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# The Use of Instruction and Teacher Enthusiasm: How Teachers Impact Student Motivation and Engagement in the Secondary English Classroom

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The Use of Instruction and Teacher Enthusiasm: How Teachers Impact Student Motivation and  
Engagement in the Secondary English Classroom

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### **Abstract**

Student engagement and motivation are an essential part of the classroom experience. A teacher's job is to cater to student needs in the classroom when planning lessons and differentiating instruction. Motivating factors for students differ; however, the question is whether or not a teacher can motivate a student through enthusiasm and a well-designed lesson plan. In this research study, I focused on how my enthusiasm and the use of effectively designed lessons affect student motivation and engagement.

Keywords: engagement, motivation, instruction

The line between engagement and just having fun in class is, at times, thin; however, it does exist and sometimes it's crossed. Engagement and motivation are two important factors when it comes to student learning at any grade level and must be considered carefully by teachers. This research was largely focus on the teacher and their role in engaging students and motivating them to learn actively in the secondary classroom setting. Many factors contribute to student learning including how a teacher presents himself or herself in front of the classroom on a daily basis. This work gives insight to how a teacher can use certain techniques that promote learning, how students can become motivated, and what engagement looks like.

An important aspect of this research was to define various key terms that were essential later on. First and foremost, for the sake of this study, I needed to breakdown the term “teacher techniques” since I implemented these techniques during my research. In terms of the research I conducted, teacher techniques were composed of two levels: instructional methods and classroom management practices. Instructional methods referred to the models a teacher uses during instructional time such as direct instruction. Classroom management practices largely focused on a teacher’s personal beliefs; however, for this research the primary technique that I focused on was a teacher’s level of enthusiasm as a management technique that engaged and motivated students to learn.

Another term that must be dissected early on is engagement. By definition, “engagement refers to the behavioral intensity and emotional quality of a person’s active involvement during a task” (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon & Barch, 2004, p. 147). Since this is educational research, the task at hand would be a student’s involvement during a lesson being taught by a teacher. Not only is engagement important to define, the term motivation is also essential to understand. Motivation, according to Williams and Williams (2011), is defined as “the act or process of motivating, the

condition of being motivated; a motivating force, stimulus, or influence; incentive; drive; something (such as desire) that causes a person or student to act” (p. 2). While this is the technical definition of motivation, what I sought to find in this research study was the student’s self-perception of motivation; how the student felt when assigned classwork and if they were increasingly willing to complete work assigned with little to no complaint or procrastination. The defined terms above played a vital role in the research that I conducted. A teacher’s instructional methods and management practices may correlate with a student’s level of engagement and thus positively affect student motivation at the secondary level, but this speculation wasn’t proven. As a future teacher, it was important that I understood student engagement and motivation and how they correlated. This research defined specific words such as motivation and engagement that were essential to this study while also looking at different techniques teachers could implement during instruction to enhance student performance with the intention of finding a correlating factor or factors between a teacher’s methods and student motivation and engagement.

### **Literature Review**

Student engagement and motivation are factors that teachers often focus on in the classroom setting. In order to more fully understand the topic and all the components that contribute to it, a myriad of resources such as educational journals, articles, and research studies have been consulted to gather all the data. These sources provide all of the research that has been conducted on students and their motivation as well as the factors that add to their engagement in the classroom.

## **Teacher Techniques**

Teachers utilize different techniques in the classroom on a daily basis. No two days are exactly the same because teachers often vary their instructional techniques or methods of delivery based on each individual class and their needs. For this literature review, teacher techniques refer to the instructional models a teacher utilizes in their classroom and the management practices they implement. On a smaller scale, classroom management practices refer to the persona a teacher personifies in front of the students, specifically their level of enthusiasm. According to Guvenc (2015) “teachers who design and apply teaching techniques play an important role in the motivation and class participation of the students” (p. 648). Educators that have students with emotional or behavioral disorders can alleviate disruptions by planning their instruction accordingly (Hirn & Scott, 2014). Lesson plans or instructional models that are well thought out and used appropriately make instruction easier to facilitate while a teacher’s ability to motivate students through the use of management practices encourage students to complete their work.

Teachers can use various instructional models in their classroom to facilitate learning and engage students in the material. Instructional models such as the Jigsaw model or the Concept Attainment model are great tools for a teacher to have and call upon when trying to differentiate instruction. McCoy (2013) suggests that teachers introduce new material on a daily basis so that the students will stay on task and be more engaged with the lesson. These models can be used when introducing a new concept as McCoy suggested, or even to review previously learned material. Models of instruction are often effective in the classroom, which then “facilitate higher rates of student success and thus should result in higher rates of positive feedback and lower rates of negative feedback” (Hirn & Scott, 2014, p. 592). Models are not the only means of

teaching in the classroom; other methods such as scaffolding strengthen students' ability to think critically and also enhance writing skills (McCoy, 2013, p.150).

Recent studies have also shown that “instructional sequence consisting of presentation of information, the provision of questions or action requests, positive feedback in response to success, corrective feedback in response to errors, and formative assessment(s)” also influence student learning through the methods teachers use (Hirn & Scott, 2014, p. 591). Between the use of models and scaffolding, teachers have the ability to teach their lessons in various ways so that their instruction is engaging for students. Students differ in several aspects; some students need support in the form of various strategies that promote active engagement rather than passive listening. The appropriate delivery of instruction is essential for student engagement, especially for students in a classroom who may have a disability. Stringfellow and Miller (2005) found in their study that active student engagement for students with disabilities is critical to their success. Though instructional models are not the only technique a teacher can use to engage and motivate students, it is one of the most popular techniques.

The way in which a teacher facilitates their classroom and the management style they choose to implement can have a large effect on student behavior, and learning. According to Hirn and Scott (2014) recent research that looks at the interactions between teachers and students with behavior issues show low amounts of positive as well as negative student engagement (p. 590). Teachers must cater their management styles effectively to maximize student engagement; therefore, the way in which a teacher manages the students in their classroom can have either a positive or a negative effect on their learning process. Classroom management is more than just how a teacher controls their classroom.



Management for the sake of engagement and motivation also deals with how a teacher handles the timing of activities as well as the resources that they implement into their lessons. According to McCoy (2013), “One effective pattern of structuring class time is to break instruction into smaller teaching and activity sets and to intersperse each set with higher order thinking and reflective questions” (p. 149). This management technique allows for the teacher to focus on specific students who may need extra motivation. Activities in the classroom should not be drawn out or overextended because the longer a student is asked to focus on one task at hand, the higher the risk of losing that student to boredom. Students vary in their ability to stay on task for a certain amount of time and if a teacher recognizes this feature in their classroom then they should adjust accordingly (McCoy, 2013, p. 149).

Students respond in a more positive manner to learning when a teacher is enthusiastic and gives positive feedback to students during instruction, but unfortunately according to Hirn and Scott (2014), teachers give positive feedback to students once every half hour on average (p. 603). A teacher’s response to students, whether it is positive or negative, impacts the students’ ability to be engaged in the lesson. In the classroom “the emotional dimension of engagement reflects positive emotions such as enthusiasm, interest, and enjoyment experienced during learning” (Guvenc, 2015, p. 648). As teenagers, students’ mental and emotional capacities largely influence their thinking and learning processes; therefore, if a teacher is responding with negative feedback rather than positive feedback, the student will be more apt to disrupt class and forgo any learning at all even if the teacher uses engaging instructional methods. Students respond in a more positive manner to teachers and assigned work when the teacher has a positive attitude and upbeat demeanor in the classroom (Guvenc, 2015; Hirn & Scott, 2014). Teachers should try to respond more often with positive feedback so that the classroom has a warm,

inviting environment where the students feel safe to learn while also considering their level of enthusiasm when teaching.

While research does show that positive, enthusiastic feedback impacts students, research does not show how a teacher's level of enthusiasm while instructing impacts students. Teacher attitude, whether negative or positive, affects student learning, but the teacher's overall enthusiasm about the content is only speculated about and never directly focused on in recent studies.

### **Engagement vs. Motivation**

Current research has often debated whether or not motivation and engagement are actually different factors or if they should be considered one. However, engagement and motivation are not the same, but they do go hand-in-hand and work closely together in the classroom setting. According to Guvenc (2015), "students that approach the course with controlled motivation have difficulty in engagement to the course" (p. 649). Motivation largely is affected by a student's mentality because a student's academic performance is affected by motivation, which, in turn, is affected by their classroom engagement. Research states that student disengagement "results from a weakened relationship between the individual and educational institutions" (Archambault et al., 2009, p. 652). Learning is a cyclical experience in which factors of the learning process correlate. This can be seen specifically in the relationship between engagement and motivation. While these two terms are closely related, it is necessary to define them separately in order to fully grasp how they work together.

According to a 2004 study by Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon and Barch, "engagement refers to the behavioral intensity and emotional quality of a person's active involvement during a task" (p. 147). Students who are engaged are on task and actively listening to the teacher dispense new

information. Appleton, Christenson, Kim and Reschly (2006) contribute that “engagement thus reflects a person’s active involvement in a task or activity” (p. 428). Engagement is comprised of multiple behavioral factors like participation during instruction and affective components such as a feeling of belonging and a value on education. Four main subtypes of engagement have been cited in recent studies; these four factors are academic, behavioral, cognitive, and psychological (Appleton et al., 2006).

Motivation comes in various forms for different people. Williams and Williams (2011) define motivation as “the act or process of motivating the condition of being motivated; a motivating force, stimulus, or influence; incentive; drive; something (such as desire) that causes a person or student to act” (p. 2). Motivation is affected by various factors in the school setting such as the students themselves, the teacher, the content being taught, how the content is being taught, and the environment around them (Williams & Williams, 2011). Each of these five aspects of motivation is important to remember when understanding the definition of the term.

**Measuring engagement.** The Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) was developed and implemented in the 2006 study conducted by Appleton et al., which focused specifically on student engagement with the four determining factors of engagement (academic, behavioral, cognitive and psychological). This scale was constructed by “creating a detailed scale blueprint that captured the broad conceptualizations of cognitive and psychological engagement discussed in the literature” (Appleton et al., 2006). Appleton et al. (2006) used the SEI, which was comprised of other scales, and blueprints that closely followed what they were searching for in terms of what engagement is defined as. The SEI is a survey comprised of 35 questions that ask students about their personal beliefs. This survey is ideally given at the beginning of a study and

then at the end of the study so that researchers can compare student answers from the beginning and the end.

**Measuring motivation.** The Teacher's Motivational Support Scale is a 24-item Likert-type scale that looks at and measures students' perceptions of the teacher's motivational support (Guvenc, 2015). The purpose of this scale is to see how students view their teacher's support during instruction and focuses on the teachers' ability to encourage students. While this scale determines what the students think of their teacher's motivational support, the Motivational Regulation Scale assesses the student's beliefs about their own motivation (Guvenc, 2015, p. 653). The Academic Self-regulation Scale was developed to assess "the students' reasons for studying on a certain course" (Guvenc, 2015, p. 652). This scale helps teachers and researchers discover where the student's motivational drive comes from. Another way to measure student motivation is the Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS) introduced in a 2000 study conducted by Guay, Vallerand and Blanchard. The SIMS measures student motivation by the amount of time the student spends doing work on something that is not directly assigned by a teacher. This scale helps researchers measure motivation, specifically intrinsic motivation since the students are willingly participating in work when they do not have to work.

Students are engaged only if the teacher gives them the opportunity to engage in the material. Teachers should create an environment in their classroom where students are motivated to work, participate and learn (Adkins-Coleman, 2010, p. 44.) For a student to be engaged in the material being taught they need to be motivated to participate. According to Adkins-Coleman (2010), students are motivated to participate in classroom tasks when teachers "focus on student learning, facilitate warm social interactions, demonstrate concern for their students and insist that students show respect and care for one another" (p. 45). The students in a secondary classroom

setting can be difficult for a teacher to engage. However, the way teachers present themselves and what they expect of their students promotes engagement and motivation. It is important to take into account the students and their backgrounds when looking at the best ways to motivate them. Students from different upbringings require specialized techniques when it comes to engagement and motivation.

There is a vast difference between a student who is just learning and a student who is learning while engaged. Guvenc (2015) suggests, “Students who are engaged during learning achieve better grades as compared with the less-engaged students and are less likely to drop out” (p. 648). A lesson may have the tendency to be fun for a student, but an engaging lesson is one where they are actively learning while being engaged in the content. In a 2010 study by Adkins-Coleman, the students were constantly actively engaged because the teacher gave them no other alternative. The lesson design, the teacher’s expectations of the students, and the student’s motivational drive led them to be engaged in the lesson rather than just having fun going through the motions.

Often, it can be difficult to tell if a student is doing their work based on a desire to learn or seeking the praise of teacher. Research suggests, “autonomous motivation comprises intrinsic motivation and autonomously decided external motivation (identification)” (Guvenc, 2015, p. 649). Students who are motivated intrinsically appear to have a higher regard for learning information without having to be rewarded; whereas, students who require constant praise and positive reinforcement are extrinsically motivated (Williams & Williams, 2011). Guvenc (2015) suggests that intrinsic motivation must be a target that teachers aim for when instructing. The theory of self-determination relies heavily on two succinct levels of motivation: autonomy

competence, and relatedness (Guvenc, 2015). When students are motivated it is because these needs are met and fulfilled.

A student's reasons for completing assigned tasks may be the desire to be prideful in their work or they can be working because they are "avoiding a feeling of guilt, coping with shame and anxiety, or achieving positive emotions, such as pride and relaxation" (Guvenc, 2015, p. 648).

This form of motivation is referred to as "introjected" according to Guvenc (2015). Introjected motivation is closely related to external motivation because the student does not wish to complete a task for the fulfillment that completion brings. These students require attention from teachers during instruction and when classwork is assigned.

Whether a student is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated is not the issue. The issue lies with the teacher's ability to motivate students. The research does not make a connection between the student's intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and the instructor of a classroom.

### **Relationship Between Engagement and Motivation**

Engagement and motivation are largely dependent upon each other. In fact, engagement is a product of motivation. A student who cares about their work, thus they are intrinsically motivated, is more likely to become engaged in classroom activities because they have a personal desire to perform well (Guay et al., 2000; Reeve et al., 2004). According to Reeve et al. (2004) "high school teachers can become more autonomy supportive and, to the extent that they are able to do so, their students show greater engagement" (p. 165). When a teacher shows a greater amount of support for students the engagement levels increase and the students become more intrinsically motivated (Guvenc, 2015). Students who receive support motivationally are more likely to become engaged in the content and participate in class (Reeve et al., 2004; Guvenc, 2015). However, students who perceive teacher support in a negative manner are less

likely to become engaged and will experience disaffection. Disaffection is a state of dissatisfaction with those who have authority; in this case the students would be displeased with the teacher because teachers are the authority in the classroom. Signs of disaffection most commonly seen in students are boredom, anxiety, and frustration (Guvenc, 2015). Motivation relies on engagement, which is a precarious balance between how a teacher handles a classroom and how the students respond to the teacher's instruction.

Motivation and engagement are two terms that are associated frequently with students and teachers. Students are affected daily by a teacher's instructional methods and techniques employed in the classroom. A student's motivational drive is often based on their personal beliefs about themselves and the teacher's expectations of their students. Engaging a student with low motivational drive can be difficult for a teacher. Teachers must learn their students and the personalities that come with the children so that they can best instruct them. A personal relationship with a student can promote learning in the classroom and can even spur the student to perform more efficiently in the academic setting.

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## **Methods**

The purpose of this research was to identify the connection between a teacher's use of instruction, such as lesson plans, and the students' motivation and engagement in the secondary English classroom. Teacher techniques such as instructional models or classroom management techniques often impact students and their ability to perform well and engage in the material. Another factor that was considered during this study was how a teacher personifies him or herself in front of the students. As a researcher, I implemented practices in the classroom so that I could analyze how the students react to techniques used in the classroom.

### **School and Participants**

This study took place in a rural high school in central Virginia. This county, according to the 2014 census, had a population of about 130,000 residents with approximately 33 schools to service those in the county. The high school that was specifically being studied for this research had about 2,000 students enrolled for the 2015-2016 school year. The students that participated in this study were all 10th grade students. The course was a 10th grade general English class. Before collecting data, all students were given consent and assent letters to be signed by them and their parents (See appendices A and B). In the particular class that I collected data on there were about 28 students, roughly 60% of these students are Caucasian and 40% are minority students. These 28 students consist mostly of females with males being the minority. Though there were 28 students in this class only 17 chose to participate in the study.

### **Data Collection**

The data for this study was collected during the spring semester of the school year. The classes, which were on an 80-minute block scheduling with an alternating A-B day format, rotate daily; therefore, the data collection was done every other day since those were the days in which



the selected class was present. Since this research mainly focused on student motivation and engagement, a large portion of the data was observation and collections of student work. The first collection of data was in survey format. The second set of data that was collected was quantitative data from a worksheet to test the level of engagement as well as observation notes. A third form of data was collected in the form of student interviews combined with a survey regarding their level of motivation. Lastly, the students were asked to take the same survey at the end of the study that they took at the beginning.

### **Procedure**

Since this was a mixed methods study, I used both qualitative and quantitative measures during the process to collect the data I was looking for. In the beginning of the research, I asked the students to take a survey. This survey was the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) (See Appendix C) and it consisted of 35 questions that asked the students about their beliefs about school and themselves on general. The SEI measured six different variables of student cognitive and psychological engagement: student-teacher relationships, peer support at school, family support for learning, control relevance for school work, future aspirations and goals, and intrinsic motivation. Only I saw the student answers and I scored them myself. This was given to them at the very beginning of the study so that I was able to measure their progress by the end of the study when I gave them this same survey again. This survey was scored using a four-point Likert scale with answers such as “1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Disagree, 4-Strongly Disagree” (See Appendix C). This survey was given to all students at the very beginning of the research so that I will be able to assess their personal motivational transformation by the end of the experience.

After the survey, I conducted two weeks of lessons in the classroom using instructional models, like direct instruction, and lesson plans that had engaging factors such as videos or

handouts. During those lessons I observed the students' levels of engagement and motivation by monitoring their work ethic when given the assignment and the rate of questions asked during instruction. Students who frequently asked questions during a lesson were often (but not always) more engaged with the material and had higher levels of motivation. Another aspect I incorporated in the classroom was the use of enthusiasm. The idea was that a student's level of enthusiasm would reflect the teacher's. I looked for student reactions to the material based on my level of enthusiasm about the content. This was measurable by the number of questions asked as well as the way in which the students asked them.

Students were given an additional survey during the middle of the study to gauge their levels of motivation. I created this survey and it was on a five-point Likert scale such as "1- Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3- Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly Disagree" and measured student beliefs about teacher enthusiasm, their personal motivation, and a lesson's level of interest (See Appendix D). This survey was given to every student in the classroom and I collected the answers and analyzed their answers with their personal works I've already collected in class.

The student interview portion (See Appendix E) of this research was conducted during the middle of the study. The interviews with students were recorded and then transcribed afterward. The six students who were interviewed were selected from the pool of students who had turned in their assent and consent forms; these students were a diverse representation of the student population in this class. During this portion, the interviews were conducted one-on-one and asked the students to analyze how my teaching techniques positively affected, negatively affected or made no impact on their engagement and motivation.

The final portion of data collection was the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI) survey again (See Appendix C) and it was identical to the first survey. The point of giving this survey

twice was to see how the student answers had changed over the course of the two weeks where I was implementing lessons of my design as their full-time teacher and while I was conducting my study.

### **Analysis of Data**

Once all of the data was collected, I analyzed it as a whole. The surveys were compared against each other by looking at the first survey and then moving to the second so that I could analyze them in depth. I took into consideration the six-part breakdown of the Student Engagement Instrument survey and looked at student's individual scores for the pre and post survey scores. I examined at the scores for each individual student from the first SEI survey to the final survey. Student answers were evaluated to see if their perception of personal motivation had progressed throughout the two weeks with me as their teacher based on the way in which I conducted class. The quantitative work I collected earlier in the study was then assessed along with that day's observations of the students who were engaged with the lesson. The scores for the work and the level of observed engagement were examined to see if their levels of engagement were related to the received scores. While it is ideal that the scores would have been related to the student level of engagement this was not a guarantee. If the scores did not match the level of engagement then I analyzed the score while recalling my teaching to see if that was a factor.

Finally, the student interviews were dissected to appraise students' thoughts on motivation and engagement based on their teacher and their ideas about motivation. Specifically, students' personal beliefs about themselves, school courses, and the environment in which they learn were the main focus for the interviews. These interviews were representative of the student population embodying the overall opinion of the students who were interviewed. All of this data

was used to see if the ways in which a teacher introduces new material to students through the use of instructional models, lesson plan design, and their classroom attitude positively or negatively impact student engagement and motivation in the secondary English classroom.

### **Results**

Students were given the Student Engagement Instrument survey before I began to teach lessons. The instrument measured student beliefs on their relationships with teachers, their relationships with peers, family support, their beliefs on schoolwork as well as their opinions about the future and their motivation. Each of these categories broke down into cognitive and psychological engagement; the lower the score a student received the more positive they felt about each of the categories. Of the 17 students who took the pre-survey, student scores ranged from 1.17 to 3.3 (See Appendix F). Scores such as 1.17, the lower scores, meant that the student either strongly agreed or agreed with the most of the statements on the survey. Students had an overall total score of 22.28 for the pre-survey.

After the two-week instructional period, students were given the Student Engagement Survey Instrument again as a post-survey. They were asked to complete the same 35 questions as before. The post-survey results varied only slightly from the pre-survey scores and ranged from 1.14 to 2.85. For the post-survey, the overall total score for all 17 students was 30.51. The difference of +8.23 can be seen between the pre and post survey scores. After calculating the pre and post-test scores there is a p-value of 0.2874, which denotes that there was no significant change in the results.

Students were taught lessons designed specifically for this research study. During this time, they were observed during the lesson and how they interacted with the material during class. Students were directly observed during class time as they were being instructed and during

independent work. While observing the students, I noticed certain aspects of student engagement. If a lesson included notes at the beginning, then students were less attentive throughout the activity and the independent practice. However, if the lesson included a handout and a video that correlated with the content, students listened more actively and asked more questions. In addition, during lessons where the students were asked to actively move around the room they participated far more often in class discussion than they would on any given day.

Toward the middle of the study, the students were given a seven question, 4-point Likert scale survey (See Appendix B) in which they were asked to answer questions about their personal beliefs about motivation. This survey focused on student beliefs about teacher enthusiasm and motivation in the classroom and the students were asked to answer as honestly as possible. Thirteen of the 17 students indicated on their survey that they already considered themselves to be motivated students while the other four suggested that they could be more motivated when it comes to schoolwork (See Appendix G).

The majority of students answered the second question on the survey indicating that they believed that if a lesson is more interesting, they're more motivated to do an assignment after the lesson (See Appendix H). Fifteen of the 17 students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. When asked about the teacher's level of enthusiasm impacting their engagement and motivation students gave mixed results, but the scores were more positive than negative with 10 students reporting that the level of enthusiasm affected their learning in some capacity.

Six students were asked to participate in the interview process at the end of the study. After transcribing the interviews two themes occurred from the student responses: self-motivation and student interest. Students frequently talked about their ability to motivate themselves and how the lesson's level of interest factored into their engagement. One student

stated, “I think if a teacher is excited about what they’re teaching about and enjoying what they’re teaching it makes [learning] a lot more [motivating] for a student. For example, in this class [the lead teacher and the student teacher] are very excited to teach and make sure we are all very engaged in what we’re learning about and it makes it a lot more enjoyable and that’s why I enjoy this class.” She indicated, along with several other students, that interesting lessons made her want to learn.

### **Discussion**

The research and data collected during this study did not show any significance in the results. I have a few theories as to why the research was insignificant. The Student Engagement Instrument survey measured six different cognitive and psychological areas of engagement and this particular survey was chosen so that I could look specifically at certain areas of engagement. The scores from the SEI showed no significance but the results may have been different if there had been a larger time gap between the pre and post surveys. Students, for the most part, remained consistent in their answers from the pre to post survey in almost every aspect (See Appendix F). A couple of students (Students 14 and 15) had a change in their score, but these students only completed half of the survey during the pre-survey.

A factor that may have prohibited their expression of enthusiasm was that the class began at 7:30 in the morning. High school students are not particularly alert at that hour. If the class had been taught at 9:30 the students may have shown a little more emotion. With this being said, students responded differently to lessons that had videos or an aspect that captured their attention. When shown a video or asked to be active during the learning process, students were more likely to participate in class discussion.

For example, one lesson on audience awareness required the students to watch two videos and then discuss who the intended audience would be. Students paid attention carefully to the videos and then willingly raised their hand to answer my questions. They responded more to these videos than they would a PowerPoint with notes because this required them to think critically while also adding an interest factor. These students related to the videos they were shown and the videos interested them more than a slide with notes would.

Lesson plans that were designed using a modified instructional model usually required the students to be more active. These lessons had students moving to different corners of the room to read excerpts or watch videos. Students seemed to enjoy being given the chance to move during instruction. From my observation, I noted that students did not respond so much to the particular instructional model used, but rather they responded to the engaging factor that the lesson had. The model itself wasn't a factor; the students cared more about what was in the lesson as opposed to how it was designed.

The particular class in which the research was conducted consisted of many students who were already self-motivated as well as other students who did not care as much about their academic performance in school. Most of these students had hopes and aspirations for their futures and had already set goals to achieve. Despite my efforts to influence their motivation by being upbeat and planning lessons that I intended to be engaging, it is my belief that a teacher cannot motivate a student in such a short amount of time as two weeks. Motivating a student to perform well in class requires a much longer timeline than the one for this study.

When some of the students were interviewed, they said that a teacher's level of enthusiasm impacted their interest in learning; however, in my observations students did not appear to match my level of enthusiasm at any point. It was never expected for them to exude

enthusiasm during a lesson about tone, but none of the students outwardly showed their interest. This again ties back into the fact that this class was early in the day when students were not as aware as they might have been in later class blocks.

During the interview, students indicated that they were mostly self-motivated. Most indicated that they were motivated to do their work because they wanted to go to college or because they had goals they'd previously set for themselves. When asked if there was anything a teacher had done that motivated them, most students could not recall a particular instance where one teacher had motivated them.

Despite them being self-motivated, all students indicated they were more interested when the teacher designed a lesson that was interesting. One female student indicated that a lesson that was interesting made her want to learn more. She's a motivated student to begin with but even students who did not match her level of motivation gave a similar response. One male student in particular did not agree that he was self-motivated but rather extrinsically motivated. He was the only student to disagree with the first question in the interviews (See Appendix E). This particular student often misses multiple days of school and does not turn in his work on time.

### **Conclusion**

Student engagement and motivation in the classroom are an important aspect of learning. Lessons that have an engaging component capture student attention and teachers who encourage students make learning more interesting. Based on the results from this study, instructional models do not play a pivotal role in student engagement, but the lesson plan itself does. As long as the lesson is well designed and consists of a component that captures student attention the use of a model is not required.



Teachers should be excited about their content and teaching it to students because that is one of the most important aspects of teaching. An enthusiastic teacher can make all the difference for some students when it comes to learning. When it comes to engaging and motivating students in the secondary classroom, there is not a clear path because each teacher is different in their techniques. While the results were not significant, this does not mean that engagement is not linked to teacher instruction. However, there were some limitations during this study. First, the time in which I had planned to conduct the study was cut short. Initially, the study was supposed to last three to four weeks, but due to snow and a previously scheduled break, my research time was narrowed to two weeks. While I only lost a week of research, this additional week would have allowed me to collect more data and teach more lessons. Secondly, the study was also limited because students kept forgetting to have their parents sign the letters consent. Some students didn't turn anything in at all and told me they lost their forms. If more students had participated there would have been more data to analyze and a larger pool of students to interview. Instructional models might not be the key to motivating and engaging students, but some part of the lesson captures student attention more than others.

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## APPENDIX A Consent Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Hello, my name is Taylor Agee, and I am a student teacher in your child's classroom. I am currently a graduate student at the University of Mary Washington working towards my Masters in Secondary Education with an endorsement in English. A requirement of our program is to conduct an action research study in an area related to our studies. *I am inviting your child to participate in a research study I am doing. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to have your child participate or not. I am now going to explain the study to you.*

*I am interested in learning about how a teacher's use of instructional models and an enthusiastic attitude affect student engagement and motivation. For two weeks, your child's class will be instructed using various instructional models and I will also be utilizing my positive attitude toward the content as I instruct to assess how teachers affect student engagement and motivation. I am requesting permission to give your child a survey to complete about his or her feelings on their personal levels of motivation and how they are best engaged during classroom instruction. I am also requesting to interview and tape record your child answering questions about the project. **This project will be part of your child's work for class. It will in no way require extra work for him or her.***

Your child's work will be kept confidential. His or her name will not appear in any papers in the project. All names will be changed to protect his or her privacy. Following the project, all samples I collect will be destroyed. Participation in this project will not affect your child's grade in any way. His or her participation in the study is voluntary, and you have the right to keep your child out of the study. Also, your child is free to stop participating in the study at any time. Your child would still participate in the classroom project, but data for the research study would not be collected from him or her.

*The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me understand the influence of instructional models and teacher attitude in the classroom. The only potential risk is that your child may be uncomfortable being interviewed. This risk will be minimized by interviewing your child during times that all students are working individually.*

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my university supervisor and head of the UMW IRB, Dr. Jo Tyler (jtyler@umw.edu) or myself (tagee@mail.umw.edu). Please return this form by March 17, 2016. I look forward to working with you and your student!

Thank you,

Taylor N. Agee

I have read the above letter and give my child, \_\_\_\_\_, permission to participate in this project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I give my child permission to be tape-recorded during interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian Signature)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to keep all information and data collected during this research project confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Researcher Signature)

**APPENDIX B**  
**Student Assent Letter**

Dear Student,

I am very excited to be your student teacher throughout the spring! During our time together we will be studying different types of writing as well as reading a book together during the non-fiction unit.

While you work, I will be collecting information for a research project that I am doing to see how your motivation to do work and your levels of engagement during lessons are impacted through my lesson plan designs and delivery. During my study, I will interview you to see how you feel in the classroom and I may tape record you to remember what you say. You will not be graded for your help in my study, and this study will not require you to have extra work. The only things you will do are talk with me about how you feel and answer questions on a survey.

*Your parents were given a letter about taking part in this study. If your parents did not allow you to participate in this study, you will not be asked to sign this form. However, if your parents did allow you to participate, I encourage you to participate in this study.*

*You do not have to be in this study. No one will be mad at you if you decide not to do this study. Nothing bad will happen if you take part in the study and nothing bad will happen if you do not. However, if you decide not to participate you will still participate in all assigned classwork; I will just not use your work in my research. Even if you start, you can stop later if you want. You may ask questions about the study.*

*If you decide to be in the study, I will keep your information confidential. This means that I will not use your names or the name of the school in anything I write and I will not reveal any personal, identifying information about you.*

*Signing this form means that you have read it or have had it read to you, and that you are willing to be in this study. If at any point you have any questions, please ask me!*

Thanks,

Ms. Agee

I have been read the above letter, all my questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in the project.

---

(Student Signature)

---

(Date)

I agree to be tape-recorded during interviews.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

I, \_\_\_\_\_ will keep your names confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Student Teacher/Researcher Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## APPENDIX C

### Student Engagement Instrument Survey

#### 4-Point Scale

### Student Engagement Instrument (SEI)<sup>1</sup>

### Administration Standardization Procedures<sup>2</sup>

#### What to Say to Students:

- 1) "Today we have a questionnaire to learn about your experiences while attending this school. Your responses will be confidential: no one at this school will see your individual answers. To keep them confidential, I will select a student to collect the questionnaires and seal them inside an envelope before sending them to the central office. Reports of the survey results will show only summarized data. Your honest answers will be used to help me and the school serve you and other students better."
- 2) "Do not begin marking answers until we discuss the directions and I begin to read the questionnaire items aloud."
- 3) "First, use a pencil to fill in your student number in the boxes in the upper right corner of the form. Then darken the circles corresponding to each digit of your student number."
- 4) "For most of the questionnaire items you will be choosing how much you agree with the statement by selecting from 'strongly agree,' 'agree,' 'disagree,' or 'strongly disagree.' The last two items of the questionnaire are different, and require you to fill in two-digit numbers."
- 5) "For each item mark only one answer by filling in the circle completely with a pencil. If you make a mistake or change your mind, erase your old answer entirely and fill in your new answer."
- 6) "I'll be reading the items so that I can respond to any questions you might have right away."
- 7) "If you have any questions about the items I'm reading or if you need a bit more time with an item be sure to let me know." [*Read items as directed in the right column 'Administration Procedures.'*]
- 8) "Thank you for your time and opinions."

#### Administration Procedures:

- Read questionnaire items aloud with 3- to 5-second pauses between items depending on the reading levels within the class
- Items should be read with brief pauses between the general text and parenthetical sections to aid in understanding, e.g., "extracurricular (after school) activities"
- Plural versions should be used for items with a plural option, e.g., "parent/guardian(s)".
- Choices (i.e., "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") are described during the introduction. Following the introduction, the questions can be read without the choices.

#### Note:

- If students ask, they may work ahead on items if the Advisor's pace of reading is too slow for them.

#### Collection:

- Give the questionnaire collection envelope to a student and ask that student to:
  - collect all of the completed questionnaires,
  - arrange them so they all face the same way,
  - place them in the envelope, and
  - seal the envelope closed.
- Return the sealed envelope as directed by your school's advisement program coordinator.

<sup>1</sup> Appleton, J.J., Christenson, S.L., Kim, D., & Reschly, A. (2006). Measuring cognitive and psychological engagement: Validation of the Student Engagement Instrument. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*, 427-445.

<sup>2</sup> These procedures are intended to ensure questionnaires are administered similarly across advisement groups. Thank you for your help.



# Student Engagement Instrument

## MARKING INSTRUCTIONS


- Use a No. 2 pencil or a blue or black ink pen only.
- Do not use pens with ink that soaks through the paper.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Make no stray marks on this form.

CORRECT: ●

INCORRECT: ✗ ⊗ ○

Strongly Disagree  
Disagree  
Agree  
Strongly Agree

- |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My family/guardian(s) are there for me when I need them.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. After finishing my schoolwork I check it over to see if it's correct.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. My teachers are there for me when I need them.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. Other students here like me the way I am.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Adults at my school listen to the students.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. Other students at school care about me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. Students at my school are there for me when I need them.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. My education will create many future opportunities for me.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. Most of what is important to know you learn in school.                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. The school rules are fair.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. Going to school after high school is important.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. When something good happens at school, my family/guardian(s) want to know about it. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person, not just as a student. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. Students here respect what I have to say.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. When I do schoolwork I check to see whether I understand what I'm doing.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. Overall, my teachers are open and honest with me.                                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. I plan to continue my education following high school.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. I'll learn, but only if the teacher gives me a reward.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19. School is important for achieving my future goals.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20. When I have problems at school my family/guardian(s) are willing to help me.        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Please Turn Over 

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. Overall, adults at my school treat students fairly.	1	2	3	4
22. I enjoy talking to the teachers here.	1	2	3	4
23. I enjoy talking to the students here.	1	2	3	4
24. I have some friends at school.	1	2	3	4
25. When I do well in school it's because I work hard.	1	2	3	4
26. The tests in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.	1	2	3	4
27. I feel safe at school.	1	2	3	4
28. I feel like I have a say about what happens to me at school.	1	2	3	4
29. My family/guardian(s) want me to keep trying when things are tough at school.	1	2	3	4
30. I am hopeful about my future.	1	2	3	4
31. At my school, teachers care about students.	1	2	3	4
32. I'll learn, but only if my family/guardian(s) give me a reward.	1	2	3	4
33. Learning is fun because I get better at something.	1	2	3	4
34. What I'm learning in my classes will be important in my future.	1	2	3	4
35. The grades in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.	1	2	3	4

**Scoring Procedures**

Within each clear box, write the number that corresponds with the rating identified by the student.  
Use either five or four options depending on the version of the SEI Scale you are using.

5-point scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither Agree Nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5)

4-point scale: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly Agree (4)

Item	TSR	PSS	FSL	CRSW	FG	IM*
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						
21						
22						
23						
24						
25						
26						
27						
28						
29						
30						
31						
32						
33						
34						
35						
<b>Total</b>						

*Affective*

*Cognitive*

\*Intrinsic Motivation (IM) is the only domain where the item responses are reversed.

Student responses should be re-coded as follows before entering the value in the clear box:

5-point scale:

- Strongly Agree (5) = 1
- Agree (4) = 2
- Disagree (2) = 4
- Strongly Disagree (1) = 5

4-point scale:

- Strongly Agree (4) = 1
- Agree (3) = 2
- Disagree (2) = 3
- Strongly Disagree (1) = 4

**SEI Total =**

(Sum all items if at least 15 Affective and 12 Cognitive Items Completed)

---

Write each column total in the box next to the column title.  
Then divide by the number of items answered<sup>1</sup> to calculate a column average.

---

**AFFECTIVE (PSYCHOLOGICAL) ENGAGEMENT:**

Teacher-Student Relationships (TSR)  / 9 (or 8 or 7 if fewer answered)  
Peer Support at School (PSS)  / 6 (or 5 if fewer answered)  
Family Support for Learning (FSL)  / 4 (or 3 if fewer answered)

**COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT:**

Control and Relevance of School Work (CRSW)  / 9 (or 8 or 7 if fewer answered)  
Future Aspirations and Goals (FG)  / 5 (or 4 if fewer answered)  
Intrinsic Motivation (IM)  / 2

SEI Total (SEI\_Tot)  / 35 (use number answered)

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Survey

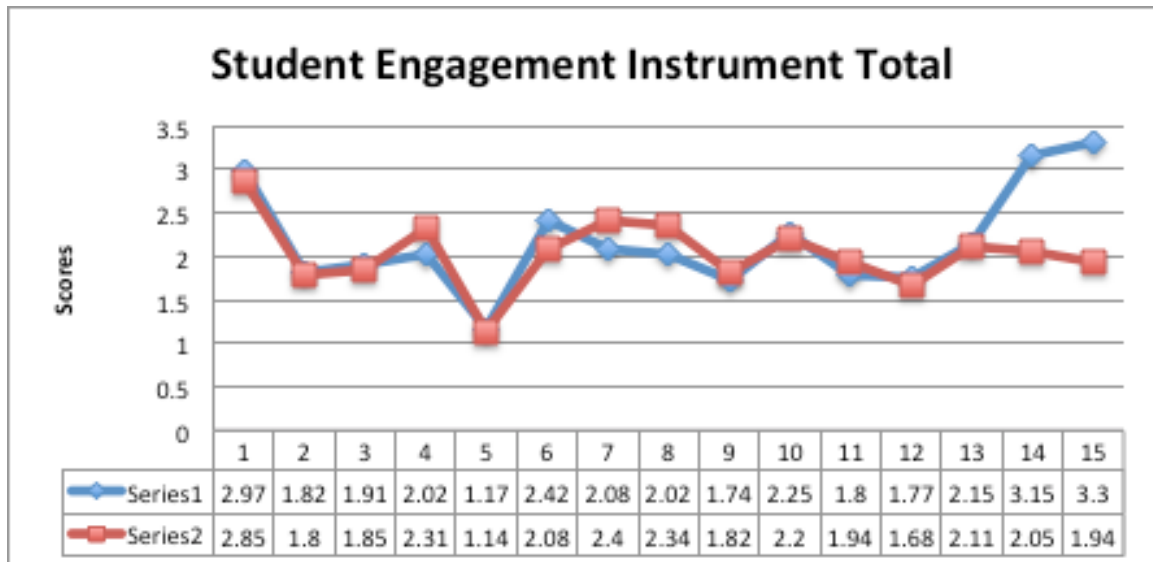
#### Survey of Student beliefs on Engagement and Motivation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I am a motivated student.					
2. I believe that if a teacher's lesson is interesting I'm more likely to do my work.					
3. If my teacher is excited about what I'm learning, I'm excited about it, too.					
4. I am more engaged in this English class than I am in my other classes during the day.					
5. Learning is fun for me.					
6. I come to school ready to learn every day.					
7. My teacher makes learning interesting every class period and I enjoy that.					

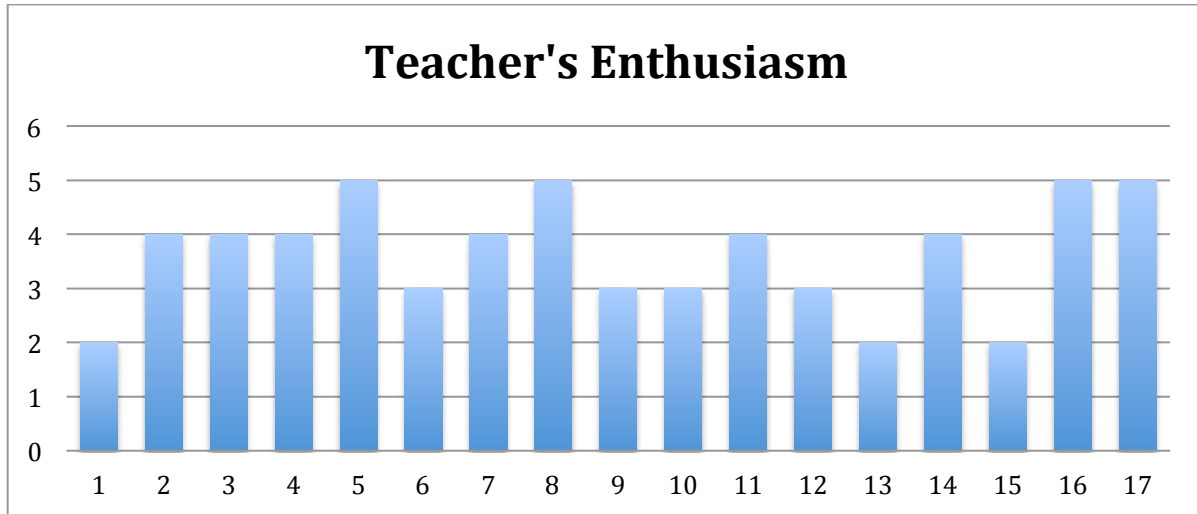
**APPENDIX E**  
**Sample Student Interview Questions**

1. Can you tell me what you think motivation is?
  - a. Why do you think it's this definition?
2. Would you say that you're a motivated student?
  - a. If yes, why are you motivated? Sports? Parents? College?
3. Is there anything that a teacher has done that's motivated you? If so, what is it?
4. What do you need, as a student, to become motivated?
5. Do you think that a teacher's lesson and how interesting it is makes you more motivated to do your work? Can you give me an example?

**APPENDIX F**  
**SEI Pre/Post Survey Results**



**APPENDIX G**  
Results from a survey on motivation





**APPENDIX H**  
**Lesson Interest Level Results**

