeks that divide the components of Classcraft into more feasible pieces and make the onboarding less overwhelming.
2. Give teachers access to accounts before the first training.
3. In the initial training, consider adding more support - evidence-based recommendations like the ones below - on how teachers should implement it in the classroom.
4. Offer additional, short and optional PD sessions for users throughout the first semester of use to offer more insight into the more complex features. (Many teachers do not use the support materials even though they are readily accessible as they need more hands-on support.)

Teacher Classroom Use

Teachers used Classcraft points to positively reinforce student behavior in the classroom.

The teachers that found most success with assigning points did so on their phones in real-time throughout the whole day.

All teachers used it differently and not consistently. They all reported that they didn't have clear guidelines on best practice for classroom use and found it challenging to incorporate into their routines. They acknowledged that it would have been easier to integrate into routine if

For teachers that don't like to walk around with their phones, it was a significant challenge to find the right time to assign points. It was too much of a distraction to stop what they were doing to go to the computer to assign points in the moment. At the end of the day - or during breaks -

they had either forgotten or reported that it would take them too long to go through each student and assign points. They also said that it defeated the purpose to assign points for positive behavior when it didn't occur at the moment it happened.

The majority of teachers found that students were more motivated by it when teachers tied the points to something they could earn outside of Classcraft, particularly when they tied points to their school store in the case of Longfellow.

All teachers reported that they struggled to incentivize students with points since students felt like the points weren't tied to anything.

Administrators wanted to see points tied to their school store and a way for them to see how many total points each student has.

A few teachers would pull up the list of students in their class with their corresponding points on the projector in order for the students to compare themselves and that helped motivate them. Teachers also showed the full class progress to incentivize them to work as a team, and that also helped motivate them and get kids working together on various tasks.

Assigning team points was also a good way for teachers to reward many people and an effective motivator because "one kid didn't want to be the one that hurt the team."

Recommendation on Teacher Use

1. Teachers need more support and ideas of how to implement Classcraft in their classrooms with more efficiency, especially for teachers that don't want to carry around their phones.
2. Teachers and administrators both want the points to be tied to their school stores or other customizable rewards. To the extent that this is already possible, teachers didn't understand how to set that up.
3. The teacher experience was wildly inconsistent and they felt very overwhelmed by all the features. This validates Classcraft's next iteration of allowing teachers to choose how extensively they want to engage with the various features, and further implementation research should test whether that change is effective or not.

Student Use and Engagement

50% of teachers said students are excited and engaged with the program - at least in the beginning - particularly those in 3rd grade and beyond.

Teachers of younger grades (K, 1st) reported that the vast majority of the students found it challenging to engage with Classcraft for the following reasons:

- Students cannot read so they weren't able to understand a lot of it, especially independently
- The concepts of points in the hundreds and thousands were too advanced. Students don't know how many 350 is compared to 3500, so the point structure was confusing for them
- Students struggled to log in independently, which frustrated students and took a lot of time for teachers to support.

Students expected to see more games, so they all started to disengage when they realized there was no game or didn't understand their goal.

About $\frac{1}{3}$ of teachers at Melcher expressed concern about the "look" of avatars for younger students, suggesting the characters were too mature, "scary-looking," and "evil."

Recommendation on Student Use

1. Teachers suggested audio could accompany reading material for younger grades.
2. Different point structure for K-1
3. Make the experience feel more like a competitive game and/or add "things for the characters to do."

STUDENT FEEDBACK

The table below summarizes student feedback as captured in four different focus groups across 3rd to 6th grade. **Also refer to audio recordings that were sent for access to verbatim responses.**

Student Feedback	
Question	Patterns in Responses
What feature or activity of Classcraft do you like the most?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The designs and features of the pets. ● Designing characters and choosing clothes ● Leveling up and not having to stop ● Training our animals
What did you think about the characters? Was there a particular one you wanted to be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Liked characters but wanted more options for characters and wanted to be able to design clothes and accessories including the pets ● Girls tended to like “the one with one eye” and boys tended to like the “green monster” but not many systematic preferences
What would you like to be able to do in Classcraft that you currently can't?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Send private messages to other kids or be able to interact with other students more in the platform through games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I like <i>kudos</i> but they are a little boring.” ● More quests - be able to walk around and do them like <i>prodigy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need more things for the characters to do ● Crafting station <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I want to be able to design our own outfits.” ● Need more things to do with my points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Examples: play games, go on more quests
What about Classcraft is hard to use? What do you not understand about Classcraft?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The level up system was confusing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “The confusing part is you don't know what level you are going to.....is there ever a stop?” ● Students didn't know what the “goal” of Classcraft was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I wish there was a goal or objective to Classcraft.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “I never knew what I was supposed to be doing with my character or points.” ● Students didn’t know what to do with points and preferred to use them for external benefits
What would you change about Classcraft? Or add to Classcraft?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All students were disappointed that it was not a game ● Other additions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More pet designs ○ More costumes ○ More opportunity to use power ○ Add a shop with the option to buy more weapons ○ More background and setting options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Examples: a forest, desert, ocean, other planets

Recommendations based on Student Feedback

1. Overall, students wanted the experience to feel more game-like. They were unclear what the goal of Classcraft was from the student experience. Of the students that used it most frequently, they understood the notion of leveling up, but they still didn’t know when it “ended” or what their goal was. There was lots of interest in the quests and powers and students wanted to be able to use the powers in quests in a game-like fashion. Therefore, it is recommended to enhance the quests by making it feel more like a game - especially one that would be competitive with their friends.
2. While all students loved the characters, they wanted more options and more flexibility in designing their own characters and clothes/accessories.
3. The points were not explicitly tied to anything tangible for the students. They didn’t know what to do with them and, again, wanted points to be tied to a game that they could compare with their friends. All students said that without the points tied to a game, they weren’t motivated by them. If the points were tied to their school stores, they would like that better.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and verify conditions of Classcraft implementation that would yield sustained engagement from teachers and students across different contexts. The goal is to have begun to establish implementation fidelity among all teachers, which is a critical component to sustained use over time and a necessary component to conduct efficacy research.

The findings in this study revealed that implementation fidelity of Classcraft was still met with significant challenges as Classcraft was a bit advanced and overwhelming for teachers and students alike. Without clearer guidelines on exactly how to use it in the classroom with more efficiency, teachers really struggled with finding a way to integrate it. Using a phone was not a viable solution for most teachers. Teachers and students expected Classcraft to be more of a game where characters would have a clear goal to reach and be in competition with their peers so, as a result, the point structure and incentive quickly became not as motivating. Classcraft was also very challenging for Kindergarten and 1st grade students to even use.

The conditions and climate this year were not favorable to teachers trying a new thing especially at the level of commitment that Classcraft requires. The pandemic forced schools to change learning environments multiple times, so teachers didn't have a good chance to get into a routine or rhythm, which significantly impacted this study. Still, there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest that teachers and students were excited about Classcraft and saw the value it could have on teaching and reinforcing positive behavior.

As Classcraft undergoes a major transformation of its platform - one in which provides teachers a simpler way to use it and allows teachers more flexibility in their level of engagement - it is recommended that further implementation research be conducted in the fall to gather evidence that the changes do elicit more engagement and to identify conditions of teacher implementation fidelity that is crucial for sustained and consistent usage and a necessary component for evaluating the promise of impact of Classcraft on student outcomes.