Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers'
Perceptions and Roles

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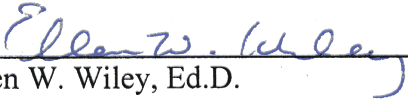

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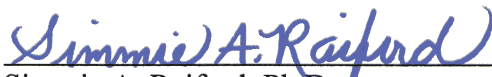
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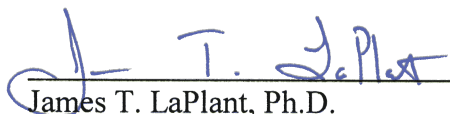This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

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ABSTRACT

In this phenomenological study, I explored perceptions about student engagement from secondary English teachers in Southwest Georgia, including their perceptions of their roles in relationship to student engagement. In addition, the confidence and enjoyment levels of participants in relationship to level of student engagement were examined. Traditionally, student engagement has been a construct researched with more focus on students' attitudes about and involvement with classroom engagement. Therefore, teachers' voices have been somewhat marginalized in the debate about how to get our students more engaged in learning and instruction. However, despite educators' lack of significant input into this discussion of student engagement, which affects gains in academic achievement and graduation rate, teachers know what to look for and know what to do to increase student engagement. I also identified a lack of uniformity and consistency on the part of educators to implement effective teaching strategies that promote active student engagement from all students.

Six current or former English teachers in the same high school in Southwest Georgia participated in the study; four females and two males. Their years of teaching experience ranged from 3 to 33 years and their ages ranged from 24 to 65 years old.

In this study, I collected three types of data: individual interviews, a focus group interview, and field note observations. These methods combined added to the credibility and wealth of descriptive data collected. I examined each data source thoroughly during first and second coding cycles.

To meet the challenges that confront educators and school systems and to provide a quality education for all students, a consistent focus must be placed on the

implementation of effective, student-centered strategies that all teachers can use to

cultivate student ownership and academic success in any secondary classroom.

Participants described five major components to student engagement: (a) active student

participation, (b) student connections, (c) instructional technology tools, (d) student

characteristics, and (e) teacher engagement.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 3:13-14

First, I thank God for His guidance and strength throughout this dissertation journey. I extend my sincere gratitude to my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Ellen Wiley, who advised me with clarity, consistency, and compassion. I am truly appreciative of the support from my committee members: Dr. Ann Marie Smith, Dr. Donna Sewell, and Dr. Simmie Raiford. A special thanks goes to Dr. Carolyn Taylor and Dr. Kimberly Scott for their encouragement and inspiration on this journey. For their love, patience, and support, I thank my family: William, Isaiah, and Chamaia Lindsey. I also thank Ms. Sandra Rodgers for her support of me in this great endeavor.

Finally, I heartily thank all additional faithful supporters and well-wishers, including other family members, church members, and friends. To God Be the Glory!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my deceased grandmother, Charlie Bell McCode, who was my greatest role model and friend, providing spiritual encouragement along this journey. I love you, and I know you are smiling on this accomplishment.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Student engagement has been a critical issue in the literature over the past two and a half decades in light of research showing a decline in student achievement and the graduation rate (Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, & Pagani, 2009; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). As demonstrated in earlier studies, student engagement had a positive relationship to achievement whereas disengagement led to poor academic results (Johnson, 2008; Marks, 2000). An engagement-achievement paradox has been identified in other studies in which minority groups demonstrate high engagement but low achievement (Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). From the results of their study, Archambault, Janosz, Morizot, and Pagani (2009) reported that low engagement from the beginning of high school presented higher risks of future dropout. These researchers suggested a pathway to reform that considers individual differences in the attempt to introduce and implement school-based interventions that support mental health and well-being (Archambault et al., 2009).

Moreover, many researchers (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Archambault et al., 2009; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Hawthorne, 2008; Marks, 2000; Shernoff, & Schmidt, 2008; Yazzie-Mintz, 2010; Zyngier, 2007) have looked at student engagement or disengagement on three primary levels: (a) behavioral, (b) emotional, or (c) cognitive. Marks (2000) provided detailed information on the history of student engagement in terms of its importance, the problem of disengagement,

and its relationship to student background. Her study defined engagement as a psychological process that implies both affective and behavioral participation in the learning experience. Marks proposed, "Engagement is an important facet of students' school experience because of its logical relationship to achievement and to optimal human development" (p. 155). On the other hand, Marks pointed out definite signs of disengagement that exist in today's classrooms. She characterized teachers as dispirited transmitters of knowledge who cultivate passivity and boredom among their students. Student disengagement was cited as being a widespread problem in U.S. secondary schools, without consideration of factors such as statistics on absenteeism and the dropout rate (Marks, 2000). Students' personal backgrounds have shown to be significant in the level of student engagement (Marks, 2000; Sharkey, You, & Schnoebelen, 2008; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008).

Context is an extremely important factor influencing the level of student engagement (Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2007; Johnson, 2008). Some off-task behaviors resulted when at-risk students were confronted with challenges in certain instructional contexts (i.e., large groups or individual seatwork) (Downer et al., 2007). On the contrary, Johnson (2008) found higher levels of engagement in non-traditional schools (school decisions made by committees of students, administrators, and teachers; grades not used to evaluate students; and curriculum and learning goals developed by teachers and students in the form of contracts) versus traditional schools (school decisions made by the administration and faculty of the school with little or no student input; grades used to evaluate students; and teachers and districts developed the curriculum and set the learning goals for students).

Yair (2000) also illustrated that contexts have a direct impact on levels of student engagement. He asserted that the classroom is a crucial context for engagement and learning. According to Yair, despite relevant instruction and skilled teachers, students fail to pay attention to their immediate instructional context and reject or neglect educational opportunities. Yair reaffirmed that other contexts or external forces have the potential to distract students from maximizing educational opportunities. The following three sets of factors that affect students' engagement and alienation from instruction are identified by Yair:

> (a) instructional factors, including methods, strategies, and subject matter (Bidwell and Kasarda, 1980), that vary within schools and may differentially buffer or decouple the effects of nonclassroom contexts; (b) students' experience in stressful nonschool environments (at home and work and in settings for leisure activities) that may intensify students' preoccupation with external issues and hence cause alienation from instruction; and (c) students' personal and background characteristics, like race, socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and previous school achievements. (p. 250)

Whereas Yair (2000) focused on external factors that distract students from meaningful engagement, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) considered engagement as a multidimensional construct with the intention of improving academic achievement and student motivation. They suggested that investigating the interactions among student behavior, emotion, and cognition has greater potential in providing more descriptive characterizations of children than in simply researching single components. Finally,

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these researchers pointed out the qualitative differences that exist in the various domains of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement; such differences suggest that engagement itself does not remain constant in duration and intensity (Fredricks et al., 2004). Various measurement techniques have been devised and used to evaluate student engagement, considering the complexity of qualitative differences within emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement (Gonida, Kiosseoglou, & Voulala, 2007; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2009). The current study focused on the levels of behavioral and emotional engagement demonstrated by high school students in English classes. Fredricks et al. (2004) indicated that several teacher ratings and self-report surveys have been used to assess behavioral engagement on indicators such as conduct, work involvement, and participation. Although observational techniques can be used to collect data, there is the potential for limited information to be gleaned from such data on the quality of effort, participation, or thinking of students (Fredricks et al., 2004). In terms of emotional engagement, self-report measures, including survey items about a variety of emotions related to the school, schoolwork, and the people at school, have been used. However, Fredricks et al. noted issues with the measurement of emotional engagement that include the following: (a) single scales used to tap into evidence of behavioral and emotional engagement, (b) source of emotions not specified in survey items, (c) more general measures of emotions are recorded, and (d) differences in the quality and intensity of emotion based on the type of class activity and setting.

Statement of the Problem

In today's secondary English classrooms, I have observed a decrease in student participation, concentration, and personal investment in the instructional and learning

processes. The quality of teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions has

diminished to a devalued learning experience for both students and teachers. Therefore,

in this current study, I sought to take a more in-depth look at teachers' perceptions of

student engagement (behavioral and emotional), to examine the impact of student

engagement on teachers' level of confidence in and enjoyment of teaching, and to

ascertain what current and future roles educators have in sparking and sustaining student

engagement.

Fredricks et al. (2004) discussed research that connects or combines the impact of

cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement with academic achievement and

dropout rates. Their study supported the claim that behavioral engagement has a positive

relationship with higher achievement across diverse samples and ages; some evidence of

a correlation between emotional engagement and achievement does exist (Fredricks et al.,

2004). Moreover, behavioral engagement and emotional engagement have been linked to

students' decisions to drop out. As stated in Fredricks et al., dropping out is one major

result of behavioral disengagement, yet a correlation between emotional engagement and

dropping out does not have strong empirical support. Archambault et al. (2009) further

probed the relationship of engagement to the dilemma of the high school dropout rate.

Potential high school dropouts report behavioral, affective, and cognitive differences

throughout their high school experience (Archambault et al., 2009). They revealed that

engagement is unique and individually specific; one-third of the study's participants

experienced disengagement during high school.

More evidence was gathered to show the engagement-achievement paradox that

exists among high school students in the U.S. in an empirical study by Shernoff and

Schmidt (2008). The contradiction exists because Caucasian students demonstrate low engagement but high achievement, whereas some ethnic minority groups demonstrate high engagement but low achievement. The study indicated that the relationship between engagement and achievement might be moderated by race and ethnicity. Shernoff and Schmidt concluded that in comparison to students from other racial and ethnic groups, African American students might respond more emotionally as they increasingly focus on academic instruction. Moreover, Wiggan (2008) delineates between the concepts of engaging pedagogy and disengaging pedagogy as they relate to teacher classroom practices and their impact on the achievement of African American students. Engaging pedagogy was associated with caring, interactive teachers who were supportive inside and outside the classroom; these teachers not only emphasized teamwork and self-direction but also encouraged student involvement and critical thinking (Wiggan, 2008).

Contributing factors of school characteristics, teacher variables, and use of instructional time were considered significant according to research discussed by Finn and Voelkl (1993), Schoen, Cebulla, Finn, and Fi (2003), and Fisher (2009) respectively. The importance of a student's sense of identifying with or belonging to his or her school has been stressed in the literature (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Walker & Greene, 2009). Without certain school accommodations, high-risk students may become alienated because of their academic or behavioral difficulties (Finn & Voelkl, 1993). Consequently, order and discipline were cited as essential characteristics of a productive school culture for at-risk students. In addition, Schoen et al. (2003) expressed support for reform of teaching through a standards-based curriculum to promote engagement and student achievement. Teacher scaffolding, cooperative learning groups, student-led

discussions, individual projects, group tests, and student presentations represent engaging activities for this type of curriculum. Lastly, Fisher (2009) made a substantive claim in his article that one significant predictor of academic achievement is time on task or time spent engaged in learning. Teachers are urged to increase the precision of their teaching, to assess prior knowledge, to design learning goals and objectives, and to use instructional time wisely for increasing knowledge and improving skills (Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Uekawa, Borman, & Lee, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative, phenomenological study, I investigated the perceptions of secondary English teachers concerning student engagement in the classroom and its impact on their confidence in and enjoyment of their teaching experiences. Based on classroom observations in high school English classes and interviews with teachers, both individually and collectively, I investigated teachers' perceptions of problems of and solutions to student disengagement, in addition to assessing teachers' current and future roles in the student engagement process.

Significance of the Study

From previous research, student engagement has already been shown to be an extremely essential component of student performance and achievement (Johnson, 2008; Marks, 2000; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). Data collected from students have revealed the complexity of student engagement, behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally. However, the perspectives of educators about this unique construct have been neglected or explored on a small scale (Harris, 2008; Irvin, 2006). As stated in Harris (2008), academic literature is deficient in its examination of teachers' understanding of student

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engagement. I conducted this study to investigate teachers' insights to shed light on the state of student engagement in high school English classes. Consequently, I hoped to discover information that would lead to solutions for student disengagement, to an increase in teacher confidence and enjoyment of teaching, and to more effective teacher roles to sustain student engagement and positive teaching experiences.

Research Questions

1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms?

2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?

3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement?

4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?

Definition of Key Terms

Several researchers (Archambault et al., 2009; Downer et al., 2007; Fredricks et al., 2004; Marks, 2000), underscore the complexity of student engagement as a construct involving behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Moreover, other external factors appear to exert influence so that student engagement cannot be examined in isolation (Finn & Voelkl, 1993; Gonida et al., 2007; Johnson, 2008; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2009). Therefore, I explored more deeply teachers' perspectives on student engagement and what these perspectives communicate about the present status of student engagement

in secondary English classes, its impact on teaching experiences, and the current and future roles of teachers through this study.

Alienation from Instruction. The dissociation occurs between students' physical presence in academic classes and their thoughts while in class (Yair, 2000).

Behavioral Engagement. Students are involved in learning and academic tasks and demonstrate behaviors such as effort, persistence, concentration, attention, asking questions, and contributing to class discussion (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Finn et al., 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Disengagement. Students are uninvolved in learning and academic tasks. Students demonstrate passive and negative behaviors such as lack of effort, persistence, concentration, attention, oral participation, proper classroom conduct as well as signs of disinterest, boredom, sadness, and anxiety (definitions adapted from Birch & Ladd, 1997; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Finn et al., 1995; Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Disaffection. The opposite of engagement is disaffection. "Disaffected children are passive, do not try hard, and give up easily in the face of challenges…can be bored, depressed, anxious, or even angry about their presence in the classroom; they can be withdrawn from learning opportunities or even rebellious towards teachers and classmates" (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, p. 572).

Emotional Engagement. Students display affective reactions in the classroom, including interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). The school and the teacher may also prompt emotional reactions from the students (Lee & Smith, 1995; Stipek, 2002).

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Engagement. It is a psychological process that involves the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning. Engagement implies both affective and behavioral participation in the learning experience (Marks, 2000).

Instructional Methods. These methods include activities and strategies designed by the teacher to promote student engagement. Lectures, cooperative learning, class discussion, formative assessment, guided practice, demonstrations/modeling, student-centered lessons, and use of technology represent such diverse methods.

Teacher Behaviors. Any actions, interactions, verbal communication, and nonverbal cues demonstrated by teachers in the process of instructing, monitoring, and providing feedback to students.

Teacher Confidence in Teaching. This concept is related to the notion of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Those teachers who are low in confidence tend to focus on their deficiencies whereas teachers who are high in confidence are characterized by their positive, proactive, and solution-focused orientations.

Teacher Enjoyment of Teaching. This state occurs when teachers find pleasure and/or satisfaction in the acts and experiences of teaching.

Teacher Perceptions. These perceptions include teachers' beliefs, thoughts, opinions, and observations based on teaching experience(s).

Summary

Previous researchers have revealed a gap between students' participation or involvement in class and their overall academic performance (Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). Students may appear to be alert and attentive to instructional activities; yet, in reality, other external factors, such as situations at home or with peers, distract students from engaging totally with instruction (Gonida et al., 2007; Sharkey et al., 2008). Because of the complexity of the constructs of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Marks, 2000), future research must combine observational data with interviews and further conversations with educators. To get to the core of student engagement, researchers must be willing to examine interactions with outside variables and possibly control for some of them. Student engagement is crucial for academic success and increased graduation rates (Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008; Wiggan, 2008).

In Chapter 2, I examined the literature on various aspects of student engagement and some factors that seem to affect it. In addition, in this chapter, I present how other researchers have approached the examination of student engagement in convergent and divergent ways. Most importantly, in Chapter 2 I demonstrated the paucity of research into teachers' perceptions of student engagement.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The problem of student engagement in this research study was explored from the perspectives of secondary English teachers. I contributed further insights into the improvement of student engagement in high school English classes. In addition, through examining teachers' perceptions, I discovered how certain teacher roles impact student engagement. Moreover, I investigated the impact of student engagement on the level of confidence and enjoyment of teaching for secondary English teachers.

This literature review begins with a discussion of definitions and characteristics of student engagement as a construct. An examination of the literature follows with the identification of what characterizes student disengagement. A plethora of information describing the impact of individual student characteristics, including student motivation, on the outcome of student engagement is presented. A divergent, yet necessary, probe into the external forces or factors that affect levels of student engagement, such as classroom culture, instructional or behavioral interventions, and parental involvement, follows. Finally, in the study I consider and evaluate the importance and the impact of the classroom teacher on student engagement by looking at certain teacher expectations, perspectives, and roles.

Student Engagement Defined as a Construct

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) conducted an extensive review and critique of the definitions, measures, precursors, and outcomes of engagement as a construct, along with the limitations of previous studies. Through their examination of student engagement as a construct, Fredricks et al. (2004) distinguished three dimensions of student engagement as cited in previous literature:

Behavioral engagement draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities. It is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out. *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school. It is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work. Finally, *cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (p. 60)

Fredricks et al. (2004) concluded that so much had been contributed to defining student engagement that the breakdown of the construct had become unwieldy, yielding slight differences and minimum conceptual clarity. On the other hand, the researchers agreed that utilizing and analyzing the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions together have great potential in producing richer, more valuable descriptions on student engagement.

Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of studies to examine the conceptual uses and valid measurements of student engagement as a construct. They concluded that most researchers defined student engagement from

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primarily behavioral terms and secondarily, from emotional/psychological components;

fewer examined student engagement from a cognitive perspective (Appleton et al., 2008).

Yet, they revealed that multidimensionality was one constant across the many

conceptualizations of engagement. Appleton et al. were not alone in this assessment of

the multiplicity of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004; Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).

Consequently, engagement was understood as the student interacting and forming distinct

relationships with educational stakeholders and other components, such as school

community, school adults, peers, instruction, and curriculum (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).

Engagement was defined as an alterable variable that was manipulated by policies, school

practices, teachers, and family influences (Kortering & Christenson, 2009). Engagement

has been described as a deeper connection between the student and the course material by

which students become interested in the topic and retain information long-term

(Schussler, 2009).

Despite this multi-faceted aspect of student engagement, Marks (2000) chose to

examine engagement as a psychological process in which students show evidence of

interest, attention, investment, and effort during instructional activities. In looking at

student engagement across grade levels, Marks found that when unadjusted for any other

influences, engagement level had the tendency to decrease with the increase in grade

level. In consideration of student engagement, along with the grade level factor, the

multiple views of secondary English teachers as it relates to the grade level taught were

examined.

In a study with college and university students, Carini, Kuh, and Klein (2006)

analyzed the potential relationship between student engagement and academic

performance on different assessments. They concluded that there was a positive link between student learning outcomes and student engagement despite the small strength of the relationships found in their study (Carini et al., 2006). In contrast, Shernoff and Schmidt (2007) studied student engagement outcomes in terms of racial and ethnic differences. They operationalized student engagement as inclusive perceptions of concentration, interest, and enjoyment while students interact with activities and measured engagement on cognitive and emotional domains (Shernoff & Schmidt, 2007). They indicated differences racially and ethnically when analyzing student engagement based on student achievement. However, Marks (2000) noted that within instructional activities there was no differentiation of engagement levels along the variables of race and ethnicity. Participants in the present study had the opportunity to comment on levels of student engagement and achievement in the context of instructional activities and a predominantly African American class population.

Wiggan (2008) offered a different perspective when looking at the academic achievement of African American college students in the South in a qualitative study. These students revealed teacher practices and engaging pedagogy as one of the main contributors to their academic success (Wiggan, 2008). For these students, caring teachers were instrumental to their success because these engaging teachers demonstrated commitment to teaching and to developing professional relationships with students. Zyngier (2007) pinpointed and examined three epistemological constructions of student engagement as revealed through the perspectives of teachers and students: instrumentalist rational technical view, social constructivist, or individualist, and critical-transformative. From an instrumentalist rational technical view of student engagement, the frequency in

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which students were observed on task and their subsequent completion of tasks was of primary importance; social constructivist or individualist engagement positions the student at the center of instruction and learning in that the student was self-motivated, reflective, and makes decisions within the context of his life experiences (Zyngier, 2007). Finally, the critical-transformative view of engagement urges students to explore and analyze their interests and experiences in such a manner that leads to social and political equality. As stated by Zyngier (2007), "the struggle over the definition of the term engagement is significant in itself for it reveals the ongoing ideological and epistemological divisions among educators, policy makers and the general public" (p. 345).

Evidence of Student Disengagement

Zyngier (2007) generalized that students have been labeled as alienated or disengaged when showing various signs of failing to conform to the school's values. Numerous, complex factors relating to gender, class, race/ethnicity, power, history, and students' lived experiences and social reality have been identified in the research as contributing to initial student disengagement and eventually, in many cases, premature school dropout (Archambault et al., 2009; Smyth, 2006). However, despite some demographic-related risks, learners who were characterized as discouraged, apathetic, and/or uninvolved can be found in all schools (Appleton et al., 2008). Smyth (2006) clearly summarized the condition of student engagement in the following statement:

> When students feel that their lives, experiences, cultures, and aspirations
> are ignored, trivialized, or denigrated, they develop hostility to the
> institution of schooling. They feel that schooling is simply not worth the

emotional and psychological investment necessary to warrant their serious

involvement. (p. 285)

Several students in Zyngier's (2007) study stated that they were not pleased with

the levels of variety or difficulty that their teachers provided for them. Along with citing

this lack of differentiation, students added boredom into the assessment of classroom

instruction, which may have prompted various forms of disruptive behaviors. According

to Yazzie-Mintz's (2010), High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE),

students attributed their boredom to various sources, such as the type of material,

relevance of the material, the level of challenge or difficulty, and the degree of interaction

with the teacher. Rosen, Carrier, and Cheever (2010) stated that current teaching

methods were extremely boring to the internet generation despite their desire to learn.

Yet, a connection with one adult in the school environment influenced a student's

decision about being engaged or staying in school (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). The problem of

student disengagement cannot be separated from the contexts of youth experience, school

interaction, and socio-environmental factors (Smyth, 2006; Zyngier, 2007). In particular,

Archambault et al. (2009) discovered individual and contextual factors related to

disengagement in high school; in fact, disengagement was reported by one-third of high

school adolescents.

One contextual factor that has been mentioned as influencing a student's level of

engagement was support from peers or the classroom teacher. Sullivan, Tobias, and

McDonough (2006) and Hawthorne (2008) had student participants who cited the

importance of teacher support in sustaining their engagement in mathematics and writing

respectively. Whereas Sullivan et al. (2006) suggested that students know how to assist

one another in improving effort in mathematics. Hawthorne (2008) noted that disruption or distraction from peers could be a hindrance to engagement. The researchers conveyed the significance of having a rationale for school participation, whether it is interest in a topic or perceived relevance of the topic for application in life or future employment (Hawthorne, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2006). One goal of the current study was to probe into the roles that teachers play in engaging their students.

Student Characteristics and Student Engagement

Certain student characteristics have been associated with disengagement in school and in academics. Archambault et al. (2009) and Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, and Pianta (2007) indicated that students with behavior problems and underachievement in certain subjects were likely to have lower levels of engagement. Both groups of researchers agreed that personal and environmental factors impact students' levels of engagement. Archambault et al. conjectured that the target group for high school dropout should be twelve-year-olds demonstrating signs of disengagement and those showing disciplinary problems the first two years of high school.

Martin (2009) and Sharkey, You, and Schnoebelen (2008) discussed other student attributes that contribute to academic or school engagement. According to Martin, the age of students in grade levels, whether due to delayed school entry or grade retention, affected their performance and engagement in school. His study illustrated the negative impact of being older-for-cohort in terms of a student's engagement, intentions, homework completion, and literacy and numeracy performance. In contrast, Sharkey et al. (2008) asserted that factors rooted more deeply than age affect student engagement in school. These factors included family assets and certain intrinsic characteristics, such as

self-efficacy, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills, which may be found lacking for some students. In such cases, the levels of emotional and behavioral engagement were in jeopardy, and therefore, provision of and support from school assets offered opportunities for certain degrees of success for students at-risk and for those not at-risk (Sharkey et al., 2008).

Moreover, De Bruyn (2005), Smyth (2006), Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, and Antaramian (2008) and Thijs and Verkuyten (2009) identified additional personal characteristics that impact students' level of engagement. De Bruyn investigated the potential effects of role-strain on student engagement of students entering secondary school; school-related items produced the more stressful experiences than those precipitated by parents, teachers, or peers. For example, in an inventory of role strain items, school was categorized as not being much fun, having too many rules, and not offering enough time for friends. In addition, parents, teachers, and peers contribute to students' stressful experiences by subjecting students to hassles about homework, unfair treatment, and incidents of bullying, respectively (De Bruyn, 2005). Accordingly, students lived with multiple levels of consciousness, negotiating different realities with family, peers, and the culture at their schools (Smyth, 2006). Whereas teacher and parent role strain proved to be predictive of student engagement, peer role strain was not predictive of student achievement or engagement. Similarly, Reschly et al. (2008) proposed that emotional well-being has considerable importance in the learning and adaptive resourcefulness of students. They corroborated a certain predictive theory of emotional quality in that positive emotions were linked to greater student engagement in school activities and more supportive relationships with adults. Thijs and Verkuyten

(2009) suggested that personal engagement could address students' level of independence and instructional needs, in addition to how engagement was affected by emotions or the degree of role strain. According to these authors, certain students were more actively involved or engaged in classrooms in which structure and organization allowed for feelings of competency.

The factors of race and ethnicity were explored as contributing to student engagement for minority groups, particularly African American students. Shernoff and Schmidt (2008) found that both race and ethnicity could moderate the relationship between achievement and engagement. The paradox revealed in their study demonstrated lower levels of achievement in African American students despite their higher levels of engagement, intrinsic motivation, and affect. Finally, the researchers suggested that community socioeconomic status, along with contextual and environmental factors, could affect the engagement of this minority group whether negatively or positively. Booker (2006) and Uekawa, Borman, and Lee (2007) emphasized the impact that a minority group's sense of belonging could have had on its level of engagement and achievement in school. These researchers indicated that sensitivity toward or awareness of minority status had the potential to create and subject minority students to feelings of hostility, alienation, and lack of warmth and welcome. Booker (2006) further hypothesized that African American students who failed to connect the value of education in terms of economic or social mobility for their ethnic group were more likely to disconnect in the classroom, thereby lowering their levels of academic achievement.

Williamson and Haigney (2009) acknowledged that students face academic challenges because of their learning competencies and diverse learning preferences.

Therefore, students were likely to progress differently toward meeting the standards, depending on the kinds of instructional support needed as well (Corcoran & Silander, 2009). Smyth (2006) concluded that students suppressed their identities for increased opportunities for success and acceptance within strong educational institutions. Yet, Ainley (2006) and Rosen et al. (2010) concurred that tapping into students' interests and unique characteristics could facilitate greater student engagement. Ainley suggested that the traits, predispositions, and orientations that students already possessed contributed to their responses to specific learning tasks. Therefore, the predisposition for sociability, orientation toward technological tools, and the need for positive reinforcement should have been considered when trying to sustain the interest and engagement of students (Rosen et al., 2010). In the midst of students who were ready, excited, and craving newness in the instructional process, teachers were judged as being unprepared for a changing educational environment.

Student Motivation and Student Engagement

Connections were drawn between motivation and student belonging, politics, age within cohort, and grade retention (Fisher, 2009; Martin, 2009; Smyth, 2006; Walker & Greene, 2009). According to Walker and Greene (2009), students were more likely to be cognitively engaged if they were treated as important members of the classroom community, supported by both teachers and peers, and if they recognized the future instrumentality of an education. Similarly, engagement in collaborative learning activities has been shown to increase student motivation and to improve student achievement (Fisher, 2009). In contrast, Smyth (2006) made the claim that political agendas were responsible for divesting students of emotional and psychological

investment in their schooling and, therefore, leaving students with feelings of hostility rather than a sense of belonging. The creation of more powerful relationships between teachers and students could have built trust that encouraged increased motivation and involvement from those students who have been marginalized and excluded. Martin (2009) presented data that supported the marginalization and exclusion that result from delayed school entry and grade retention. Students who were older than their cohorts, who experienced delayed school entry, and who were retained a grade level demonstrated little or no motivation, engagement, or performance advantages. On the other hand, higher levels of motivation, engagement, and performance were reported for younger-for-cohort students who entered school on time (Martin, 2009). In consideration of age as a crucial factor for motivation and engagement, Martin (2006) reported that primary school students demonstrated higher levels of motivation and engagement than high school students did; the transition from primary school to high school was cited as a reason for this reduction in motivation and engagement.

Several researchers emphasized that the teacher was an important contributor to student motivation (Blackburn, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Lawrence, Rabinowitz, & Perna, 2009; Pickens & Eick, 2009). Blackburn (2005) stated that students were more motivated to complete tasks that they found sensible and meaningful. This claim was supported by research about reading instruction in secondary English classes; researchers found that students made connections with the text and had higher levels of engagement when teachers incorporated balanced literacy approaches (Lawrence et al., 2009). Johnson (2008) and Pickens and Eick (2009) placed emphasis more heavily on teachers and their responsibility toward student motivation. Johnson even suggested that lack of

student engagement or motivation might be a *teacher problem* more so than a *student problem*. In addition, Pickens and Eick reported that demonstrating teacher enthusiasm, making lessons relevant, and allowing student-to-student interactions could serve as effective motivational tools or strategies. Yet, Vermette (2009) purported that emotional support from peers might be the greatest motivational factor. Students benefited from motivational factors of success, acceptance, and positive reinforcement that came from teachers and peers (Harris, 2008).

Student Engagement and Classroom Culture

According to Downer et al. (2007), the ideal classroom environment was created by constant opportunities for behavioral engagement in learning. Rosen et al. (2010) proposed that the confident, iGeneration was eager for learning environments that were stimulating and interesting. On the other hand, other researchers agreed that structure and security were necessary to maintain an environment conducive to student engagement and learning (Blackburn, 2005; Vermette, 2009). Thijs and Verkuyten (2009) conjectured that personally engaged students required a structured and ordered environment to be actively involved. Several researchers, however, upheld the notion that creating small learning communities provided the better structure for student engagement (Blackburn, 2005; Rosen et al., 2010; Wilhelm, 2007). These researchers mentioned the elements of collaboration, the connections to the cyberworld, and the promotion of inquiry as potential aspects for a classroom culture of engagement. Through classroom observations and teacher interviews, I gained insights into how classroom culture affected student engagement.

Corcoran and Silander (2009) advocated the implementation of adaptive

instruction, focusing on instructional strategies and supports to assist students in their

classroom cultures. The need to alter instructional practices toward the goal of improving

classroom climate and, consequently, student engagement was corroborated (Dockter,

Haug, & Lewis, 2010; Schussler, 2009; Uekawa et al., 2007). Schussler indicated that

teachers should have provided the right combination of challenge and support in the

learning environment for students to be successful. As stated in Downer et al. (2007),

there were risks to limiting instructional contexts:

> For example, some instructional contexts (e.g., large group situations, individual-
>
> ized seatwork, basic skills instruction) pose challenges to children at risk for
>
> school problems, requiring that they draw upon self-regulatory or cognitive
>
> resources beyond their capabilities, resulting in off-task behavior. (p. 419)

Not surprisingly, in the study by Springer, Morganfield, and Diffily (2007) both

teachers and students admitted that actual experiences in the classroom did not match

their preferred experiences. Teachers cited the demands of meeting performance

standards as the reason their own educator standards were difficult to achieve in the

classroom. In contrast, students were more likely to report a positive classroom climate and

greater engagement for those classrooms in which they expected higher grades. In a study of

high school science classes, Pickens and Eick (2009) illustrated the importance of high teacher

expectations for student achievement in creating a positive, safe classroom culture that allows

students to take risks. Mr. Benson, a teacher in the study, also indicated how his personality set

the tone for the classroom environment.

Several researchers recommended changes in classroom practices to increase preferred classroom experiences in the learning environment (Bishop & Pflaum, 2005; Doll, Spies, LeClair, Kurien, & Foley, 2010; Finn, Pannozzo, & Achilles, 2003; Tarasiuk, 2010). Finn et al. (2003) reviewed class size as a systemic condition that has resulted in studies concerning changing teacher practices, more individualized instruction, and improved student behavior. The researchers concluded in their study of elementary students that in smaller classes students appeared to be more engaged and less involved in disruptive behaviors. It was further asserted that smaller class size created a greater sense of belonging, allowing for sustained student engagement (Finn et al., 2003).

Additional researchers, Doll et al. (2010), Bishop and Pflaum (2005), Tarasuik (2010), illustrated how instituting a culture of community can help to foster increased student engagement. Doll et al. stressed the importance of a classroom structure that included cooperative learning activities. In addition, Bishop and Pflaum, in their investigation of middle school students, claimed that the authenticity of the classroom community was a key component to ultimate academic engagement. Similarly, in a study of university students, the researchers asserted that being aware of students' value of equity and justice could have impacted the quality of the learning environment (Bryson & Hand, 2007). As a teacher-researcher, Tarasiuk organized a collaborative community for her students by allowing them to create projects using online and digital content to elaborate on traditional texts; more importantly, she accomplished this learning task by relocating her students from the classroom to the computer lab. The newly formed community was described as one in which students relied on personal literacies,

discussed their creative plans with the teacher, and supported their peers authentically in the collaboration (Tarasuik, 2010).

Examining student engagement and classroom culture from a different perspective, Fisher (2009), Marks (2000), and Yazzie-Mintz (2010) drew attention and emphasis to areas in which schools and teachers were possibly lacking. An introductory quotation in Corcoran and Silander's article (2009) summed up the present condition of America's high schools:

> The American high school is often characterized by reformers as a failing institution, a place in which teaching is teacher-centered, boring, and impersonal, where students are expected to master a fragmented curriculum disconnected from the world outside the school, where too many students fail to graduate and many others graduate lacking skills essential for success in college or the workplace. (p. 158)

Fisher suggested that educators focus their goals on creating environments suitable for student engagement and students' time on task. Moreover, he proposed that federal funds should have been used to make learning environments more personalized with the teachers striving to build small learning communities in the classroom. Marks (2000) indicated that the school and classroom environments must meet certain conditions for students to be fully engaged: (a) high expectations for learning and (b) continual support from peers and teachers. The idea that students were desirous of support and connections with adults at school was reiterated in the High School Survey of Student Engagement (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). Students reported and commented on their classroom experiences relating to the environment itself; students criticized classroom

cultures for monotonous, boring, and repetitive activities, the lack of appeal to students'

interests, and the lack of interaction among teachers and students.

Student Engagement and Classroom Interventions

A group of researchers asserted that implementing certain interventions with teachers and students could impact the level of student engagement (Codding & Smyth, 2008; Colvin, Flannery, Sugai, & Monegan, 2009; Conroy, Sutherland, Snyder, & Marsh, 2008). In the study by Codding and Smyth (2008), teachers received feedback on their management of classroom transition time as an intervention; the results of the intervention were increased time on task and amount of instructional time as transition time decreased. There were other benefits noted when teachers received feedback from observations and then implemented an action plan targeting certain classroom elements and teacher behaviors (Colvin et al., 2009). Researchers and teachers witnessed improvements in class engagement, social behavior, and instructional practices. In addition, without external feedback or observation, teachers themselves could implement classroom interventions to promote positive student behaviors (Conroy et al., 2008). These proactive interventions included the following: close supervision and monitoring, enforcement of classroom rules, more opportunities to respond, praise that is more contingent, feedback and error correction and monitoring, and use of the good behavior game. Yet, according to Conroy et al. (2008), for such interventions to change students' behaviors, they must be executed efficiently and correctly, individualizing appropriately for unique aspects of each classroom.

Moreover, improvement efforts that focus on school engagement must develop and integrate different strategies that address students with various emotional, cognitive, and behavioral needs (Archambault et al., 2009). Kortering and Christenson (2009) and Ornelles (2007) conducted research to discover strategies to

assist students with disabilities and at-risk students in their school engagement and goals toward matriculation. For these students, researchers agreed that interventions should be comprehensive, targeting and setting goals for improvement in behavioral, academic, and social skills. Freedom of choice and involvement in non-academic activities were cited as necessary components to improving deficiencies (Kortering & Christenson, 2009). Other interventions may have required implementation in phases or on an individual basis to produce desired results, such as increased engagement and increased initiations with peers, as demonstrated in Ornelles (2007).

Kay and Knaack (2008) and Tarasiuk (2010) discussed how the use of computers and interactive Web-based tools known as learning objects could have enhanced the engagement and performance of students. Educators used learning objects mainly to review a concept or to present a concept from a different perspective; students provided mixed reviews on their use of learning objects and the value of them (Kay & Knaack, 2008). Despite the students' opinions of the tools, teachers expressed that the objects, overall, were engaging and supportive of instruction; moreover, student performance scores showed a significant increase. On the other hand, Tarasiuk incorporated the use of computers to tap into the out-of-school literacies that her students possessed. Students were able to translate and transform traditional texts into a digital format representative of the participation and dispersal of goods and information valued in the digital world. Using digital technology, students read traditional texts more strategically with authentic purposes in mind. Rosen et al. (2010) concurred that the incorporation of more technology was needed in teaching students inside and outside the classroom.

In contrast, Journell (2010) and Nworie and Haughton (2008) exposed some of the negative consequences that came with advances in educational technology. In Journell's study, Mr. Harding, a U.S. history teacher, supported the incorporation of technology in teaching; however, he realized that e-learning did not provide the social and emotional elements necessary for engagement in learning. In addition, Mr. Harding's students admitted that not all subjects were suited for online instruction, specifically because some subjects were more beneficial to students who engaged in hands-on, socially interactive experiences. Consequently, online instruction has been viewed as having certain educational deficits; computerized instruction, as well, has revealed its potential for disruptions and distractions in learning experiences (Nworie & Haughton, 2008). During classroom instruction, students were found using the computers for online shopping, instant messaging, paying bills, and surfing the Web, ultimately creating a barrier between the role of teacher and student.

On the contrary, another electronic device proved to be a positive reinforcer of appropriate classroom behavior (Christ & Christ, 2006). In their study, a Digital Scoreboard was used to monitor and manage student behavior and to offer competitive incentives contingent upon proper group behavior. With minimal effort and maximum efficiency, the use of this automated feedback device produced improvements in student engagement and student behavior.

Student Engagement and Parental Involvement

In the efforts of schools and students to halt the failing conditions within their schools, Smyth (2006) and Pletka (2007) indicated that greater emphasis should be placed on putting relationships at the center of everything schools do. Parents and

teachers were advised to form partnerships and to pool available resources so that students realized the connections between experiences inside and outside the classroom (Pletka, 2007). Similarly, Fan and Williams (2010) and Shirvani (2007) stressed the importance of effective communication between parents and teachers. The content of such communication has been shown to improve students' academic self-efficacy in math and English, as well as their engagement and intrinsic motivation in math and English. Negative parent-teacher communication resulted in a decrease in students' confidence, interest, and engagement in learning (Fan & Williams, 2010). However, students who felt confident, interested, and engaged reported perceptions that parents valued their education and had high expectations for their academic success. Shirvani (2007) also reiterated the idea that parental involvement can foster more positive attitudes in students and parents toward school assignments and engagement in learning. In addition, the researcher recognized the possibility of parents becoming motivated to assist schools in the elimination of inappropriate student behavior. Rosen et al. (2010) agreed that involving parents in the educational process was likely to make children happier because of their parents' participation.

Gonida, Kiosseoglou, and Voulala (2007) and Harris and Goodall (2008) investigated the effects of parental involvement, parental engagement, and parental goals in the academic behaviors of children. Parents should set the context in which their children develop and pursue their own expectations for learning as stated in Harris and Goodall. Despite the various commitments that may hinder parental involvement and engagement, student behavior and responses to learning were linked to and influenced by

the communications between home and school. Although some parents felt estranged from their child's schooling or learning because of social, environmental, educational, and financial reasons, Harris and Goodall still identified parents as the most important influence on learning. Likewise, according to Gonida et al., the performance and mastery goals of parents were likely to impact the performance and mastery goals of their children, including children's achievement goal orientations. Ironically, student engagement was not found to be strongly predicted by students' perceptions of their parents' goals. Yet, they concluded that perceived parental mastery goals and student mastery goal orientation were significant in fostering positive emotions and active classroom behavior.

Teachers' Expectations and Student Engagement

Smyth (2006) asserted that breakdowns in communication could weaken teacher expectations because of the misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the conversations, cues, and criteria provided by teachers and students, respectively, about what was going on in the context of the classroom. On the other hand, when teachers affectively communicated their enjoyment of and confidence in teaching, their students reciprocated with motivation and engagement (Martin, 2006). In addition, when teachers executed positive, proactive, and solution-focused orientations in interactions with their students, these actions affected students' motivation and engagement. Unrealistic expectations of students' motivation and engagement were said to place teachers' professional satisfaction in jeopardy (Martin, 2006).

Researchers revealed the impact that teachers' expectations can have on middle school students (Dee, 2007; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Students' perceptions of a teacher's expectations can predict their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement; perceptions of high teacher expectations predicted academic engagement (Tyler & Boelter, 2008). Dee (2007) examined the impact of teacher expectations originating from same-gender teachers. Dee proposed that student behavior or engagement could be influenced by role model effect, stereotype threat, or self-fulfilling expectations introduced and reinforced by the same-gender teacher. One example given in Dee's study illustrated how girls in a female science teacher's class became enthusiastic about going to class and began to recognize the utility of science for the future.

Teachers' Perceptions of Student Engagement

In Harris (2008) and Harris (2010), the researcher concluded that teachers have diverse perceptions about what student engagement means. In the first study, Harris discovered six different teacher conceptions of engagement in learning: behaving, enjoying, being motivated, thinking, seeing purpose, and owning (Harris, 2008). Analyzing the interview data, the researcher became aware of the hierarchical relationship ascribed to behavioral, psychological, and cognitive aspects of engagement. Surprisingly, not all teacher conceptions of engagement were focused on engagement in learning; diverse ranges of meanings were attributed to the phenomenon.

Moreover, Harris (2010) described in detail three major categories explaining how teachers facilitated engagement: delivery, modification, and collaboration. Collaboration was expressed as one of the true ways to engage students in learning. She further revealed challenges to student engagement that originate from teachers and

students, such as treating students as passive recipients and having to control or to improve student behavior. Moreover, a science teacher revealed perceptions that her students did not have the necessary self-esteem and confidence in their academic abilities (Pickens & Eick, 2009). In addition, teachers' perceptions of their subject may have presented challenging decisions related to course content, sequence, pacing, and curriculum practices (Corcoran & Silander, 2009).

Martin (2006) and Zyngier (2007) revealed teachers' positive and negative perceptions about student engagement and its impact on teachers. The dominant deficit view of some teachers reflected their attitudes that students' backgrounds rendered them incompetent and incapable in their academic pursuits (Zyngier, 2007). Teachers recognized other behaviors in students that could contribute to lack of engagement and academic success as well, such as a high incidence of anxiety, self-handicapping, and failure avoidance (Martin, 2006). On the other hand, several educators seemed to place a more positive emphasis on student strengths and lived experiences, a student-centered pedagogy (Zyngier, 2007). In Martin's study, male teachers rated their students higher in terms of self-efficacy, valuing of school, study management, and control. Whereas a proportion of teachers voiced satisfaction with students who engaged in compliance with adult rules and participated in adult predetermined and led activities, the remainder of the educators perceived that their enjoyment of and confidence in teaching came from students' mastery orientation, persistence, and planning, respectively (Martin, 2006; Zyngier, 2007).

Teachers' Roles in Student Engagement

Utilizing educators as agents of change has become the focus for improving student engagement, moving beyond the preoccupation with intractable characteristics of students, such as race/ethnicity, home language, and family income (Appleton et al., 2008). Beutel (2010), Fives and Buehl (2009), and Thijs and Verkuyten (2009) discussed the teacher's roles that affect the quality of student engagement. The following categories outlined by Beutel highlighted the necessary teacher-to-student interactions that support engagement: information providing, instructing, facilitating, guided participation, and mentoring. Although the first two categories suggested emotional distance between the teacher and students, the mentoring category specified the continuous academic and social development of students provided by their teachers. The teacher's roles expressed in these categories could have potentially been enhanced if teachers and students would have conceptualized their roles as members of an inquiring community (Wilhelm, 2007).

The other teams of researchers examined teachers and their roles according to their level of experience and individual teaching style (Fives & Buehl, 2009; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2009). In a study comparing the sense of efficacy for practicing and pre-service teachers, Fives and Buehl (2009) found that practicing teachers were most efficacious with respect to classroom management and least efficacious with respect to student engagement. Thijs and Verkuyten (2009) provided evidence that authoritative teachers (who gave structure and involvement) have had a more positive impact on their students than permissive (who gave low structure and high involvement) and authoritarian teachers (who gave high structure and low involvement). With authoritative

teachers, students responded with higher levels of academic effort and enjoyment than they responded with permissive and authoritarian teachers, respectively. Wilhelm (2007) concurred with this idea that the best teaching was authoritative, involving participation and collaboration.

Colvin et al. (2009), Schussler (2009), and Yazzie-Mintz (2010) advocated that teachers make the necessary changes in instructional practices to improve student engagement. Colvin et al. documented that once teachers improved transitional time, whole-class discussion strategies, comprehension assessment, and teacher mobility the level of student engagement increased. Targeting specific instructional strategies has facilitated student engagement by capturing students' interests (Schussler, 2009). On the other hand, educators have failed to excite and engage students by not allowing them to work and learn with peers, along with not facilitating active participation; students themselves expressed high interest in activities such as discussion and debate, group projects, presentations, and role-plays (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). Moreover, teachers have neglected to make adaptations that are more complex to technology and media in the classroom, thereby perpetuating student boredom (Rosen et al., 2010). In Yazzie-Mintz's high school survey of student engagement, one student commented that a fun, open-minded teacher, who also tailors instructional methods to be interesting and exciting, was the best teacher. McDonald and Hershman (2010) indicated that a good teacher's job was to help students achieve mastery at each level and then move forward, in addition to planning lessons and a variety of activities.

In addition, Schussler (2009) and Yazzie-Mintz (2010) stressed that teachers create authentic tasks that connect learning inside the classroom to students' futures

outside the classroom. When educators provided such real-world tasks and opportunities for success, they simultaneously created a learning environment of care and high expectations (Schussler, 2009). Teachers have also increased the amount of time, effort, and level of engagement applied to these tasks (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). Finally, Schussler and Yazzie-Mintz cited the importance of academic support for students. Teachers demonstrated that support in the classroom by communicating that all students can succeed (Schussler, 2009). When educators purposefully made connections with their students, they increased the likelihood of some students staying in school and staying engaged as well (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010).

Blackburn (2005) advocated that busy, fast-paced instruction could alleviate some classroom discipline problems. Accordingly, Corcoran and Silander (2009), Fisher (2009), and Johnson (2008) emphasized that teachers become effective users of classroom instructional time. This type of adjustment involved teachers setting aside time for cooperative learning groups, large-group instruction combined with computerized small group instruction, and interactive instruction combining lesser proportions of time for lecturing and independent seatwork (Corcoran & Silander, 2009; Johnson, 2008). Fisher suggested that educators incorporate additional time for reading and writing in class as they developed more precision in teaching and used class time wisely. Moreover, Corcoran and Silander asserted that varying instructional methods and use of instructional time could have helped account for student differences in motivation, dispositions and aptitudes, experience, and instructional needs. Corcoran and Silander proposed adaptive instruction in which learning goals do not change, but instructional strategies and supports offered by teachers did. In light of the changes or adjustments

that educators must currently execute, Smyth's (2006) declaration that it was the students who actually controlled, managed, and shaped the behavior of their teachers conveyed a certain modern-day pedagogical truth.

Lawrence et al. (2009) and Williamson and Haigney (2009) expressed various ways that teachers continued to empower students in the classroom. Improving students' experiences with literacy could have been accomplished by teaching them to employ specific instructional strategies in reading (Lawrence et al., 2009). According to Lawrence et al., offering students a balanced literacy approach could have enabled them to have meaningful conversations about the text, make connections to the texts, use different reading comprehension strategies, and demonstrate higher levels of engagement in classroom activities. Although speaking on behalf of tutors, Williamson and Haigney made a valuable suggestion that teachers could have applied to students as well, to provide a range of learning options geared toward specific methods or styles of personal engagement. Once students realized the importance of reflection in learning and approaches to learning, perhaps there would have been a transition from short-term engagement to purposeful engagement for a lifetime (Williamson & Haigney, 2009). Similarly, Vermette (2009) stated that motivating students to think deeply was approximately 99% of a teacher's job.

Shirvani (2007) espoused another kind of empowerment that teachers can develop in parents and students. Teachers should seek to involve parents in their children's education for the benefits of improving student behavior and attitudes of parents and children toward school. Shirvani proved that effective communication with parents could make a significant difference in students' conduct and engagement in the classroom.

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In conclusion, to this discussion on teachers' roles in student engagement, Bryson and Hand (2007) and Pickens and Eick (2009) firmly stated that the quality of learning for students depended on teachers and the approaches they took in the learning environment. In addition, both groups of researchers pointed specifically to the importance of teacher enthusiasm in reaching and engaging students. It was described as being critical, prerequisite, and one of the strongest motivators of student engagement (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Pickens & Eick, 2009).

Of course, there were alternative arguments (Bryson & Hand, 2007; Pickens & Eick, 2009) as to what should be done to clearly define and facilitate student engagement. One argument asserted that all teachers needed to do was introduce more active practices in the classroom; other researchers proposed that student engagement was so profound and multi-faceted that it required much sensitive and reflexive consideration before pushing ahead with permanent initiatives (Bryson & Hand, 2007). On the other hand, the study by Pickens and Eick (2009) revealed certain themes that educators could use to spark and sustain student engagement: (a) teacher enthusiasm, (b) non-threatening environment, (c) storytelling, (d) popular media connections, (e) student-to-student dialogue, (f) practical applications of lessons, (g) building student self-confidence, and (h) hands-on scientific inquiry. No matter what arguments or strategies researchers and educators support, the problem of student disengagement in all classrooms across America must be dealt with aggressively, with a clear communication of high expectations for students and a total expression of confidence in teachers' abilities to engage students purposefully, effectively, and productively for learning inside and outside the classroom (Pickens & Eick, 2009).

Summary

Chapter 2 began with various definitions of the construct of student engagement and provided evidence as to the existence or the lack of student engagement in today's classrooms. Then, details were presented about certain personal characteristics or internal qualities that engaged or disengaged students might have. More importantly, the chapter informed the audience about the numerous external factors, ranging from the classroom environment to parental involvement that could have an impact on students' level of engagement in the classroom. Finally, I examined the topic of student engagement from the teachers' perspectives, providing information on teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement. Through the present study, I attempted to add more insights into how secondary English teachers perceive student engagement, their roles in the improvement of student engagement in their classrooms, and the effects of student engagement on their confidence level and enjoyment of teaching.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The concept of student engagement has been explored from cognitive, behavioral, and psychological perspectives for many years (Appleton et al., 2008; Fredricks et al., 2004; Marks, 2000; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008). Students' perceptions and experiences have been the primary source of data in largely quantitative studies utilizing surveys and the popular Experience Sampling Method (ESM) (Johnson, 2008; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008; Uekawa et al., 2007) to gain insights into students' personal thoughts and feelings about their level of engagement in school and in the classroom. However, several researchers have indicated the need for more qualitative research to explore and describe the phenomenon of student engagement from the teachers' perspectives as well (Goodroe, 2010; Harris, 2008; Harris, 2010; Irvin, 2006; Martin, 2006). Because perceptions involve and rely on the lived experiences of students and teachers, a phenomenological approach was used to collect and analyze data about how secondary English teachers perceive student engagement and how their perceptions affect their roles, confidence in, and enjoyment of teaching.

Nature of Qualitative/Phenomenological Research

The nature of qualitative study is inductive and reflective, yielding results that tell a story about participants and their lived experiences. According to Creswell (2009) and Maxwell (2005), this research is concerned with investigating the meaning that participants

give to their experiences. Therefore, through data collection and analysis, qualitative

inquiry has the potential to generate theories related to the phenomenon under investigation

(Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Creswell outlined nine primary characteristics of

qualitative research, particularly stating how the use of multiple data sources can contribute

to various interpretations of the phenomenon. According to him, the following elements

guide the research process and the data analysis of qualitative inquiry: (a) natural setting,

(b) researcher as key instrument, (c) multiple sources of data, (d) inductive data analysis,

(e) participants' meanings, (f) emergent design, (g) theoretical lens, (h), interpretive

inquiry, and (i) holistic account (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenological research has been defined in similar ways by researchers

(Creswell, 2009; Merriam et al., 2002; Patton, 2002). These researchers made specific

reference to the *essence* of human experience examined within phenomenology. In

addition, Patton (2002) and Merriam et al. (2002) used the terms *meaning* and *structure* to

indicate the foci of phenomenological study. According to the premises of

phenomenological research, people's lived experiences with a phenomenon, along with

their perceptions of the lived experiences, provided a rich source of descriptive data for this

study. According to Harris (2008), collective understandings of groups have illustrated the

range of perspectives conveyed within the targeted population. She stated that teachers'

conceptions about student engagement have been quite overlooked in academic literature.

In the current study, secondary English teachers shared their perceptions of the essences of

student engagement, reflected on, and discussed the core meanings that experiences with

students have internalized within them (Patton, 2002). Considering the insight and

understanding that results from phenomenological studies, Goodroe (2010) declared that such studies might affect or even alter educational practices.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study primarily probed the perceptions of secondary English teachers about student engagement in their classes and the impact of these perceptions on their confidence in, enjoyment of, and roles in the teaching profession. By investigating the following questions, I attempted to gain insight into the quality of student engagement in high school English classes and the quality of teaching experiences that corresponded to students' levels of engagement.

1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms?

2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?

3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement?

4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?

Research Design

The phenomenological design of this study began with conducting standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002) with six high school English teachers, five of them currently teaching and one of them having taught at the same school. These interviews allowed for the gathering of rich information about teachers' perceptions of student engagement from their own teaching experience. One goal of the current study was to

probe into the roles that teachers play in engaging their students. The sample size of six

reached the point of saturation, receipt of redundant information from participants

(Goodroe, 2010; Irvin, 2006). Upon Institutional Review Board approval (see Appendix

A), interviews were conducted in the fall of 2012. I audiotaped the interviews in locations

acceptable and convenient to the participants. In addition, I listened to the tapes on several

occasions during the process of transcription. The following steps as outlined by Creswell

(2009) were used to discover and create categories, themes, and codes as revealed in the

data: (a) organize and prepare the data for analysis, (b) read through all the data, (c) begin

detailed analysis with a coding process, (d) generate a description of the setting or people

as well as categories or themes for analysis, (e) advance a rationale for the representation of

the qualitative narrative, and (f) make an interpretation or meaning of the data. Upon the

discovery and analysis of categories of teacher perceptions on student engagement, did

teachers in this study reveal specific challenges to student engagement? According to

Merriam et al. (2002), Goodroe (2010), Perry (2011), and Seidman (1991), member

checking is a process that allows participants to review the data and then choose to agree

or to disagree with the interpretation of the data; the participants' consent contributes to

the overall validity of the research findings.

Because of the research timeline and issues of validity, I conducted classroom

observations in the fall of 2012 on November 7, 2012 and December 4, 2012. The

observations occurred in the midst of the interview sessions during the first semester of the

school term, fall 2012. While conducting observations, I took detailed field notes about the

actions and roles of the teacher in connection with student engagement; notes of various

student actions and reactions were being recorded during the observations (see Appendix

B). Each English teacher was observed on two separate occasions in two different class

periods for an observation period of at least 45 minutes. Field notes were reviewed, typed,

and analyzed for recurring details or patterns.

Once participants' words and meanings were categorized, coded, and analyzed

thematically and comparatively (Irvin, 2006), I composed follow-up questions for a focus

group session with all teachers from the original sample; however, one teacher did not

participate in the interview. On May 13, 2013, the focus group session took place at a time

and location convenient for all participants. I served as a facilitator for the group, but not

as an equal participant, during the audiotaping and conducting of the focus group interview.

The purpose of using this research design consisting of standardized open-ended

interviews, observations and field notes, and a focus group was to enhance validity and

credibility of results (Creswell, 2009; Merriam et al., 2002; Patton, 2002).

Sample

The sample in this phenomenological study was six secondary English teachers and

one long-term substitute at the same high school in a public school system in Southwest

Georgia. Five of the teachers are certified by the Professional Standards Commission of

Georgia in the area of Communicative Arts, English, English education, or language arts;

one of the teachers is teaching on a provisional certificate in the area of English. The five

certified teachers are qualified to teach on the secondary level, encompassing grades 9-12.

The long-term substitute has served in the school's English department for two school

terms, 2010-2011 (January-May) and 2012-2013 (October-May). In consideration of

student engagement, I examined the multiple views of secondary English teachers as their

views related to the grade level taught. As common to qualitative, phenomenological

studies, the sample was a purposeful one, which was suited to the in-depth examination and description of the lived experiences of people in relation to a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Goodroe, 2010; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). The extensiveness of the interview protocol also contributes to the quality of data obtained from a small sample size (Perry, 2011). Four teachers were African American females, with the addition of one Caucasian male and one African American male. The teachers range in age from 24 to 65 years old; their total years of teaching experience equal about 96 years.

Research Setting

Teacher participants and the observed classroom populations originated from one setting. According to the archives of the Georgia Department of Education website (2012), the setting is a Title I comprehensive high school in Southwest Georgia, serving a predominantly African American population (94% in 2010-2011) from economically disadvantaged households, with 86% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (2010-2011). The school itself is currently labeled as a *priority* or *needs improvement* school (NI-4 status), having failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress over the past several years. Despite the addition of rigorous programs such as Advanced Placement courses and an International Baccalaureate middle-years program, the graduation rate has fluctuated from 72.2%, 76.5%, to 48.8% in 2009, 2010, and 2011, respectively. The administration, teachers, and students of the school have discussed the lack of parental involvement and participation in the school and in the students' academics, including the lack of strict discipline policies, as obstacles to improving student engagement and academic achievement.

Researcher's Role

In addition to being the primary researcher, I have taught in this school setting for 17 years; I have established a professional relationship and rapport with all research participants over a time period ranging from 1 to 13 years, respectively. As a peer teacher, I had the potential to affect the research participants' willingness toward full disclosure about their lived experiences with student engagement. In addition, I taught one of the study's participants in her junior year of high school, 2006-2007; she is new to the teaching profession. I have served on the school's leadership team and as English department chair from 2009-2011 and contributed input and practices toward school improvement and teacher effectiveness. In 2011-2012, I participated in professional learning seminars, *Classroom Instruction that Works (Marzano),* and three other colleagues and I re-delivered the instructional strategies to the school's faculty. Moreover, a group of my colleagues voted me as Teacher of the Month for the school in January 2012. In consideration of the various roles played within this school's community, the goal of this research study was to report and describe, as accurately as possible, the lived experiences of secondary English teachers with student engagement in their classrooms.

Data Collection

Observations

English teachers were observed in their high school classrooms in the fall of 2012. I observed teachers and looked for evidence of student engagement as it related to actions and interactions between and among teachers and students. Acting as a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2009), I visited teachers' classrooms on two different occasions for a

period of approximately 45 minutes. Observations were used to help validate the reports of lived experiences given by teachers during the interview sessions (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam et al., 2002). Moreover, through classroom observations and teacher interviews, I gained insights into how classroom culture affected student engagement.

Field Notes

Observations of the participants and their students provided the data for field notes. Field notes were taken in the various classroom settings, transformed into a narrative (Goodroe, 2010), and then saved into a Microsoft Word document. I perused the notes and looked for details that may or may not support themes or patterns revealed in the interview data previously collected in the fall of 2012 and the spring of 2013. The value of field notes in qualitative research had been proclaimed by other researchers (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Field notes recorded during classroom observations were organized in a chart form listing descriptive and reflective notations or according to personal style and work habits (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Interviews

In a phenomenological approach to research, interviews provide a rich source of data about the lived experiences of research participants (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). Perry (2011) cited the use of individual and focus group interviews in her attempt to discover the essence of students' lived experiences. In this research study, secondary English teachers gave their perceptions of how they experienced student engagement in their classrooms (Harris, 2008; Harris, 2010; Irvin, 2006; Martin, 2006; Zyngier, 2007) and how these experiences affected their teaching

roles, enjoyment of, and confidence in teaching (Fisher, 2009; Johnson, 2008; Lawrence et al., 2009; Martin, 2006; Pickens & Eick, 2009; Schussler, 2009; Shirvani, 2007; Thijs & Verkuyten, 2009). Probing questions were asked to gain more clarification and elaboration from participants as information emerged (Goodroe, 2010).

I obtained permission from another experienced researcher to use her interview guide (in a modified form) to conduct interviews with participants in the current study (Irvin, 2006). Participants were given a written consent form, from the university's Institutional Review Board, to complete prior to conducting the interviews; this form disclosed to participants that their identity would be protected through the provision of a pseudonym to be used in the recording of data and writing of the final research report (Irvin, 2006; Perry, 2011). Interviews were conducted at a date, time, and location convenient to all participants. In addition, interview sessions were allotted at least 45 minutes for each participant (Irvin, 2006). Interviews took place in participants' classrooms or offices, which lent themselves to privacy and minimal distractions. Interviewees were compensated with gift cards for their participation (not for their responses) with individual interviews and with the focus group session (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). Seidman (1991) and Patton (2002) both provide information about the participants' right to informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to know important details concerning the research process and the outcomes of the research.

Interview Schedule

The interview protocol in this study consisted of 13 questions; 11 questions were taken from Irvin's dissertation (2006), and I added two more questions to the protocol (see Appendix C). The questions asked teacher participants to give their perceptions of student engagement in their classrooms and in the context of their teaching practices and experiences. Probing questions were added to the protocol as needed for further clarification and elaboration of interviewees' responses (Creswell, 2009; Goodroe, 2010; Patton, 2002).

Focus Groups

The purpose for using the focus group was to enhance the validity by adding another source of data or further saturating the data (Perry, 2011; Seidman, 1991). The focus group, consisting of teachers from the original sample, was used as a means to compare and contrast responses of teachers given individually, in isolation, to teachers' responses given collectively, in a group setting (see Appendix D). As defined by Patton (2002), the focus group is not designed to be a problem-solving session, a decision-making group, or primarily a discussion; it is an interview. The goal of a focus group interview is to obtain quality information in a context where people share and ponder their personal views in conjunction with the views of others, using an open-ended question format (Patton, 2002; Perry, 2011). Patton gave a catalog of the advantages and the limitations that focus group interviews have in the conduct of qualitative inquiry. For example, interactions in the focus group enhance data quality, but not if the dialogue is dominated by one or two participants in the

group. According to Patton, being a focused experience is what gives the focus group interview its power. Patton summarized the powerful exchange in the following quote:

> The groups are focused by being formed homogeneously. The facilitation is focused, keeping responses on target. Interactions among participants are focused, staying on topic. Use of time must be focused, because the time passes quickly. (p. 388)

Moreover, the focus of the interview is keeping shared information strictly within the group, maintaining confidentiality (Perry, 2011).

Transcriptions

Interviews were transcribed during the timeframe of January-July of 2013. I used a desktop Windows XP computer, ICP recorder software, and Microsoft Word documents as the main tools for getting the interviews transcribed (see Appendices E and F). Interviews were transcribed verbatim as entirely representative of the words given by each participant (Irvin, 2006; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). Once the interviews were transcribed, I numbered the lines of the transcripts and read through them several times (Irvin, 2006; Perry, 2011). Participants were given the opportunity to review individual transcripts for authenticity and accuracy, thereby contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam et al., 2002; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991).

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Narrative Analysis.

Data analysis is a process that begins with the first interactions with the participants (Goodroe, 2010; Merriam et al., 2002). Before the interview process, I

bracketed my preconceived ideas by outlining any aspects of student engagement that I had encountered during my experiences as a secondary English teacher (Harris, 2008; Merriam et al., 2002; Perry, 2011). My preconceived notions about student engagement in English classes were that students lacked basic interests in reading and writing, lacked the intrinsic motivation necessary to achieve, and lacked basic proficiency in reading and writing. During the initial interviews, I revealed personal assumptions through my commentary with the research participants. By using teacher interviews as the principal data source in this study, I conducted an individual case analysis of each participant's notions and stories about student engagement in his or her classroom (Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). In analyzing each teacher's narrative, I also sought to find commonalities (essence of phenomenological analysis) about teachers' experiences with student engagement and the impact of these experiences on the teachers themselves. The process of data and narrative analysis as described by Patton (2002), Maxwell (2005), and Goodroe (2010) were used in this study. Participants' stories were reported in narrative form to allow for visualization of each participant and the contexts in which they engaged in lived experiences (Goodroe, 2010).

Comparative Thematic Analysis

After analysis of individual narratives given by the secondary English teachers, I extended the analysis by comparing one narrative text with another one (see Appendix G). The purpose of comparative thematic analysis is to highlight, to explain further, and to increase understanding of recurring patterns and themes across all participants (Goodroe, 2010; Saldana, 2009). This type of analysis validates

commonality of shared experiences among the study's participants. The process of comparative thematic analysis involved the following steps as explained by Goodroe: categorization of major points of each participant, comparison of focal points throughout all participants, and inductive analysis of themes and details. Perry (2011) and Goodroe (2010) both utilized a coding chart to organize themes under each participant's name.

Representativeness, Credibility, and Trustworthiness

The purposeful sample of this study was representative of high school English teachers who were faced with the challenges of student engagement in their classrooms. Because the study was limited to secondary English teachers, including one high school substitute teacher, in one high school in Southwest Georgia, it would not be representative of all subject areas, geographical regions, or high schools in relation to student demographics, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement. Although the study did lack generalizability (Creswell, 2009; Merriam et al., 2002), the credibility was established through the triangulation of data sources, the immersion with data and extensive data analysis, and member checking of interview data with the participants (Creswell, 2009; Goodroe, 2010; Merriam et al., 2002; Perry, 2011).

The trustworthiness of the study was established by the research process, my objectivity and integrity, and the degree of thoroughness in reporting the research data and results. Following qualitative research steps as suggested or executed by other researchers showed my dedication to preserving the essence of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2009; Goodroe, 2010; Maxwell, 2005). Revealing biases and preconceived notions as a secondary English teacher enabled me to collect and analyze

the data openly and honestly. In addition, maintaining anonymity of research participants and security of research data and files also demonstrated my integrity.

Limitations of the Study

Researcher Subjectivity

A major limitation that may have influenced data collection and analysis was my inexperience with qualitative inquiry (Goodroe, 2010). Being a secondary language arts teacher, I brought certain opinions and perceptions about student engagement into the research study. One goal was to separate my biases about students' lack of interest, motivation, and proficiency in reading and writing from the collection and analysis of the research data; this process is known as bracketing, as described by particular researchers (Harris, 2008; Perry, 2011; Merriam et al., 2002). However, I did not utilize a bracketing journal as a more efficient way of tracking my preconceived ideas. In addition, member checking of interview and focus group data reduced the influence of my subjectivity (Goodroe, 2010; Perry, 2011).

Sample

The purposeful sample of six high school English teachers was a legitimate one according to the standards of phenomenological research (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). Moreover, the sample was large enough to gather meaningful, descriptive information about teachers' perceptions of student engagement in their classrooms. Although valuable insights were gained about student engagement from the teacher's perspective, the generalizability of the results was limited because of the sample size (Goodroe, 2010; Patton, 2002).

The fact that data in this study was self-reported and only reflected teacher evaluations of student engagement was a major limitation (Harris, 2010). In addition, my professional and/or personal relationship with the participants required that steps be taken to guard against my bias, subjectivity, and influence when interviewing participants, recording their responses, and analyzing the data (Creswell, 2009; Seidman, 1991).

Summary

The purpose of the study was to report and describe teachers' perceptions about student engagement in secondary English classrooms. From teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group session, I collected qualitative data, yielding information based on participants' lived experiences surrounding student engagement. Data sources were reviewed, probed, and translated into categories, patterns, and themes as represented in the data. I gained insights into high school English teachers' perceptions of student engagement, their perceived role(s) in student engagement, and the effects of that engagement on their confidence in and their enjoyment of teaching.

Chapter IV

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

As a professional educator, I recognized in the last several years of my teaching career that my students appeared disconnected from or disinterested in the instructional and learning processes. The quality of interactions between and among my students and me had begun to diminish and led to teacher and student frustrations. Therefore, when I chose the focus of this research study, I knew that I had to discover other secondary English teachers' perceptions of student engagement in their classrooms, which had been noted as an area of deficient research (Harris, 2008; Irvin, 2006). My intention was not only to give voice to their perspectives on student engagement, but it was also to find out how these research participants perceived teachers' current and future roles in the pursuit of student engagement. In addition, I sought to discover if students' level of engagement had an impact on secondary English teachers' confidence level and their degree of enjoyment experienced in their teaching careers. To accomplish these goals, I utilized a survey instrument that had been created by another researcher (Irvin, 2006). This current study's modified survey instrument was composed of eleven interview questions from Irvin's instrument and her questions relating to demographic data on the research participants. The modified survey instrument incorporated two additional interview questions about levels of teacher confidence and teacher enjoyment in relationship to level of student engagement.

Organization of Data Analysis

In this phenomenological study, data were generated and collected from three primary sources: six teacher interviews, observation field notes, and a focus group interview. By triangulating these data, I hoped to increase the credibility of qualitative interpretation and to increase the likelihood of prominent commonalities and emerging themes. Individual and comparative analyses were conducted with all three data sources. Therefore, in this chapter, a summary of data results will be presented for each data source; this narrative will illustrate the consensus of participants' perceptions about student engagement, their roles in facilitating student engagement, and the impact of student engagement on their levels of teacher confidence and enjoyment of teaching. Following the narrative of results from the three data sources, I will provide a discussion of the five major themes gleaned from data analyses of interview and focus group data.

Description of Teacher Participants

A purposeful sample of six secondary English teachers was used in this current phenomenological study (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1991). In order to facilitate understanding of the perceptions of student engagement from the research participants in this study, brief descriptions of teachers' demographics and teaching philosophy have been provided.

One of my participants is a retired educator who returned to the classroom in 2012-2013 to teach at the high school, which is the setting for the current study. Charles Drew (his pseudonym-CD) has 33 years of teaching experience and falls within the age category of 60-64. He is certified in the subject area of English Education, has a Specialist degree in that area, has a Specialist degree in Administration/Supervision, and

has taught English in grade levels 7-12, including American and British literature. According to Mr. Drew, his teaching philosophy for the twenty-first century is learner-centered. He believes that with encouragement and positive reinforcement each learner can develop a sense of self-worth and personal achievement. "Learning and achievement occur when the learner believes," stated Mr. Drew. Although he commends the American culture for valuing the education of all individuals, he stresses that Americans must take a closer look at the many pitfalls that affect the learning process for students. Mr. Drew has taught at this specific school setting for 1 year. During this study, Mr. Drew was observed twice, teaching his second period morning American literature/composition class and teaching his sixth period afternoon class of tenth grade literature/composition.

Another participant from the same high school setting invested 15 years teaching English in the classroom before taking on the position of Instructional Coach for the same school. Marie Seay (her pseudonym-MS) has taught at this study's setting for 13 years, and she falls within the age category of 35-39. During her career, she has taught English in grades 9-12, Advanced Placement English Language, and Advanced Placement English Literature; she is certified in the areas of Secondary English Education and English Education. Ms. Seay's teaching philosophy emphasizes the teacher's responsibility in molding young citizens who can contribute productively to their communities. She suggested that educators focus on maintaining classroom environments that foster active creation of knowledge through the use of technology and other interactive activities. Because of Ms. Seay's position as Instructional Coach, she could not be observed working and interacting with students in a teaching capacity.

Ms. Sparkle Slade (her pseudonym-SS) has a broader range of teaching experiences than any other participant in the current study. She has taught 24 years in the grade levels or subjects of Special Education and English in grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12. She falls within the age category of 50-54, and she has educational and professional training in the area of English Education, but is classified as a non-certified teacher. "I think that every person should have the right to an education. They should take every opportunity to receive that education," according to Ms. Slade. These beliefs represent her teaching philosophy for the twenty-first century. She also stressed the current accessibility of educational goals through the avenue of virtual learning that requires individuals to have a desire or motivation to learn new things. Ms. Slade has taught at the present study's setting for 4 and a half years. I observed Ms. Slade providing instruction during two separate class sessions, her seventh period British literature/composition class and her second period British literature/composition class.

Justin Jeffreys (his pseudonym-JJ) has completed his fourth year of teaching, all 4 years taught at the current setting of the research study; he falls within the age category of 25-29. His certification is in the areas of Philosophy and English, earning a Bachelor of Arts in both. During the 4 years of his teaching career, he has taught English in grades 9-12, in addition to Advanced Placement literature and Advanced Placement language. Mr. Jeffreys's teaching philosophy for this century focuses on envisioning teachers as artists who must pursue and cultivate lives of inquiry and reading. According to him, if teachers would follow this pathway, they would discover the truths to some of the unanswered questions of pedagogy. I observed Mr. Jeffreys delivering classroom instruction during

his sixth period British literature/composition and first period Advanced Placement language classes.

Ruth Henry (her pseudonym-RH) has completed 4 years of teaching and falls into the age category of 25-29. She is certified to teach middle school and high school English, grades 6-12. She has spent 3 and a half years teaching ninth grade literature/composition at the study's current setting. Ms. Henry stated, "My philosophy of education is that school should be a place where the possibilities are endless." She believes that teachers who set high expectations for their students are able to reach beyond teaching the curriculum effectively and are more importantly able to reach the hearts of their students. She further believes that teachers are effective classroom managers who create learning environments for various student expression and engagement in stimulating activities. Ms. Henry's third-period and fourth-period classes were observed during instructional time; both class periods were ninth grade literature/composition.

One research participant, Diana Lake, was not interviewed as a part of the study because of her status as a substitute teacher. However, she was observed delivering classroom instruction because during the data collection phase of the study she was serving as a long-term substitute for six sections of ninth grade literature/composition. Ms. Lake has served as a substitute teacher for the same school system for 8 years. She has served as a long-term substitute for the current setting of this study for 4 years, facilitating for grades 9-12, in the subjects of English, Science, and Mathematics. She has certification in the area of business office technology and years of experience as a short-term and long-term substitute; Ms. Lake falls within the age category of 50-54. Her

teaching philosophy for the twenty-first century subscribes to the belief that students will be able to place their creative spin on learning tasks and products through the use of diverse technology and that traditionally modeled classrooms will soon become obsolete. I observed Ms. Lake delivering instruction to her fourth-period and third-period classes of ninth grade literature/composition.

Finally, Ms. Payton Davis (her pseudonym-PD) is new to teaching and the youngest educator in this study; her age falls into the category of 20-24. She has 2 years of experience teaching English, with 1 year of experience at the current setting of the study. She earned her certification in English Education and has taught ninth grade and tenth grade literature and composition. Ms. Payton's teaching philosophy hinges on the belief that teachers do not teach just curriculum and content, but they also teach students lifelong skills, cultural diversity, the importance of independent critical thinking. According to Ms. Payton, her ultimate goal for her students is "that they leave my class a better person than they entered it. I aim to teach the complete person, not just the brain." She was observed delivering instruction to her first-period and seventh-period classes of tenth grade literature and composition.

Overview of Teachers' Perceptions of and Roles within Student Engagement

In the past several years, researchers have probed the topic of teachers' perceptions of student engagement. One major conclusion from these studies has been that educators view student engagement as a multi-faceted phenomenon (Harris, 2008; Harris, 2010). The following narrative presents summaries of research data gathered from individual teacher interviews, a focus group interview, and observation field notes;

evidence was provided to illustrate the diversity of perceptions that educators have about student engagement and their roles in maintaining student engagement.

Initial Teacher Interviews

In the individual interviews, each teacher was asked 13 questions to probe his/her views on student engagement, teacher roles, teacher confidence, and teacher enjoyment. When the six educators were asked to define student engagement, the majority of the participants agreed that student engagement is represented by students who are actively participating or actively involved in the learning and educational process. For the times that students were engaged in English classrooms, participants reported that students could relate to the content or material, find relevancy in the literature, or make personal connections to the literature. Half of the teachers communicated the perception that student or teacher interest in the activities and material is a primary factor in student engagement. According to Ms. Davis, "I know for me, I can't teach without having my students engaged. If you're not actively participating and you're not giving me feedback …that you understand, then to me you're not fully engaged." Thirty-three percent of participants expressed the perception that learning activities that are fun and enjoyable identify another potential source for student engagement. In talking about the experience of rapping in front of her students, Ms. Davis concluded, "That environment is more relaxed and everybody is just wanting to have fun and learn, and learning should be fun."

Certain interview questions required the participants to describe the characteristics that are exhibited by engaged students. All of the educators agreed that an engaged student is one who actively participates verbally and nonverbally; over half of them also supported the idea that engaged students are attentive in class. Sixty-six

percent of participants stated that students who seem more likely to engage are usually outgoing, assertive extroverts. Mr. Drew supported his perception of these engaged students by stating, "First of all, …an engaged student is one who, no matter what the task is, the first thing they're gonna take a look at is what is it that I really need to do. And, if they don't understand, they're gonna ask questions; …." In addition, 50% of participants concurred that students who seem more likely to engage also receive support from parents and teachers. As reported by 50% of the teachers, students who are withdrawn or isolated in the classroom are less likely to be engaged; 33% of participants also indicated that students who have low self-esteem and students who are academically irresponsible are less likely to be engaged as well. Ms. Slade further described these disengaged students: "You have loners that are not necessarily exceptional students, they just don't do well in crowds at all; they come to school because they have to. And you find those are the ones that they usually don't do the assignments…." Moreover, teachers were asked to describe what student engagement would look like on a school-wide level. They proposed that school-wide engagement involved the following components: display of student work, increase in student responsibility, improvement in teacher morale and general morale, and collaboration among stakeholders.

After participants rendered their definitions of student engagement and their descriptions of engaged students, they responded to questions that sought to pinpoint specific actions and responsibilities of teachers toward student engagement. Several teachers revealed that they used both student input and discussion questions to foster student engagement. Fifty percent of the participants concluded that they must incorporate more student-centered involvement in their English classes, along with more

student input and decision-making in the learning process, in the attempt to increase student engagement. Ms. Davis expressed her desire for student-centered involvement in the following statements: "You know, let them see some of my mistakes as well and I let them give me feedback on things that I need to work on as well…if I'm, you know, allowing them to do that then they won't be afraid to approach, you know whatever task it is, and they'll actively engage…." Moreover, participants suggested that educators increase their engagement in professional knowledge and educational research in order to increase their students' engagement. Half of the participants stated that they were doing well in adjusting and adapting their teacher strategies to improve student engagement. Sixty-six percent of the participants rated themselves as satisfactory or proficient in using strategies to increase student engagement. According to Ms. Henry, "With one being the lowest and ten being the highest, I think I'm probably at about a seven. I say that because I do have some classes where everybody is engaged, they're all interested, but I also have some classes where there are a handful that still haven't gotten to the point where I feel like they need to be as far as engagement; …."

Because of the impact of various teacher roles on student engagement, I wanted to examine the effects of student engagement on levels of teacher confidence and teacher enjoyment in the profession. Sixty-six percent of participants agreed that there is a positive correlation between student engagement and teacher confidence. They stated that their teacher confidence increases with more student engagement. Ms. Seay explained the impact of student engagement on teachers' confidence level by stating, "…when students are engaged, it does make a teacher more confident …you realize that you're reaching them, because they are… participating and interacting with you. But, I

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think it makes you more confident because you know it's something that they'll retain."

Similarly, 66% of participants agreed that there is a positive correlation between student engagement and teacher enjoyment of teaching. Mr. Jeffreys communicated this relationship so vividly that: "…there's nothing more satisfying than a student coming to you in the hallway and asking you to explain something, and you saying 'Well, let me get off this silly post and let's walk in the classroom and talk for a minute here.' "

Focus Group Interviews

The purpose of conducting a focus group interview was to obtain more information and insights into student engagement as teacher participants interacted and shared their perceptions in a group setting (Patton, 2002; Perry, 2011). The focus group interview for this study was conducted in the afternoon at the end of the regular school day on May 13, 2013, approximately 5 months after the initial teacher interviews. Five of the initial six educators who participated in the individual interviews were present for the focus group interview.

Participants in the focus group were asked a series of seven follow-up questions based on analysis of the data collected from the initial teacher interviews (Perry, 2011; Seidman, 1991). In the final interview question, teachers could revisit any of the seven questions addressed that they thought needed further probing or discussion. In the first question, teachers were asked to describe what student engagement looks like in today's secondary English classroom. The consensus expressed was that students should be working and fully immersed in the tasks, which means knowing and understanding the tasks. According to Ms. Slade, "…students participating in the assignment where they're giving feedback to what we're doing." Participants were then asked to identify an

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instructional strategy that all high school English teachers should use to engage their students. Payton Davis and Charles Drew suggested the use of argumentation, persuasion, and competition for student engagement ; these particular strategies pinpointed the need for variety and challenge in the selection of student activities. Ms. Davis explained her strategy, "…either I may tell you that you have to agree or disagree, but you have to be able to use evidence to support your point. And that way in writing, they're able to have those counterpoints in their head …." In addition, teachers were asked to consider what other educators must do to improve the quality of student engagement. The opinions or perceptions communicated by the participants were quite diverse. The responses offered a range of the following instructor's responsibilities: completing assignments before the students' attempts, establishing a positive learning environment, using technology during instruction, and having students write freely or write in exposition mode.

When participants were asked about the importance of using technology to engage high school students in English classes, they agreed that there is a definite degree of interest where technology is involved. Specifically, Marie Seay stated that technology can be used to engage students in reading and in writing; according to her, "…you have to use what it is that motivates them or that interests them and use those things to bring in the literature, to bring in the writing." The use of technology can lead to other potential ways that teachers could model engagement in the classroom. For instance, according to Davis and Seay, teachers could demonstrate their engagement by rendering continual feedback and assessment and through conducting in-class research with the aid of technological tools. Ms. Seay stated, "…, sometimes they need to see that we're not

asking them to do something that we wouldn't do or that we haven't done; …."
Although educators have certain roles in promoting student engagement, there were
additional factors mentioned by the participants that could influence students' level of
engagement. The factors highlighted by the participants included the following: (a) value
and importance of education in the home, (b) student background relative to making
content connections, and (c) student background relative to the potential for expanding
experiences.

Only one participant responded to the question about professional development
and its future importance in training or assisting educators with the improvement of
student engagement. Marie Seay expressed her belief that teacher preparation will
involve training on improving student engagement in classrooms, thereby keeping
professional knowledge current and relevant (FGMS--105-108). She reiterated this point
by saying, "We can't do… gone are the days of chalkboards, and Mary Jane shoes, and
the hair bun; we got to do things differently with our students, so we have to stay
knowledgeable of what new techniques are out or new strategies are out for teaching."
The focus group session concluded with a profound statement by one educator about the
nature of student engagement. According to Justin Jeffreys, engagement is not a uniform
construct among all students; student engagement is a unique, personal, and individual
experience for each student.

Field Notes

This data source was used in triangulation with the individual interviews and
focus group interview to specifically observe and ascertain the major roles that educators
perform in the classroom and secondarily, to observe students' actions and interactions in

response to teachers' actions and interactions. Through a series of twelve classroom

observations (two per teacher), I concluded that the dominant role of *Provider* was

exhibited by 66% of the participants. Teachers provided help, directions, clues, and

materials; they also provided examples, reminders, and connections for students. In

addition, teachers demonstrated evidence of strong roles as classroom directors,

summarizers, and questioners. During specific class sessions, Davis, Drew, and Henry

promoted engagement with the following responses, respectively: "Somebody give me a

run down;" "I'll give some examples," and "Did anyone catch what the poem is about?"

One educator, Ruth Henry, performed the less frequently observed roles among

educators: (a) modeler-- modeled reading fluency, inflection, and expression, (b)

facilitator--redirected students' responses and transitioned class discussions, and (c) time

manager--made use of automatic timer. Moreover, when teachers interacted with their

students, they usually did so in the form of conducting individual conferences, assisting

with aspects of the lesson, or assisting students with various tasks.

In addition, I noted performance of student actions and interactions as potential

evidence of student engagement. According to the classroom observations, students

demonstrated engagement by working toward the completion of assigned tasks and

responding to the teacher's questions through oral response. For instance, a male student

in a group stated, "I just gave y'all a solution." Another male student said, "Wait, hold

up!" In addition, students interacted with one another during conversations that were

either task-related or off-task; they also chose interaction within groups or with partners.

For example, a female student asked a male student, "What did you put for coarse?"

because the teacher was talking, another female student said, "Y'all be quiet." From the

analyses (individually and comparatively) of the initial interviews, focus group session, and classroom field notes, I was able to discover a commonality of five distinct themes related to teachers' perceptions of student engagement and perceptions of their roles within student engagement.

Summary

Chapter 4 began with a description of the participants in this research study. A diversity of educational backgrounds, educational philosophies, and teaching experiences was represented by this group of educators. Next, Chapter 4 provided a synopsis of the data results gleaned from analysis of teacher interviews, classroom field notes, and a focus group interview. Overall, the educators agreed that students should actively participate in the learning process; however, they did not uniformly agree on what active student engagement should look like in a secondary English classroom. Similarly, participants agreed that teachers have central roles to play to ensure that student engagement occurs and persists. On the other hand, educators appeared deficient in using the full range of their roles appropriately and strategically. In Chapters 5 and 6, five themes of commonality among participants are presented, based on careful analysis of very diverse teachers' perceptions: (a) active student participation as an essential component, (b) student connections as an essential component, (c) instructional technology tools as an essential component, (d) student characteristics associated with disengagement/engagement, and (e) teacher engagement as an essential component.

Chapter V

DATA PRESENTATION FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS ONE AND TWO

Themes One, Two, and Four

This chapter discusses three themes as they relate to Research Questions 1 and 2. Research participants described their perceptions of student engagement in their high school classrooms. In addition, teachers described the impact of student engagement on their levels of teacher confidence and teacher enjoyment. See Appendix H for a representative sample of an analysis of the four research questions and the themes that resulted from examination of the data. Teachers gave their perceptions about student engagement, their levels of confidence and enjoyment in relationship to student engagement, and their current and future roles relating to student engagement in their classrooms (see Table 1).

Table 1

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles:
Final Thematic Analysis

Research Questions	Five Major Themes
1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms? 2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?	1. Active student participation as a component
1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms? 2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?	2. Student connections as a component
3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement? 4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?	3. Instructional technology tools as a component
1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms? 2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?	4. Student characteristics associated with disengagement/engagement
3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement? 4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?	5. Teacher engagement as a component

Theme One: Active Student Participation as an Essential Component

To validate the theme of active student participation, I focused on participants'
responses that defined student engagement, told stories of student engagement, described
pictures of engaged students, and that described student engagement in today's high
school English classrooms. Most of the teachers used such adverbs as *actively* and *fully*
to communicate the level of involvement or participation that student engagement
requires. Ms. Davis, a secondary English teacher of three years, expressed her view of
what student engagement should look like. She stated:

> For me student engagement is having kids fully participate and understand
> whatever it is that you are trying to teach them. I know for me, I can't teach
> without having my students engaged. If you're not actively participating and
> you're not giving me feedback, on what it is that I can do better to help you
> understand more or giving me signals that you understand, then to me you're not
> fully engaged.

Here, Ms. Davis stressed the importance of interactive engagement between the
teacher and her students. In addition, Ms. Davis and Ms. Henry communicated the
perception that engagement is something that their students actually *wanted* to have in
class. For instance, Ms. Davis remembered a time in which students were engaged in
reading the novel, *A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich*. She said, "Um, they absolutely
loved that story. And that was one of the times where they were actually trying to take
my books out of the classroom with them, because they wanted to read ahead." In a
cooperative learning session on December 2012, Ms. Davis's students fulfilled specific
group roles, and female students demonstrated more participation. Similarly, when Ms.

Henry was asked to explain the reason for her students' engagement in a specific activity, she responded, "They were alert throughout the entire story, they wanted to know more; …, since they loved the story so much they wanted to, you know, participate and add their input into it; …." In another class session on December 2012, one of Ms. Henry's male students wanted to continue writing questions and answers whereas another male student wanted more time to record his written work. On the other hand, when Mr. Drew was asked the same question regarding reasons for student engagement in classroom activities, he stated:

> First of all, when a student comes to school, they should understand and have a
> pretty good knowledge of what is expected of them. A lot of them are involved
> because they come from backgrounds where they are really encouraged to learn,
> and they're really encouraged to do well in school. And another part of it is, is
> the type of activities; some activities are more interesting than others.

Mr. Drew, therefore, expressed his belief that student engagement is established within each student, encouraged within the home environment, and motivated by certain types of instructional activities. In addition, Mr. Jeffreys recalled a time when his students were involved in the reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet;* for him, a particular moment stood out in which one of his students was engaged. He said, "Last period, actually today…when Claudio was talking with Laertes, one of the other students began to rather personalize his, his reading of Laertes based on his own understanding of Laertes...." Jeffreys further suggested that reading participation allows students' imaginations to be stimulated in a way in which they can get caught up in a world of fantasy.

When Ms. Slade and Ms. Seay were asked why students were engaged in particular activities, they both proposed that interactions with the teacher or other students were the source of engagement. Ms. Slade made this comment in reference to her students' feedback on their completed presentations: "The majority of the students said they really liked the assignment…they got to think, work on topics that were familiar to them…, and they got to do things that they wanted to write about; and so, they really enjoyed working in groups." Moreover, Ms. Seay stated the importance of involving students in expressive activities that coincide with teacher interactions as well. According to her, "Um, if they can interact with you, like I said, if I'm interested in it and they feed off of that,…where they can, they can exchange with you and, and express how they feel and ask how you feel, they usually get, become interested in it." Certainly, I agree that teachers are instrumental catalysts who ignite students' engagement through their own display of enthusiasm and active participation.

During the classroom observations, certain student behaviors were noted in response to direct teacher actions or interactions. From observations of Davis's, Drew's, and Henry's classrooms, the theme of active participation was demonstrated by students giving feedback, students asking questions, working on tasks independently or collaboratively, and responding to questions as individuals or as a whole group. For instance, in Ms. Davis's class, during a session of working in cooperative groups, two students commented from within and from without their groups with the following statements: "Stop talking to people in our group;" "You listening to me?" In addition, engagement with the text was another way in which students participated actively in Ms. Slade's and Mr. Jeffreys' classrooms. For example, students read aloud from the text

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while other students followed along with the text; several students marked up the text while others assisted their peers in locating metaphors from specific line numbers. Mr. Jeffreys responded to his students' participation by saying, "Good job reading by the way," and "R--- [female student] asked a good question." In Lake's classroom [a ninth-grade English long-term substitute, serving from October 2012- May 2013], students demonstrated their active participation through interaction with the teacher, which consisted of communicating levels of understanding, responding to teacher questions, and sharing of ideas and experiences. Two female students in her class expressed concern about completing their assignments when they said, "I don't understand number five (on the test)" and "What if I don't finish?"

Theme Two: Student Connections as an Essential Component

One theme revealed through the data analysis that represents more of an intrinsic component to student engagement is the student's ability to connect personally with the subject, topic, or task at hand. When research participants used such words or phrases as "enjoyed," "exciting," "fun," "pleasurable," "expressive," "like it," and "relate to it," student engagement began to be described through a different lens. Teachers were asked in the focus group session of May 2013 if they thought students' personal backgrounds and personal experiences influenced their level of engagement. Ms. Davis emphasized the importance of students establishing a meaningful connection to subjects or topics in English classrooms. She stated, "I think it plays a major role because the more they can relate to it, the more interesting or the more interested they are in the subject. Students like to show off something that they're really good in, so if they relate to it more, then they'll be more actively engaged in it; …." Ms. Henry confirmed that students'

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connection to certain subjects or topics can lead to greater enjoyment and excitement in learning, demonstrating engagement by asking questions, answering questions, and discussing elements of literature; she stated, "…since they loved the story so much they wanted to, you know, participate and add their input into it; they found it really exciting because they really loved the story." During the November 2012 class session, her students were eager to respond, laughed at certain students' responses, and burst into laughter at her real-life examples.

In addition, Mr. Drew stressed the connection that students must have with parents to promote more active learning in school. He commented that students who are involved in school come from backgrounds where they are really encouraged to learn, and they're really encouraged to do well in school; he also said, "…backgrounds where education is stressed is very important to their parents or who whatever guardian that's in charge of them." Ms. Slade and Mr. Jeffreys also noted that students could actively engage when their learning is connected to their imaginations. According to Ms. Slade, her students told her they really liked assignments that allowed them to be creative. Mr. Jeffreys reiterated this point even further:

> I think it really goes back to the imagination, that they can step outside of their own day-to-day concerns or the deadlines or whatever else might be coming at them from the real, practical point of view, and they can get caught up in a fantasy world, a world that they want to entertain just because it's fun and pleasurable for them, so it has to do with imagination.

On the other hand, Ms. Davis communicated another perception that students are also able to connect their real-life experiences to what they experience while engaged in

reading literature. She remembered how her students related to the story of Benjie, a 13-year-old heroin addict, in the novel *A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich*. She stated, "They're most engaged when they can relate to something….They absolutely loved that story." Ms. Davis imagined that some of her students could possibly identify with Benjie's conflicts, having known relatives who were using drugs or other youth struggling with some of the same decisions or choices that Benjie encountered. Ms. Slade further suggested that students could easily make connections to literature when they work on assigned projects. She discussed having her students compose and complete children's books. According to her, "…they found that very interesting because some of them had never read a children's book….And another time I did the children's book, I allowed my students to go to the elementary school…; they read the books they made to the students to see how well it would be perceived by the public." These projects allow students to contribute their outside knowledge and to show more of themselves. In addition, Mr. Jeffreys agreed that students could make personal connections to literature. Mr. Jeffreys stated that these connections come in different ways: "…when they can relate to it through another book that they've read or something that somebody's told them or if they, if they just are particularly intrigued by the character …."

Ms. Davis discussed briefly a unique connection that occurred in her classroom. She spoke about students who are actively engaged and who are able to connect cognitively with the lesson; these students, in turn, assist other students who need additional clarification in order to make similar connections. In addition, Ms. Henry expressed that she and her students enjoyed playing games to help fill in missing

connections before a major test. According to her, "Games help them to become actively involved...; you know, it can be Jeopardy in which they're reviewing for a lesson or something like that, that keeps them involved because they like things like that." However, as suggested by Mr. Drew, allowing students to pull from their own personal experience and backgrounds can be one of the most basic connections that they make to reading and writing in the classroom. These types of connections provide students with familiar content or ideas, something that they can talk about and feel comfortable talking about. Mr. Drew concluded, "We're so driven by state-mandated courses, goals, or standards, and sometimes, we realize that every new procedure, every new method may not necessarily fit our students, in some cases."

Theme Four: Student Characteristics Associated with Disengagement/Engagement

Participants in this study have distinct views about the qualities of engaged and disengaged students. For the most part, the educators agreed that disengaged students exhibit signs of low self-esteem, disruptive behavior, or negative attitudes toward school or academics. Ms. Henry commented on certain students who feel that they lack physical attractiveness or superior intelligence and therefore refrain from active engagement in the classroom. According to Ms. Seay, "...sometimes very smart students will shy to the back, not speak up as much, but I think that may not be because they're, they don't know; that's just their personality to kind of be like an introvert." In addition, Ms. Seay referred to students who lack the confidence to participate actively because of their low popularity or small circle of friends. Mr. Drew added that he has witnessed this defeated attitude in some students who say they do not understand the content or cannot perform certain tasks.

Two educators mentioned scenarios in which students' disruptive behavior deters them from active engagement. Ms. Henry pointed out the potential class clown who sometimes prefers to make his peers laugh and to get them off-task rather than attempt to complete assigned tasks. Mr. Drew explained, "Oh, absolutely, and it's not hard to pick those students out because most of the time they're going to be doing something that's off-task; they're not gonna be prepared in terms of having necessary materials, books, paper, pencil, …." Frequently, he noticed that these groups of students appear to be looking for confrontation or looking to engage in some negative activity. Mr. Drew concluded that public schools, and the students therein, are simply reflections of society as a whole; therefore, teachers have the challenge of shaping or building whatever caliber of students that enter the classrooms.

The other research participants gave insights into factors that result in students being detached from school or academics. Ms. Davis mentioned students who are perhaps disengaged because of excessive absences from or tardies in school. These students might receive daily reminders about keeping their heads up during instruction or about staying after school to get assignments completed. She described a specific classroom scenario: "…when you assign an assignment… you can 'just' have given them the instructions, you have those kids who gonna raise their hands and say, 'Ms. Davis, what did you just say we're supposed to do again?' " Ms. Slade also described students who demonstrate other aversions to academic engagement. She provided three categories of disengaged students: (a) the "loners" who do not interact with crowds, (b) the "loafers" who do not contribute to group tasks but do not mind taking the credit, and (c) the "magicians" who usually find a way to relieve or remove themselves from academic

duties and responsibilities. Finally, Mr. Jeffreys summed up his perception of disengaged students as those who "for whatever reason feel like they've never been successful in education and in the classroom."

Although Mr. Jeffreys recognized the dilemma of disengaged students, he expressed that the students more likely to be engaged are the ones who have established a reading habit of their own and those students who have parents who value reading and higher education. Ms. Henry acknowledged that students who are motivated by making good grades often demonstrate greater levels of engagement. In addition, she made the distinction between students who consistently engage in learning versus those students who do not:

> So, the ones that aren't really interested in a specific story might daydream while the ones that are actually here to get good grades no matter what, or, you know, succeed no matter what, they're the ones that are engaged regardless of what it is that's going on.

She concluded by further describing engaged students as being driven to succeed, motivated, dedicated, inquisitive, open-minded, and open to learning new things. For instance, during her class sessions, one female student raised her hand twice until she was recognized by Ms. Henry; also, a male and female student worked together to keep each other on track. Mr. Drew also attested to the importance of a student's background and environment. He stated that certain students are naturally more motivated to work no matter what the task is because they come from environments that value education.

Ms. Seay and Ms. Slade agreed that engaged students have outgoing personalities. On the December 2012 class session, Ms. Slade's students demonstrated assertiveness by

wanting to continue with their reading and by asking for help with pronouncing unfamiliar words. According to Ms. Seay, these students appear to have no personal inhibitions because of their likeability and open personality. Similarly, Ms. Slade perceived that students more likely to be engaged in her class are leaders, loud, involved in other school activities, and more prone to do better on assignments because they like to be seen. Ms. Davis provided the following description of engaged students in her classroom:

> So, I do have students that are a little bit more engaged than others and those are usually the kids who sit in the front of the classroom, the ones who are always, 'Ooh, can I read?', raising their hands, they're usually the ones that stay after school all the time, those are the ones whose parents I hear from the most...

Furthermore, each educator received the opportunity to describe his or her individual picture of what an engaged student looks like. Ms. Davis imagined the student who is well-groomed, sitting in the front of the classroom, making eye contact, nodding to signify understanding, indicating misunderstanding, and being attentive and alert. In one of her class sessions, students asked clarifying questions and jotted down her summary notes. Ms. Henry painted a similar portrait of an engaged student who is sitting upright and occasionally nodding in agreement or in disagreement, but she also included details of that student who is asking questions, raising his hand, or taking notes. Moreover, Mr. Jeffreys concluded that a student asking the teacher questions is what provides the depth to pictures of engaged students. From his perspective, when students ask questions, it demonstrates that they're obviously thinking on their own.

Ms. Seay's picture of an engaged student illustrated simplistic, yet essential, characteristics for the learning and instructional process. Her description provided a view of learners who come prepared, bring the necessary educational tools, participate in class, and listen to teachers and peers. Ms. Slade's input into this description revealed similar insights as the other educators:

An engaged student is one that's whenever you're talking, they're listening; they're always ready to raise their hand, to answer questions, they give you feedback, whether you want it or not, and they're usually always the first ones to volunteer to read, …they're eager, the eager beaver.

Finally, Mr. Drew completed the portrait of an engaged student by pointing out his willingness and desire to ask questions, figure it out, understand, and to learn.

From the discussion of these themes, educators provided individual perceptions on what student engagement does or does not look like in their secondary English classrooms. According to research participants, students are fully engaged when they exhibit specific physical and emotional behaviors and provide their teachers with the feedback necessary to modify or to improve instruction. In addition, these educators emphasized how important it is for students to connect or to relate to content and learning on personal, practical, and real-world levels; student connections serve as the driving force behind active student engagement and increased student achievement. Lastly, research participants identified certain behaviors that are exhibited by engaged and disengaged students. They concluded that students possess personal characteristics that either empower or hinder their levels of engagement.

Chapter VI

DATA PRESENTATION FOR RESEARCH QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR

Themes Three and Five

This chapter discusses the two themes related to Research Questions 3 and 4. Research participants described their current roles concerning student engagement in their secondary English classrooms and described their future roles relating to the improvement of students' active engagement.

Theme Three: Instructional Technology Tools as an Essential Component

During the focus group session, participants were asked to comment on the most important thing that secondary English teachers could do to improve student engagement. One of the three educators who responded stated the importance of improving student engagement through technology use. Ms. Seay declared, "I also think that teachers should embrace technology as an instructional tool because our students are digital natives born in a world of technology, and they know technology, so to embrace that as an instructional tool is important for teachers." She admitted to using the Internet to conduct research in her high school English classes. As a post-secondary adjunct English instructor, Ms. Seay has experienced interaction with online classrooms such as D2L; therefore, she emphasized the importance of high school students using laptops, tablets, and learning management systems to access, download, and upload various content and materials.

Also, during the focus group interview, participants contributed their views on the importance of using technology in high school English classes. Mr. Drew said that it is amazing how students respond to technology and how they become so engaged when using it; he proposed that using technology could help prepare students for the future. He further concluded, "I think in this changing society of technology and all of the advances that have been made, we need to figure out a way to get students more involved with technology in terms of education." More importantly, Ms. Seay recommended that educators incorporate technology as a way to motivate or intrigue students with classroom instruction. She concluded:

> You know sometimes we have to meet them where they are sometimes; you have to use what it is that, that motivates them or that interests them and use those things to bring in the, the literature, to bring in the writing.

Technology tools can be used to hook student interest in the content. Furthermore, students can continue using technology to create, upload, and post their responses to literature, as well as comment on their classmates' responses.

The theme of using technology as an instructional tool also appeared when research participants were asked what sort of things teachers, like themselves, should do to boost or increase student engagement. To promote student engagement, Ms. Henry has shown PowerPoints with pictures and music and a video or a film that corresponded with a book read and discussed in class. According to her, in this technological age, students are eager to get involved with technology; "They also like to watch; …anything that has to do with technology, they're running towards it; they like it." In addition, Mr. Drew recognized how much students enjoy working with technology tools and how much

students need more engagement with technology in the classroom. He expressed his

opinion about a long-term benefit of incorporating more technology:

>They really enjoy working with the new gadgets, the things that are available to
>
>them now. If we can somehow parley that into their educational process a little bit
>
>more, there is quite a bit being done, but just observing students on a daily basis,
>
>they, technology has just captivated them. And if we could take that and channel it
>
>into the educational process that would really go a long ways, I think, and it would
>
>prepare them for the future.

 Mr. Drew further noted that some classrooms are limited in terms of the necessary

technological equipment; consequently, teachers are placed at a disadvantage in what

they can do to increase student engagement until these technological issues are resolved.

"We're somewhat limited in technology; there are a lot of good things, but all of the

classrooms or schools are not quite set up. Some classrooms are more, I would say,

prepared than others." Therefore, educators make adjustments and adaptations in

students' access to modern technology through the use of a few classroom computers,

computer labs, or computers in the media center. On the other hand, from using the

technology frequently with her students, Ms. Seay evaluated herself as being proficient

with incorporating it in the educational process. She noticed that using technology gave

students opportunities for more engagement by helping her navigate or by demonstrating

to her the proper use of some technological tool. She stated, "… I like to resort to

technology because the students like that and they usually are engaged when you give

them something they like." Moreover, Ms. Slade indicated that she would alter her

teaching practices involving technology to increase student engagement. She expressed

the need for educators to adapt to various styles of technology and to allow students to use that technology as well. Ms. Slade has engaged her students through instructional use of computers, the Internet, and cell phones. Using cell phones, students researched unfamiliar vocabulary and various topics of class discussion. Having frequent access to a computer lab, students completed essays and took online tests.

Theme Five: Teacher Engagement as an Essential Component

This theme became apparent in the data analysis as participants shared stories about their various roles as educators. Through their different opinions about student engagement, the teachers revealed that teacher engagement is almost as equally important when it comes to instruction and learning. Ms. Davis discussed her experience with engagement as a first-year teacher:

> And I don't give them anything that I don't do on my own. So, if I give it to them, nine times out of ten, I've done it before or I've done it right before I came….I have a rap that I'm actually gonna have to do tomorrow, and so I can't expect them to be engaged in it if I'm not as a teacher. So, you know that's you know one thing that I try to keep in mind; if it doesn't interest me, nine times out of ten, it's not going to interest my students.

Similarly, two other participants acknowledged that engaged teachers usually complete assigned tasks before or with their students. Ms. Slade admitted to doing assignments first so that her students would have an example or a model and would know her expectations for the assignment. According to Ms. Seay, students can better appreciate the purpose and value of assignments when their teachers complete assignments with them. In November 2012, during the oral reading of *Macbeth* with his students, Mr.

Jeffreys encouraged active reading, clarified main ideas of passages, and summarized certain passages for his students.

Mr. Jeffreys also stressed a teacher's responsibility to select material based on the class after studying the personality of each individual class. Then, he emphasized the engagement of a teacher who leads his classes by showing how excited he is about the material. Also, Ms. Henry stated that being a teacher involves active managing and monitoring; her engagement in the classroom is represented when she pauses to ask her students questions and walks around to monitor what they are doing. Ms. Henry performed these types of tasks in November 2012 as she checked for students' comprehension of a poem, redirected students' responses, and used a buzzword to refocus students' attention. She proclaimed that these actions helped to evaluate students' understanding and to keep them engaged during instruction.

Ms. Seay and Mr. Jeffreys proposed that a crucial part of teacher engagement is the continual pursuit of professional knowledge and expertise. Because today's students require different styles of instruction, Ms. Seay suggested that it becomes the educator's responsibility to be involved with current research, to be informed of new educational strategies or techniques. From a different perspective, Mr. Jeffreys first criticized some educators and other stakeholders as being the source of teacher disengagement. According to him, many teachers may have lost their real love of academics over time or perhaps never really possessed it; also, teachers have been strongly discouraged from really loving the literature or whatever subject that they teach. He stated, "They may not have really loved their subject to begin with; it just was a career or something opened up; …and so, if we want to distinguish ourselves in the academics we have to be those who

are the best at reading Shakespeare or who are the best at reading this historical book."

His solution for improved teacher engagement would be for teachers to become

researchers on their own, in their particular subject areas.

Ms. Davis also expressed the great need for educators to become more engaged

in the classroom, especially if they want to increase their students' engagement. She

provided a vivid example of how teacher engagement positively impacts student

engagement:

> Sometimes you have to put yourself in that position as a student…but like I said,
>
> with the assignment that I gave them today. They, it's, it's awkward as a teacher
>
> to be rapping in front of the class, but if they see mine and they see that I'm
>
> actively engaged, then, then, they'll mock that; you know cause nine times out of
>
> ten, if you show them, you know, a sample of something that you want them to
>
> do, then they're gonna mock it.

Moreover, Ms. Davis stated that educators could further demonstrate their engagement by

establishing a positive learning environment where all students feel encouraged to

participate. She spoke the following quotes in a November 2012 class session: "Help

them out;" "Good job!" and "Make sure everyone has a part." She also suggested that

teachers use a variety of interactive strategies, express high expectations, and provide

continual feedback and assessments to students. Through careful attention to feedback

and assessments, she discovered the need to modify her lesson plans and to implement

new strategies. However, Ms. Davis did warn educators about the potential results when

they become too engaged with their students. She noticed that her students were

becoming somewhat lazy and that her extensive engagement with them was handicapping

them and preventing them from making more productive use of their own minds and assistance from their peers. Her deep involvement was represented by a range of teacher interactions: redirected and refocused the students, talked with the students, circulated among and monitored two groups, and assisted students by asking them questions.

Despite the possibility of being too engaged with one's students, Mr. Drew expressed the belief that teachers should make students feel important, feel loved, and feel that someone is concerned about them. He summarized the challenge of being an engaged teacher:

Like I said, it is a challenge; …they really want structure; they really want someone to be concerned about them, and they really want someone to work with them, even though they may kick and scream like they're against it. But, the bottom line, those kids want to be challenged, and they need structure in their life, no matter how much some of their actions might say no to that particular idea...

Mr. Jeffreys explained the challenge of teacher engagement as an ongoing process that involves measurement of student motivation and interest, selection of timely and accessible materials, and review and research of content to broaden students' learning experiences. He also compared the educational interaction and exchange between teachers and students to a play or drama; the teacher, as the director, sets the tone or climate of the classroom, helps to sculpt the learning outcomes, but he does not set the students (actors/actresses) up for failure because his goal is not to produce a year-long tragedy. He expressed his desire for students' success in the following statements: "Make sure we get off to a good start;" "That's pretty good;" and "We'll keep working on it."

Ms. Henry implemented strategies that can help prevent the academic failure of students. Because of her engagement with monitoring, facilitating, walking around, and questioning her students, she was able to discover which students understood and which students did not. From there, she made efforts to revamp her lesson plans to make the content more interesting for students. In addition, Ms. Slade emphasized the importance of educators demonstrating their own excitement about their subject matter; in turn, students feed off that excitement and become more engaged in the lessons. Ms. Seay also stated that her students became more excited and engaged when she chose novels to read that she liked and that she knew well.

From the discussion of these themes, it is clear that today's educators, not only English teachers, must incorporate the use of technological tools to capture students' interest and sustain student engagement. The use of technology will offer the hands-on learning experience that today's students require and will offer educators an efficient way to include differentiated instruction and quick formative assessment. Moreover, teacher engagement will be crucial to active student engagement and increased student achievement. Educators will demonstrate their active engagement in the classroom in the specific roles of facilitator of learning, monitor of student progress, and evaluator of student performance.

Chapter VII

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the problem, purpose, and research questions of the current study. I discuss the findings as they relate to secondary English teachers' perceptions of student engagement and the specific roles that educators play within student engagement. After findings and conclusions are presented, implications are discussed as they relate the impact of the results to the improvement of student engagement and to the precise roles that educators will play to maintain student engagement and thereby improve teachers' levels of confidence and enjoyment. Finally, suggestions for areas of future research are provided to increase the body of knowledge, leading to all educational stakeholders' involvement in the pursuit of a quality educational system. The summary concludes this chapter and reviews important elements of the research study.

Summary of the Study

The problem of student engagement in today's secondary English classrooms was investigated in this current study. Some high school students have lost personal interest, involvement, and ownership of the instructional and learning processes. Educators have witnessed signs of boredom, a decrease in meaningful student interactions, and an increase in the high school dropout rate. I sought to bring teachers' lived experiences with student engagement to the forefront in this study so that their perceptions might

provide insight into solutions to improve student engagement, add more definition to educators' roles within student engagement, and increase educators' levels of confidence and enjoyment within their classrooms.

A phenomenological approach to qualitative research was employed in this study. Therefore, the data collected had to allow for rich narratives and descriptions of student engagement from the teacher's perspective. I triangulated data from the following sources: (a) individual teacher interviews, (b) a focus group interview, and (c) classroom observation field notes. The data analysis process began with transcription and review of interviews and notes; then, individual analysis was performed on transcripts and notes, looking for similar content or patterns within participants' responses. During the first coding cycle, key quotes or phrases were identified from responses to interview questions and from the field notes. In the second coding cycle, comparative analysis took place between sets of interviews and field notes until categories from the data were revealed. Lastly, after examination of the categories, I discovered five themes of commonality from among participants' responses and observations: (a) active student participation as an essential component, (b) student connections as an essential component, (c) instructional technology tools as an essential component, (d) student characteristics associated with disengagement/engagement, and (e) teacher engagement as an essential component. The following research questions guided the focus of the research study:

1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms?

2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?

3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement?

4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?

The review of literature began with several definitions of student engagement as a construct and the characteristics of disengagement as well. Intrinsic factors such as individual student characteristics and student motivation were examined for their potential effects on student engagement. In addition, researchers found that the following external factors could impact student engagement: (a) classroom culture, (b) classroom interventions, and (c) parental involvement. Finally, placing educators at the center of the debate about student engagement, some researchers explored teachers' expectations, teachers' perceptions, and teachers' roles as they relate to student engagement.

The teacher and student populations of this study were members of a high school in Southwest Georgia, categorized as a priority status school due to lack of significant gains in student achievement and the graduation rate. In the 2012-2013 school year (when interviews and observations were conducted), the total student population was 959 students; 478 females and 481 males; 837 students categorized as economically disadvantaged and 122 as not economically disadvantaged; and 89 students reported with a disability. The teaching staff in that same school term consisted of 49 members; 21 males and 28 females. In terms of professional degrees, 17 teachers had a bachelor's degree; 18 teachers had a master's degree; 11 teachers had a specialist's degree; 1 had a doctoral degree; and 2 faculty members were classified as *other*. Of the 49 certified personnel, 40 had professional certification and 9 had provisional certification.

Of the 49 faculty members, 7 of them were English teachers, including me. One of the English teachers vacated her position as a ninth-grade literature teacher. The teacher was replaced by a long-term substitute, Ms. Diana Lake. Her classroom was observed on two occasions. Of the 6 English teachers who were interviewed, 5 of them were professionally certified, 1 was provisionally certified, and 1 of the 6 was currently serving as the school's instructional coach after having taught at the school for 13 years. The years of teaching experience for the participants ranged from 3 to 33 years; their ages ranged from 24 to 65 years old. All participants were interviewed individually and observed teaching twice in their classrooms during different class periods; however, the instructional coach could not be observed in a teaching capacity due to her position.

Findings

The findings of this study were based on analyses of first and second coding cycles of data from interview transcripts and classroom field notes. Even though participants' perceptions about how to promote student engagement were diverse, the educators appeared to agree that student engagement involves at least five major components.

Participants identified active student participation as a key component of student engagement. According to them, students must be actively involved in the learning activity or lesson. For these educators, students demonstrate engagement through their behavioral and emotional responses. Behaviorally, they expect students to participate through oral responses and physical gestures, collaboration with others, and through the completion of written assignments or major projects. In addition, research participants look for evidence of emotional involvement such as eagerness, excitement, frustration, or

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confusion. They suggested that emotional investment in learning comes with a certain desire or willingness to perform and to do well. Two participants further proposed that students must take ownership of their learning to experience full engagement.

Secondly, the educators in this study explained how important student connections are as a component to student engagement. Most participants agreed that if students can relate to the topics or the content on a personal, realistic, or practical level, it becomes easier for them to participate fully in the assigned tasks. These high school teachers expressed that when students connect literature and writing to their personal experiences, they contribute more energy, originality, and creativity to the assignments.

Moreover, participants stressed the importance of making connections with other peers and with the teachers as well. Collaboration with others provides a support system to encourage continued engagement in the learning process. Interactions with peers and teachers can also fuel the interest and excitement that makes learning fun.

The use of instructional technology tools was indicated to be a vital component of student engagement. The majority of participants admitted to the natural interest and attraction that students have toward technology. They realized the capability that technology has to grab and hold students' attention during instruction. During classroom observations, Ms. Davis and Mr. Jeffreys had students using laptop computers to complete assignments. As a former English teacher, Ms. Seay admitted to researching topics via the internet during instructional time. In addition, Ms. Slade reported using a video camera to record students' oral presentations. Certain participants stated that technology could be used as a hook or a bridge to help students connect to literature and writing. In addition, students can use technology to demonstrate their mastery of content

standards and according to one educator, even to help students prepare for their futures, if technology use could be more streamlined into the instructional process.

Even with the incorporation of more technology, participants explained how student characteristics could influence the level of engagement. Based on family background, self-esteem, and socialization skills, certain students appear prone to higher or lower levels of engagement. For instance, a few participants mentioned that emphasis on the value of education in the home could encourage greater student engagement and academic achievement.

Participants also suggested that students' self-esteem could affect their involvement and participation in the classroom. They have witnessed the confident extroverts, who are usually loud, assertive, and popular with their peers,

Conclusions

The following four research questions were addressed and answered in relationship to the results revealed from the three data sources.

1. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement in their classrooms?

2. How do secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement impact their confidence in and enjoyment of teaching?

3. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their roles concerning student engagement?

4. What are secondary English teachers' perceptions of their future roles in the improvement of student engagement?

Conclusion 1: Teachers' Perceptions about Student Engagement in Their Classrooms

Secondary English teachers in this study perceived the behavioral engagement in their students as defined by Fredricks et al. (2004). Eighty-three percent of the participants agreed that student engagement is represented by students who are actively participating or actively involved in the learning and educational process. Participants cited evidence of behavioral engagement such as giving teachers feedback, working with fellow classmates, and reviewing content outside of the classroom. In addition, participants reported students' behaviors such as the following: taking notes, raising hands, asking questions, nodding heads, and making eye contact.

Researchers conveyed the significance of having a rationale for school participation, whether it is interest in a topic or perceived relevance of the topic for application in life or future employment (Hawthorne, 2008; Sullivan et al., 2006). Approximately 66% of educators in the current study told stories of active student engagement when students found relevancy in the literature or were able to make personal connections to it. Moreover, participants recognized higher levels of engagement when their students expressed enjoyment, excitement, or desire to be involved in certain activities or to read specific genres of literature. Fredricks et al. (2004) explained that emotional engagement encompassed positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and has been presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.

As a current educator, I realize that emotional engagement is as equally important as behavioral engagement in teaching today's youth. If students are initially interested in the topic, connected to the topic on a personal level, or even become hooked on the topic, their behavioral engagement is more consistently observed and sustained throughout the

learning process. Helping students to recognize the relevance or rationale for learning content is another role that educators must responsibly fulfill.

In addition, teacher participants acknowledged how student engagement is influenced by the actions and attitudes of the teacher. Two educators explained that their engagement with and interest in classroom topics and literature served as catalysts to ignite their students' engagement. According to Ms. Seay, "Usually when I read novels that I like and that I know well, students seem to be engaged; I think they feed off of my excitement" (IIMS-- 6-8). Likewise, Sullivan et al. (2006) and Hawthorne (2008) had student participants who cited the importance of teacher support in sustaining their engagement in the academic subjects of mathematics and writing. I also agree with the importance of teacher support in the secondary English classroom; however, as suggested by one research participant, too much teacher support can make students totally dependent on the teacher. If teachers were to tap more specifically into the roles of modeling and facilitating, their students could develop their skills as independent, expert learners.

Even though teacher support is provided, secondary English teachers noted that other factors could influence student engagement as well. Sharkey et al. (2008) asserted that these factors include family assets and certain intrinsic characteristics, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and interpersonal skills. As an educator of 20 years, I have witnessed that without the influence of certain internal and external factors, some students continue to face challenges with disengagement and academic achievement. Both male educators in the study mentioned the significance of families who value education, reading, broader learning experiences, and encourage higher academic

achievement and pursuits from their children. In agreement with the research, Mr. Drew explained, "If education is not stressed at the beginning, if it's not something that's pushed in the home, then you pretty much can see it in the students, as opposed to the ones who have, they come from a different experience." A few other participants described students who were more engaged in classroom instruction and performance because they possessed a positive outlook, assertiveness, eagerness, and a degree of popularity with their peers.

The dominant deficit view of some teachers reflected their attitudes that students' backgrounds rendered them incompetent and incapable in their academic pursuits (Zyngier, 2007). Mr. Drew reflected on some students in his classes who were likely to slack off in their academic work if they perceived that there was no fun involved; he declared, "…there's gonna be some type of excuse. ' I don't understand, or this is boring.' …there's always something…that's wrong with someone else other than themselves." However, he also noted that students who came from backgrounds where education is stressed by parents were more likely to put forth their best effort no matter what the assignment entailed. From Mr. Jeffreys's perspective, students who come from limited backgrounds are hindered in their experiences with literature because of the inability to step outside of their common, cultural experiences.

On the other hand, several educators seemed to place a more positive emphasis on student strengths and lived experiences, a student-centered pedagogy (Zyngier, 2007). I agree that educators should not focus on students' limitations concerning family, social, and educational experiences; instead, educators should create alternative pathways for their students to achieve personal growth and academic success. In the current study, Ms.

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Davis commented that students need opportunities to demonstrate what they know or what they experience, which in turn results in greater student interest and engagement. Ms. Slade acknowledged the benefits of allowing students to contribute their outside knowledge to major projects.

Appleton et al. (2008), in their investigations, revealed that multidimensionality is one constant across the many conceptualizations of engagement. Similarly, Mr. Jeffreys reiterated the same point about student engagement in the following statements:

> I guess…engagement really does look different for different students…I know sometimes my students don't look like they're engaged, but they're, they're just really thinking, or they may even be daydreaming,…., but I think it's very, very personal question, which is what education has to be; but it is so individual, I think.

Conclusion 2: Teachers' Perceptions about How Student Engagement Impacts Their Confidence in and Enjoyment of Teaching

Sixty-six percent of participants agreed that there is a positive correlation between student engagement and teacher confidence. They stated that their teacher confidence increases with more student engagement. Ms. Seay proclaimed that teacher confidence is built when students participate and interact with the teacher and when they retain the information taught. In addition, Ms. Davis discussed how collaboration with students can result in positive changes in the attitude and behavior of at-risk students; witnessing such a turnaround in one particular student gave her a definite ego boost. Therefore, I believe the positive correlation between student engagement and teacher confidence can be

accurate as long as teachers and students are knowledgeable of their respective roles and operate within the roles cooperatively and effectively.

Mr. Jeffreys and Ms. Henry explained the necessity of altering teaching strategies to maintain confidence. Mr. Jeffreys suggested looking for different academic games or simply offering students encouragement to keep them engaged. In addition, Ms. Henry stated that she sometimes revamped a lesson so that it would be more interesting and understandable to her students; she remarked, "And, of course, if they're all actively engaged, then I do feel pretty good about myself and the lesson that I planned; …." Mr. Jeffreys admitted to moments of wavering confidence in response to varying degrees of student engagement; however, he was not motivated to stop teaching or to lose his confidence altogether. For me, effective teacher planning is one of the greatest assets toward maintaining high levels of teacher confidence. Moreover, utilizing such tools as formative instructional practices and universal design for learning can contribute to effective teacher planning and subsequently, increased teacher confidence.

Two other participants, Ms. Slade and Mr. Drew, mentioned the challenges that come with maintaining teacher confidence. Ms. Slade discussed the challenge of building her own confidence when confronted with limited time to work with students in a 50-minute class period; according to her, "But in, like this 53 minutes, trying to do an opening, a work session, and a closing; it's really hard to do that every single period." She proposed that a block schedule lends itself to more effective teaching and, therefore, more teacher confidence. She concluded that teacher confidence is strengthened with having the respect of the students and having effective classroom management. With so many challenges faced by teachers from within and from without the classroom, teachers

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must learn to manage the factors within their control to maintain satisfactory levels of confidence. Mr. Drew described the struggle with teacher confidence as being on a battlefield:

> I would say that I feel challenged, more challenged…., it's like, you're out there, on the battlefield, trying to accomplish some things, and a lot of students have so many things pulling at them, that's trying to distract them from what they should be doing. And, so, it's a challenge, but I'm also encouraged, knowing that I can come on a daily basis and do the very best that I can...

On the contrary, Ms. Henry expressed her excitement and love for teaching when her students are engaged; at those times, she really felt like she was doing her job. In addition, Mr. Jeffreys recalled moments in class when his students were enjoying the lesson, and he really did not want to rush through it and miss the opportunity to deepen his own understanding simultaneously. He intimated that his enjoyment of teaching comes from learning something from his students. Likewise, Ms. Seay described the enjoyment of teaching that she feels when students are passionate about and interested in what they are doing; both the teacher and the students are having fun with learning. In other studies, a proportion of teachers voiced satisfaction with students who engaged in compliance with adult rules and participated in adult predetermined and led activities, whereas the remainder of the educators perceived that their enjoyment of and confidence in teaching came from students' mastery orientation, persistence, and planning, respectively (Zyngier, 2007; Martin, 2006). Overall, participants in this study communicated a positive relationship between student engagement and teacher enjoyment of teaching, situations occurring in the classroom in which the teacher and

students are equally passionate and equally involved in the instructional and learning processes

Conclusion 3: Teachers' Perceptions about Their Roles Concerning Student Engagement

One important role identified by participants is that of instructional strategist. Fifty percent of participants in the current study used both student input and discussion questions as specific strategies to foster student engagement. Mr. Jeffreys referenced the ancient philosopher Socrates and his questioning techniques: "And his whole point was I'm not here, I'm not a pitcher to fill you up as a cup; I'm here to, at the very least, ask you the right questions, …where, hopefully, the more questions and the right questions that I ask will help them to ask me the right questions." Bryson and Hand (2007) and Pickens and Eick (2009) firmly stated that the quality of learning for students is dependent on teachers and the approaches they take in the learning environment. For instance, Ms. Henry stated that continuously asking questions helps to keep the students engaged. Ms. Slade added that students tend to perform better when allowed to give input into assignments. With authoritative teachers such as Henry and Slade, students are reported to respond with higher levels of academic effort and enjoyment than they respond with permissive and authoritarian teachers. Wilhelm (2007) concurred with this idea that the best teaching is authoritative, involving participation, and collaboration. More recently in education, there has been a trend for teachers to engage in collaborative planning so that through their collaboration they share and design instructional activities that help improve student engagement.

Two participants suggested that educators increase their engagement in professional knowledge and educational research in order to increase their students'

engagement. In this role, educators become active learners themselves. They take ownership of implementing best educational practices that ensure improvement in student engagement and achievement. As Mr. Jeffreys suggested, "…I think that would really help…if teachers were encouraged to be researchers on their own, in their subject material" (IIJJ—75-76). According to Ms. Seay, teachers can be researchers in their own classrooms: "…doing the assignments with the students; …, actually allowing them to see you as a researcher…researching things right there in the classroom with them,…, actually seeing that you're not asking them to do isolated assignments…."

Moreover, participants mentioned the important roles of teachers who model activities and projects for their students. Ms. Davis discussed working with her students to write an introduction, a body, and a conclusion to an essay. She remarked, "The first time I let them do it on their own, it was a disaster, but then we worked on the second one in class together and it was a better turnout." Corcoran and Silander (2009) proposed such forms of adaptive instruction in which learning goals do not change, but instructional strategies and supports offered by teachers do.

In their various teacher roles, over half (66%) of the participants rated themselves as satisfactory or proficient in using strategies to increase student engagement. In her reflection on student engagement, based on students' performance, Ms. Davis concluded, "So, everything that I mentioned I'm already doing, and it's working pretty good because I've seen an increase in grades…from the progress report up until that first report card…." A crucial role that Mr. Jeffreys emphasized is knowing when to assess the students' level of motivation and level of interest during instruction. Similarly, Mr. Drew discussed giving his students a variety of activities during one class period. Ms. Henry

also explained that she walks around, monitors, and facilitates when her students work in collaborative groups. For her classes, student engagement is increased because "they know if I'm coming around, that means they definitely need to be doing their work or focusing on what they're supposed to be focusing on, reading what they're supposed to be reading." From my teaching experiences, executing such various roles in the classroom requires much planning, reflection, and flexibility.

Conclusion 4: Teachers' Perceptions of Their Future Roles in the Improvement of

Student Engagement

Fifty percent of the participants concluded that they must incorporate more student-centered involvement in their English classes, along with more student input and decision-making in the learning process, in the attempt to increase student engagement. Ms. Davis expressed the necessity of making her students less dependent on her in working toward mastery of learning goals. She stated her purpose for wanting to accomplish this goal: "…, because they're so used to me helping them or showing them how to do something. And I think if I take myself out of the equation, then all they have to depend on is their minds and each other." Similarly, Vermette (2009) stated that motivating students to think deeply is approximately 99% of a teacher's job. Consequently, educators must assume the roles of monitor and facilitator after modeling close reading and questioning techniques for students.

If Ms. Seay were to return to the classroom, she promised to involve students in more collaborative assignments in which they could exercise their creativity. Yazzie-Mintz (2010), on the other hand, proclaimed that educators have failed to excite and engage students by not allowing them to work and learn with peers, along with not

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facilitating active participation. Perhaps, like me, other English teachers have been reluctant to implement more cooperative learning tasks because of the additional planning and classroom management involved. However, eliminating the factor of classroom boredom can lead to discussions about other sources of student disengagement. According to Ms. Henry, educators should devote time to figuring out and understanding the reasons for lack of student engagement.

> …, a lot of times, as teachers, sometimes we say 'Oh, it's the students, it's the students.', but it's not always the students…, sometimes we have to look at ourselves and figure out what can we do differently that'll help incorporate everybody in the class and just not a percentage.

She also stated that she would contact parents more often to gain insights into their child's lack of participation. Shirvani's study (2007) proved that effective communication with parents could make a significant difference in students' conduct and engagement in the classroom.

Finally, Ms. Seay proposed that improving student engagement in the future would depend on teachers' participation in staff development and training. Because the teaching profession is constantly evolving, she made the following prediction:

> ...professional learning and professional development is gonna be a very intricate part in preparing teachers and keeping teachers prepared for, to teach the students that we have to teach. We have to stay current to be relevant…professional learning is going to help keep teachers abreast on what they need.

Ms. Seay also stressed that educators be involved with educational research to stay informed about new techniques, strategies, or methodologies. In conclusion, teachers should be lifelong learners as well, not only to add expertise and credibility to their profession but also to improve levels of student engagement and student achievement.

Implications

The results of my research suggest that teachers reassess their roles in the classroom. Traditional, teacher-centered roles are not truly fostering active student engagement. Teachers must take ownership of their responsibilities and not place the blame solely on the characteristics, behaviors, or caliber of students.

Current educational initiatives such as Formative Instructional Practices (FIP) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) require that teachers adapt to *sea changes* in the educational progress by relinquishing roles that are more traditional and practicing the roles that prompt and encourage active student engagement. These shifts in the educational paradigm also call for a revision of educators' instructional thinking and practices. To inform and assist secondary English teachers and other educators as well, I have noted the following implications from my research that can facilitate improvement in the levels of student engagement.

First of all, to assist educators in making necessary shifts in thought and practice, more teacher training and professional development are essential. The past several years teachers have been hearing about and even introduced to what the educational system refers to as *best practices*. A few years ago, I participated in a training seminar entitled *Classroom Instruction That Works*. However, I believe teachers can benefit from learning about best practices that specifically target strategies to increase student

engagement. Universities and colleges with teacher education programs can be the starting point for new educators being exposed to practices that really encourage and sustain active student engagement. Current school systems in Georgia and across the nation can utilize pre-planning, post-planning, and in-house staff development sessions to inform and to train teachers on best practices in student engagement, which I consider to be cooperative learning, project-based learning, student-centered discussions and presentations, and components of UDL.

Another area in which educators require more focused training is in the instructional use of technological tools. As one of my research participants indicated to me, some veteran teachers are *digital immigrants* and not *digital natives* as the younger generations of teachers and students. Therefore, it is imperative that educators receive training from district instructional specialists on how to incorporate the use of technology seamlessly into lesson planning and actual instruction. What are the benefits to purchasing interactive Smartboards, software programs such as ActivInspire, or equipment such as Classroom Performance Systems (CPS) if teachers have not been adequately trained to use these tools in the most efficient ways possible to produce gains in student engagement and achievement?

There are other forms of teacher training that could assist with the improvement of student engagement. For instance, educators should be required to attend at least two professional conferences per year to hear and to gather information from seminal researchers in the educational field. Afterward, conference attendees can re-deliver the content to school faculty, thus broadening their professional knowledge outside of the teaching practices within the four walls of the classroom. Teachers can be also granted

opportunities to conduct research on student engagement in their own classrooms; the results of these independent studies can be presented at conferences as well.

Teacher collaboration is another potential pathway from which solutions to student engagement can be explored. In collaborative planning sessions, educators can share what specific strategies or best practices appear to promote higher levels of student engagement. Student performance data on formative and summative assessments can be used as measurements of comparison and contrast in relationship to the level of student engagement observed by the classroom teacher (Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008).

Participation in instructional rounds can provide an additional avenue by which educators gain insights into student engagement. These classroom visits allow teachers from all academic disciplines opportunities to observe other academic teachers providing daily instruction; the quality and level of student engagement can also be examined during instructional rounds. Teachers, along with assistance from instructional coaches, can share feedback about what environmental and instructional factors directly influence student engagement and consequently, which factors should be uniformly established across disciplines. Moreover, evidence of student-centered instruction is another construct to be examined during instructional rounds and to be followed up with feedback from instructional coaches and teacher training with best practices, when apparent deficiencies are noted from the observations.

Lastly, formative assessment can be used to gauge and monitor student levels of engagement. For example, at the beginning of the school year, teachers can administer a student interest inventory, learning styles inventory, and career profile inventory to identify students' likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses. The results of these

inventories can be used to guide instruction with consideration for what specific elements engage students. In addition, results from formative assessments during instruction (teacher observations, class discussion, quizzes, writing prompts, and tickets-out-the-door) can provide teachers with information to gauge student engagement and to revise lesson plans if needed.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future researchers will hopefully describe and delineate the specific roles of teachers, students, parents, and administrators in maintaining active engagement in America's classrooms. A more in-depth look into certain teacher practices and how students respond to these teacher practices is needed in educational research. The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES), which began its pilot implementation in 26 Race to the Top school districts in the spring of 2012, has made an attempt to require more consistency and uniformity in teacher practices. The use of this teacher evaluation instrument in itself indicates the importance of teacher engagement and specific teaching practices as strong contributing factors to student engagement and student achievement as well.

The current study was limited in its generalizability because of the small sample size of six English educators. Future studies on student engagement can increase sample size by interviewing and observing all secondary English teachers in one school district. In addition, examination of student engagement can be conducted in the other academic areas of mathematics, science, and social studies for the purpose of collecting comparison/contrast data.

For a deeper analysis of the construct of student engagement, data collected from future studies can be disaggregated on different levels. For instance, if the researcher wants to discover if student engagement levels change across grade levels, the data can be separated and analyzed according to secondary grade levels. On the other hand, if researchers are interested in looking at the impact or influence of certain parental factors, the data can be analyzed from the perspectives of family income, highest level of education attained, or level of educational support provided in the home. Disaggregation of data can lead to more specific goals and targeted solutions toward the improvement of student engagement.

In examining student engagement in the future, more emphasis can be placed on teaching practices rather than teaching philosophies. Future researchers can help determine more fully if the majority of educators across the country have made the shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to differentiated student-centered instruction and help identify best practices for student engagement. Moreover, researchers need to investigate the specific roles that parents or guardians play in the engagement levels of students in the classroom, through the use of parent interviews and surveys.

In addition, the methodology used for future studies on student engagement can be modified in several ways. First of all, a qualitative longitudinal study on student engagement can involve extensive observations of teachers and students interacting in the classroom and more interviews with teachers. A study of this nature has the potential to yield data that are more descriptive and to increase validity, reliability, and credibility. Students can be interviewed, along with teachers, to offer unique perspectives on their perceived levels of engagement. Researchers can then determine if there are any

noticeable discrepancies between teachers' and students' reports on classroom engagement.

A mixed methods approach provides an alternative in which to combine qualitative and quantitative elements of research. For example, teachers, students, and parents can participate in interviews, observations, and surveys. Researchers can also examine student performance data on standardized assessments in conjunction with observations and teachers' reports on instructional practices. The quantitative aspect of this approach allows for other educational researchers and lay people as well to discover if the statistics provided by a survey help to support or to disprove the original hypotheses of the research study.

Summary

In this study, I examined secondary English teachers' perceptions about student engagement and perceptions about their roles within student engagement. The study was qualitative in nature and took a phenomenological approach to research and data analysis in which the four research questions were investigated through the lived experiences of the participants as English teachers. The six participants taught at the same high school in a Southwest Georgia school district; they represent a diverse range of personal, educational, and professional experiences.

The actual process of data collection began in November of 2012 and ended in May of 2013. Initial teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a focus group interview were the data sources for the research study. Each data source provided a different lens from which to examine, analyze, and describe teachers' perceptions about student engagement, individually, practically, and collectively. As a novice analyst of

qualitative data, I sorted and organized the data initially through interview questions and finally through the four research questions, using processes of first and second cycle coding as suggested by Saldana (2009). From these steps of data analysis, I gleaned five themes of commonality that describe the participants' perceptions about student engagement and the roles they play within student engagement in their classrooms.

My findings indicated that educators perceived student engagement as a multi-dimensional construct. The following themes were revealed through the data analysis: (a) active student participation as an essential component, (b) student connections as an essential component, (c) instructional technology tools as an essential component, (d) student characteristics associated with disengagement/engagement, and (e) teacher engagement as an essential component. The participants concluded that evidence of student engagement must involve active participation from students in their demonstration of specific behaviors and emotions. Also, the high school English teachers stressed that students must be able to relate or connect to the topic or content in a personal, practical, or authentic manner. They recommended the incorporation of instructional technology tools as a way to hook students' interest and to sustain their effort and perseverance throughout instruction. However, the participants did identify certain student characteristics that could promote or hinder active student engagement. They finally proposed that teacher engagement could serve as an instructional and professional component to encourage, to model, and to facilitate active student engagement in today's secondary English classrooms.

Participants in the study concluded that student engagement could take place in high school English classrooms with certain levels of teacher support alongside the

influence of other intrinsic and extrinsic factors. They further declared that the measurement of student engagement is extremely individual specific. Participants also concluded that student engagement had a positive relationship with their levels of teacher confidence and teacher enjoyment. Both confidence in and enjoyment of teaching increased when students participated and retained information, demonstrated changes in attitude and/or behavior, and expressed passion for and enjoyment of learning.

Other conclusions by participants concerned their current and future roles in maintaining student engagement in the classroom. Teachers described their current roles from active involvement in modeling skills to students, planning for instruction, assessing student progress, and engaging in professional learning activities. In the future, participants indicated that they would implement more student-centered instruction and collaborative assignments, initiate more contact with parents, and participate in more staff development and training.

Additional teacher training, teacher collaboration, and teacher use of formative assessments were important implications revealed from my data analysis. Educators could benefit from training that provides knowledge and skills in using best practices that promote student engagement. In addition, during collaborative planning sessions, teachers could share information about certain strategies that spark and sustain student engagement. Finally, examination and discussion of student data from observations, weekly assessments, and writing samples could provide insights into students' levels of engagement.

Future research on student engagement in secondary English classrooms should involve a collection of data from students and teachers, using interviews and classroom

observations. Data analysis from the perspectives of these stakeholders could reveal the possibility of discrepancies or some sort of disconnect between teachers' and students' perceptions about classroom engagement. Secondly, perhaps a mixed methods approach could provide the statistical data to support or to disprove what students and teachers both describe and demonstrate as their lived experiences with classroom engagement. It is very clear that multiple perspectives must be heard and examined to understand the dynamics of student engagement fully and its impact on student achievement.

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APPENDIX A:

Institutional Review Board Approval Notification

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

NEW PROTOCOL APPROVAL

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-02871-2012   **RESPONSIBLE RESEARCHER:**   **Marcia Lindsey**

PROJECT TITLE: Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

APPROVAL DATE: 10/25/12   **EXPIRATION DATE:**   10/24/13

LEVEL OF RISK: ☒ Minimal   ☐ More than Minimal

TYPE OF REVIEW: ☒ Expedited Under Catetory/ies 7   ☐ Convened (Full Board)

CONSENT REQUIREMENTS: ☒ Adult Participants – Written informed consent with documentation (signature)
☐ Adult Participants – Written informed consent with waiver of documentation (signature)
☐ Adult Participants – Verbal informed consent
☐ Adult Participants – Waiver of informed consent
☐ Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with documentation (signature)
☐ Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with waiver of documentation (signature)
☐ Minor Participants – Verbal parent/guardian permission
☐ Minor Participants – Waiver of parent/guardian permission
☐ Minor Participants – Written assent with documentation (signature)
☐ Minor Participants – Written assent with waiver of documentation (signature)
☐ Minor Participants – Verbal assent
☐ Minor Participants – Waiver of assent
☐ Waiver of some elements of consent/permission/assent

APPROVAL: This research protocol is **approved** as presented. If applicable, your approved consent form(s), bearing the IRB approval stamp and protocol expiration date, will be mailed to you via campus mail or U.S. Postal Service unless you have made other arrangements with the IRB Administrator. Please use the stamped consent document(s) as your copy master(s). Once you duplicate the consent form(s), you may begin participant recruitment. **Please see Attachment 1 for additional important information for researchers.**

COMMENTS: none

Wilson Huang   10/25/12   *Thank you for submitting an IRB application.*
Wilson Huang, Ph.D., IRB Chair   Date   *Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.*

NEW PROTOCOL REVIEW REPORT
Attachment 1

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RESEARCHERS:

If your protocol received expedited approval, it was reviewed by a two-member team, or, in extraordinary circumstances, the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the IRB. Although the expediters may approve protocols, they are required by federal regulation to report expedited approvals at the next IRB meeting. At that time, other IRB members may express any concerns and may occasionally request minor modifications to the protocol. In rare instances, the IRB may request that research activities involving participants be halted until such modifications are implemented. Should this situation arise, you will receive an explanatory communiqué from the IRB.

Protocol approvals are generally valid for one year. In rare instances, when a protocol is determined to place participants at more than minimal risk, the IRB may shorten the approval period so that protocols are reviewed more frequently, allowing the IRB to reassess the potential risks and benefits to participants. The expiration date of your protocol approval is noted on the approval form. You will be contacted no less than one month before this expiration date and will be asked to either submit a final report if the research is concluded or to apply for a continuation of approval. It is your responsibility to submit a continuation request in sufficient time for IRB review before the expiration date. If you do not secure a protocol approval extension prior to the expiration date, you must stop all activities involving participants (including interaction, intervention, data collection, and data analysis) until approval is reinstated.

Please be reminded that you are required to seek approval of the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or the research protocol or implementing changes in the approved consent process/forms. You are also required to report to the IRB, through the Office of Sponsored Programs & Research Administration, any unanticipated problems or adverse events which become apparent during the course or as a result of the research and the actions you have taken.

Please refer to the IRB website (http://www.valdosta.edu/ospra/HumanResearchParticipants.shtml) for additional information about Valdosta State University's human protection program and your responsibilities as a researcher.

Form Revised: 04.10.2012

APPENDIX B:

Sample Field Notes

Ms. Davis Grade 10 First period	Observation #1: November 7, 2012
Teacher Actions	Prompts students by asking questions Leads opening with summary/review Directs students to a certain page number, part of speech, and textual evidence Asks "how" questions Clears up misconceptions "Somebody give me a run down." "Open that book and get focused." "Get busy!" "We might make it a competition." Initiates change of activity and pace Gives clear directions; repeats directions Writes the acronym RAFT and what it means Divides students into three groups "First thing, outline the events of the story." "Help them out." "Good job!" In group three, teacher is sitting down with them Looks in briefly on group one during the closing No closing evident; teacher is caught by the bell "No, you're going to give these to me when the bell rings." "Make sure everyone has a part (in the production)." "Y'all are too loud. I hope it's something to do with work."
	Leader role—leads, initiates Director role—directs, gives directions Questioner role—asks questions Teacher quotes represent teacher instructional commands
Teacher Interactions	Redirects and refocuses the students Dialogues with the students Circulates and monitors two groups and assists them Assists students by asking them questions Asks a male student to step outside the classroom for a private conference Stays with the weakest group longer Discuss and brainstorm ideas with the teacher Has a private conference with a female student who came late

	to class
	Dialogues with students Conferences with students Assists the students Shares information with students
Student Actions	A female student asks Students are flipping pages A male student asks A female student asks Student leader demonstrates what he has for the rap in the group Female student says, "I'm not fin to get no zero!" Group two with seven students appears to place the work on a few members Group three with four students appears to place work on two members of the group
	Asks the teacher questions Students do not fulfill roles (do not participate) in groups Female students are more vocal
Student Interactions	One group is more verbal Male student in group two states, "I just gave y'all a solution." Humorous exchange between groups one and two
	Sharing conversation Sharing information Sharing humor
Ms. Davis **Grade 10** **Seventh period** **Eighteen students present**	**Observation #2: December 4, 2012**
Teacher Actions	Asks students to get into groups of four Discusses the roles of each group member "Each group should have two net books." "Does everybody understand the directions?" Assists students with getting the net books booted Responds to a male student's question At her desk, sorting or organizing class work Returns with a female student from a private conference outside the classroom Asks another female student to come outside the classroom Is sitting/is not walking around

	"Do you have two computers (net books) back there?" "Don't tell her; let her read for herself." Ends class with a review of pages 49-60 Provides review questions/summarizes at the same time Continues to summarize the section Provides clues about what to remember in a story "Need to listen; my last time reviewing before the quiz." "It is also worth noting."
	Summarizer role—summarizes, reviews Group facilitator role—organizes, informs Passive role—sitting at desk; organizing papers Proactive disciplinarian—conferences with two females outside classroom Teacher quotes encourage/motivate participation
Teacher Interactions	Helps students get into groups with order and control Gives a male student feedback on his work
	Helps organize students into groups Provides verbal feedback to male student
Student Actions	Another female student asks about the page numbers One female student is reading aloud in her group A male student says, "Stop talking to people in our group." One female student wants to know her role with a group of two students A female student snaps her fingers and says, "You listening to me?" Several students are jotting down the teacher's summary notes Students ask clarifying questions, especially female students
	Student ask questions that demonstrate engagement Students participate or fulfill certain roles within groups Female students demonstrate more participation
Student Interactions	None noted by the researcher in this observation

APPENDIX C:

Individual Interview Questions

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

In the following interview, I am interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation.

1. Define student engagement.

2. Tell the story of a time in which students were engaged in your class.

3. Why do you think these students were engaged?

4. What specific strategies did (do) you use to foster engagement?

5. Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage?

6. Are there some students who seem less likely to be engaged?

7. Describe your picture of an engaged student.

8. What does engagement mean in a school context?

9. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase student engagement?

10. Which of these things do you think you are already doing? How well do you think you are doing them?

11. What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement?

12. How has your students' engagement affected or impacted your overall confidence level in teaching?

13. How has your students' engagement affected or impacted your overall enjoyment of teaching?

APPENDIX D:

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms.

2. Discuss an "instructional" strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students.

3. What is the "most" important thing that secondary English teachers can "do" to improve student engagement?

4. How important is the use of technology for student engagement in the high school English classroom?

5. What role do you think students' personal backgrounds (i.e., education, family, home, and other outside influences) and personal experiences play in shaping their level of engagement?

6. How does the teacher demonstrate or model active engagement in his or her classroom?

7. How important do you think professional development seminars and/or activities will be, in the future, toward helping English teachers improve student engagement?

APPENDIX E:

Individual Interview Transcripts

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. MARCIA LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MS. DAVIS

INTERVIEWER: Today is November the 8ᵗʰ 2012, and I am interviewing Ms. Davis on the topic of Student Engagement in secondary English classes: Teachers' perceptions and roles. Good afternoon, Ms. Davis.

1Ms. Davis: Good afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, in the following interview I'm interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation. 1. The first question is define student engagement.

2Ms. Davis: Um, for me student engagement is um having kids fully participate and understand **3**um whatever it is that you are trying to teach them. Um, I know for me, I can't teach without **4**having my students engaged. If you're not actively participating and you're not giving me **5**feedback, on what it is that I can do better to help you understand more or um giving me signals **6**that you understand then to me you're not fully engaged.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you. 2. Next question. Tell the story of a time in which your students were engaged in your classroom. It can be recent or a time you can remember in which your students were engaged.

7Ms. Davis: Ummm, well, there are two times that actually come to my mind. Um, they're most **8**engaged when they can relate to something. Um, a lot of times if it's something that they're not **9**really interested in or that they don't understand well or it's difficult for them to master then **10**they're not really into it, but um two times come to mind, and that's when we read the short **11**story, um, "A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich." Um, they absolutely loved that story. And **12**that was one of the times where they were actually trying to take my books out of the **13**classroom with them, um because they wanted to read ahead.
14So, um it was that time and then today we used the RAFTmethod for them to summarize **15**Antigone. And, if ….well, you know Greek mythology, so you know how difficult it can be, **16**and you know all the background information that you have to know in order to understand **17**Antigone. So, what I did with them today; we finished the story on yesterday. Today, um, we **18**used the RAFT method; you know with the RAFT method you have to identify your roles in

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19the group, um your audience, your um…format that you're going to use and the topic, you
20know, of course, was Antigone.

21So, today they had the opportunity to kind of wiggle around a little bit and decide which
22format they were going to use. Some of them did um the rap; they were going to memorize
23then the rap; some of them did a speech; some of them did a poem; some of them did a song.
24And I was really shocked at the things that they came up with in such a short period of time,
25and this was something that they were actually battling each other about. They were so into it;
26and you know one group was arguing, "Oh, ours is going to be better than yours." Not actually
[*Interviewer interrupts: "They like that competition."*]

27Ms. Davis: realizing that they're learning this story or proving that they know the content of
28this story.

INTERVIEWER: **Yeah, you're right. You see it as a way to see if they comprehend** ["Right"—
Ms. Davis] **the play, but they're seeing it as a competition** ["Competition, Right"—Ms. Davis]**,
not realizing they're learning** ["Right"—Ms. Davis] **at the same time**. ["Right"—Ms. Davis].
Okay. Thank you, thank you.

29Ms. Davis: You're welcome.

INTERVIEWER: **3.Okay, number three. Why do you think these students were engaged in
those two… in that activity…in those activities you described…why do you think they were so
engaged?**

30Ms. Davis: Well, like I said earlier I think it's because it was something that they can relate to.
31Umm, it's easier for them; you know, I don't rap much and I don't watch a whole lot of rap,
32but when you give them an opportunity to um actually do something that they see [slight pause
33and stumble over words here] no telling how many hours after they get out of school, you
34know, when it's something that their generation is so prone to that I think that they are more
35interested in it and it's something that they can relate to or that they're facing . Just like with
36"A Hero Ain't Nothing but a Sandwich" um Benjie was a 13-year-old heroin addict umm and
37you know they can relate to, some of them may have relatives that are, you know, on drugs or
38maybe struggling or facing some of those same decisions or choices that um Benjie had to
39make. So, the more that they can relate to it, the more interested they're in it; um they're into
40it.

INTERVIEWER: That's true; I agree. So, we have to find a way to appeal to student interests
["Right"—Ms. Davis] **when we create activities for them to do.**

41Ms. Davis: And I don't give them anything that I don't do on my own. So, if I give it to them,
42nine times out of ten, I've done it before or I've done it right before I came. Just like with the
43rap thing we did today. Um, I have a rap that I'm actually gonna have to do tomorrow, and so-
44- I can't expect them to be engaged in it if I'm not as a teacher. So, you know that's you know
45one thing that I try to keep in mind; if it doesn't interest me, nine times out of ten, it's not
46going to interest my students. So--

INTERVIEWER: Very true, very true. Okay, moving on to 4.number four. What specific strategies [pause] did you use to or do you use to foster engagement? What particular strategies do you use to foster student or encourage student engagement?

47Ms. Davis: Um, well, I came up with the, this incentive program for my room. And what it is,
48um you know that writing is 45% of their grade; And at the beginning, my students struggled
49so bad 'til it was just; it was heart-wrenching; it was sad because they struggled so bad and a
50lot of times they just wanna give up. So, what I did was I came up with a rewards program just
51for my class, and you know they never know when umm I'm going to do a reward. So, that
52first reward that I did um it was you know a writing contest, um with one of those assessments
53that we did. And out of all of the tenth grade classes I had one student, I picked one essay;
54um, well I picked--it came down to about four kids, and I got um feedback from another
55teacher, um, well, a couple of other teachers, and you know we decided on that one essay. And
56with that student he won a Nike gift card and that gift card was $200. So-- um, you know I
57don't have kids so-- I can do, you know, kind of whatever I want to do with my money. So,
58um, you know with that in mind, I did it that time because if they see it's, --you know it's
59posted back there on the wall. They see that you know such and such has won this award for
60doing that, then it's going to prone everybody else to want to you know get engaged and pay
61attention so that they can understand. So, the next time that it happens, I can be in that number
62for that award, too.

[*Interviewer: "True, true."*]

63Ms. Davis: So, um that was one of things that I used. Umm, and like I said, I just try to put
64myself out there and let them know that, you know, we're equal in, in certain instances.
65Umm, I'm no better than you are. Umm, only thing is I have a little bit more experience and
66I'm a little bit more knowledgeable than you all are. So, I let them know that I make mistakes,
67too, and I do um bring back some of my old papers from college and you know let them see
68that how this professor marked this paper up and I thought I did good on it. You know, let
69them see some of my mistakes as well and… um I let them give me feedback on things that I
70need to work on as well because in that manner if I'm you know allowing them to do that then
71they won't be afraid to approach, umm, you know whatever task it is, and they'll actively
72engage because they know I'm not just gonna cut them down like that **[*Interviewer: True*.]**
73So…

INTERVIEWER: So, you build your students' confidence ["Right"—Ms. Davis] *by letting them know that you don't know everything as a teacher* ["Right"—Ms. Davis], *and you'll not a perfect teacher* ["Right"—Ms. Davis] *Okay, I can agree, I can understand that.*
74Ms. Davis: It makes them more comfortable with um coming to me, telling me that they don't
75understand, and they're, you know, not afraid to ask questions in front of the class cause we're
76all in here, we're all learning this together.

INTERVIEWER: Cause you're establishing a rapport with your students ["Right"—Ms. Davis], *and that's good. Question # 5: Okay, are there some students in your classes who seem to more likely be engaged when, you know, each and everyday you look at them; are there*

certain ones they have certain characteristics t o let you know that they are more engaged in the work. ["than others"—Ms. Davis] *Yes, Ma'am.*

77Ms. Davis: Umm, yes M'am. I do have students like that. Umm, [slight pause] and usually
78those are the ones that umm can help me if I'm speaking— you know, sometimes they'll say,
79Ms. N… [*name omitted by interviewer*], I don't understand that, and in my mind, I'm like,
80Okay, [oh, Ms. Davis], in my mind, I'm like um [longer pause] I'm like, okay, I can't
81condense this down in any more basic terms than that, but I may have one of those students
82who are my good active engagers, and they will be able to go to other students and say, "Well,
83what she meant is—such and such—" and then help them to understand and then everybody'll
84come together. So, I do have students that are um a little bit more engaged than others and
85those are usually the kids who sit in um the front of the classroom, the ones who are always,
86"Ooh, can I read?" [said with mocking enthusiasm], um raising their hands umm, they're
87usually the ones that stay after school all the time, umm, [slight pause] those are the ones
88whose parents I hear from the most, and with that, um, [slight pause] I, those are the kids,
89well, I try to do it with all of my kids, just call home and let them know, "Hey such and such
90did good on this test today." Because you don't want to call home all the time just for bad
91things; you want to let **[*Interviewer: "True."*]** the parents know the good things that the kids
92are doing, too. So, those are usually the kids who are umm in the front of the room, you know,
93I can just , I know them when I hear them down the hallway, I can tell who it is.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay. And then on the flip side of that, are there some students that you recognize in the class that seem less likely to be engaged? Question # Six: What characteristics do they exhibit?

94Ms. Davis: Um, those students are usually the ones in the back of the room; um, so that I
95can't see what they're doing. Umm, they're usually the ones that have an abundance of tardies
96or absences. Umm [slight pause], they usually have their heads down; you have to keep
97reminding them to get their heads up. Umm, you have to keep reminding them to stay after
98school to get my work done; umm [slight pause] and they're usually the ones that when you
99assign an assignment, they might raise their hands, you can "just" [says the word with great
100emphasis] have given them the instructions, you have those kids who gonna raise their hands
101and say, "Ms. Davis, what did you just say we're supposed to do again?" Um, so,
102[*Interviewer: Okay.*] that's usually the characteristics of those.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and I can agree with that cause I've experienced that myself as a teacher. Okay, the next question. Question # Seven: Describe your picture of what an engaged student looks like. If you could picture a student, you know, that you've encountered; describe that picture of the engaged student.

103 Ms. Davis: Umm, like I said, it's the student who's well-groomed, um usually in the front of
104the classroom; they're giving me that eye to eye contact, probably nodding their head and
105letting me know that they understand, um or they'll making some type of gestures if they
106don't understand; they may have that look. Umm, I'm not gonna say that they're quiet, but
107[*Interviewer: "Maybe Attentive."*] Right, they're attentive. Umm, **[*Interviewer:*

108"*Alert.*"] Well, yeah, alert will be a better word. They're alert, umm [slight pause], and
109that's [longer pause] that's about….

**INTERVIEWER: *Okay, that's pretty much it. Yeah, that's in a nutshell, what an engaged
student would look like in any classroom. Okay, and this might be a little bit, umm, well, you
have to, a little bit more challenging; I don't know, but the question is [Question # Eight] What
does engagement mean in a school-wide context? You know, we have, this is a…this building
is our school; so, what would you think engagement would look like on a school-wide level, the
whole school, the total school?***

110 Ms. Davis: Um, you mean interacting together or just in each classroom?

INTERVIEWER: *Not necessarily in the classroom, but in the building.* [Ms. Davis interrupts:
"engage the school"] ***You're looking at…We want students engaged, so what would engaged
students look like all over the building?***

111 Ms. Davis: Umm [pause] for one, they would get to class on time; we wouldn't have um that
112many tardies. They would be actually in school. Um, we would probably have more student
113work posted outside of our rooms to show that, you know, um these kids are learning, that
114they do understand. Umm [long pause] I think that the attitudes of the teachers would
115actually be a little bit better because um it wouldn't be such a… you know we all those
116moments when we're like, "Oh, God, you know I.. I can't explain this to them any better."
117 You walk around with a headache some days, and I think that, you know, just the whole
118climate of the school would umm a little bit better um if we were just a fully engaged
119school. I think that a lot of attitudes would be better um [pause]….

**INTERVIEWER: *Well, that's very good that you include teachers in that aspect cause not only
are students engaged, getting to class on time, but also you see um more positive*** ["Right"—Ms.
Davis] ***um attitudes on the behalf of teachers*** ["Teachers, Right"—Ms. Davis] ***as well and you
know I agree with that. Okay, number nine. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like
yourself should be doing to increase student engagement?***

120 Ms. Davis: Umm, becoming more engaged as a teacher. Um, one thing that I...I tell my
121parents all the time and I tell anybody that I come into contact with what people must
122understand is that you have to give a little bit in order to get a little bit. So, if you want to
123have an engaged student, then you yourself as a teacher have to be a little bit more engaged,
124and you know, that's with the parents because if you're, you, you have that contact with the
125parents, not calling them all the time when it's just bad news, if you could just build that
126relationship with the parents, then the parents will let you know, "hey, I'm on your side," and
127they'll take care of whatever it is that they need to take care of at home, and when the
128students come to school, they know that I'm not gonna play with them at school and that
129their parents aren't gonna, you know, deal with that at home either. So, you know, the
130parents will help you out on that end, and then when they come to school um students will be
131a little bit more engaged. So, you know, my take on that is that you just have to be engaged
132as a teacher, willing to give a little bit in order to get a little bit for, for me. Um, sometimes
133you have to put yourself in that position as a student, not necessarily, you know, letting them

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134run wild in the classroom, but like I said um, with the assignment that I gave them today.
135 Um, they, it's, it's awkward as a teacher to be rapping in front of the class, but if they see
136mine and they see that I'm actively engaged, then, then, they'll mock that; you know cause
137nine times out of ten, if you show them, you know, a sample of something that you want
138them to do, then they're gonna mock it. So, if I get up there and I rap and make a clown out
139of myself in front of the class, then they'll be okay with doing it um with one another. That
140that environment is..is more relaxed and everybody is just wanting to have fun and learn, and
141learning should be fun. Um, if I look out and see my, I can tell when my students are bored
142with something, and I'm thinking in my head, okay, I've got to come up with something
143better than this for next period cause this is not gone work. Um, so, I have to have that
144engagement because I can not stand standing up talking to myself and I'm not getting any
145feedback, I don't know if you understand or if you're, you know, you're lost; I have to have
146you fully engaged because if not, then, um, my class is not going to go how it's supposed to
147go.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you're saying it is, the teacher is key, instrumental ["Um huh"—
Ms. Davis] *to student engagement; the type of activities you plan and making sure you let the
students know that you're just as much involved as the instruction or in the activities as they
are*. ["Um huh"—Ms. Davis] *Okay, very good, very good. Um, next question. [Question # Ten]
Um, which of these things that you already, you know, hinted at do you think you are already
doing? You just talked about what needs to be done to increase student engagement. Which of
these things are you already doing and how well do you think you're doing them?*

148 Ms. Davis: Umm, well, everything that I just mentioned um I'm already doing. And, I think
149that, you know, I'm actually doing a good job with it because the first nine weeks um, that
150was just like a trial and error period for me. And, I had to take out the things that didn't work,
151and, and try to come up and implement some new strategies. So, um, everything that I
152mentioned I'm already doing, and it's working pretty good because I've seen an increase in
153um grades and actually with the failure report from the progress report up until that first
154report card we just got, um, the number of F's that I had actually slackened off a little bit. So,
155I just had to rethink my strategy and, um, I think that they're working out pretty good for me.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, very good. So, teachers have to, we have to be like experimenters. We,
like you said, you figure out what works and what doesn't* [Ms.Davis interrupts: "what doesn't
work; you gonna have to be quick on your feet] *to boost that student engagement. Okay, very
good. Um, the next question [Question # Eleven] What kind of changes might you make in
your teaching practice to increase student engagement?*

156 Ms. Davis: Umm…changes that I might make….

*INTERVIEWER: To yeah, to further increase or further boost student engagement. Is there
anything that you think, anything you think you need to work on?*

157 Ms. Davis: Umm… [pause] I think that I've handicapped them in a way because I've become
158a little bit too engaged with them. Umm, so I think that I'm gonna have to pull the reins back
159a little because now umm if I'm doing something with them then they'll understand it, but

160they're getting a little bit lazy, too, because they're so used to me helping them or umm
161showing them how to do something. And I think if I take myself out of the equation, then all
162they have to depend on is their minds and each other. So, umm, I may take myself out of the
163equation a little bit. Umm [pause] probably give more homework umm assignments for them
164to do at home because a lot times I like to have them work in the class um just so I can
165monitor and make sure that they're doing things correctly but um I'm hand-holding them too
166much, so I think I'm gonna have to assign a little bit more homework so that they can go
167home, and we'll see how that engagement works at home.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, and those are some good ideas on how to um, you know, change your teaching methods to increase student engagement. Couple of more questions… [Question #12] How has your students' engagement affected or impacted your overall confidence in your um teaching?*

168 Ms. Davis: Um, it actually boosted my confidence because you know this is my first year
169teaching. So, like I said, all of this has been a trial and error thing for me. And, um, [slight
170pause] I've had students who at the beginning of the year they were just isolated, they didn't
171talk to anybody, they didn't do any work, and they really didn't care. Um, but once they seen
172that, you know, we're all human, and I've "dumbed" myself down a little bit to their level;
173then, um, you know, they actually come back to me and talk to me, and one of those biggest
174moments was I had a parent, um, at parent-teacher conference time, she actually broke down
175crying because I showed her an essay that her son had wrote, and at the beginning of the year
176we butted heads, me and her son, we butted heads, um, but I showed her an essay that her son
177had wrote, and she burst out into tears, she was crying, and she said, "My baby wrote that."
178 And I said, "He did; he really did write that." And she said, "Can I get a copy of it?" I said, "I
179will give you a copy of it." And I framed it for her. And with that essay, we actually did it all
180in class; I did the introduction with them; I worked on the body with them one day, and then I
181did the conclusion with them another day. So, you know that was after that first writing
182assessment, and for that second one, you know, like I said, it was trial and error. The first
183time I let them do it on their own, it was a disaster, but then we worked on the second one in
184class together and it was a better turnout. Um, so for me, for her to, you know, thank me that
185much and saying that she's been having a hard time with him, and you know he doesn't like
186to read; she says now he comes home, and he wants to read different books; he's really into
187this Greek mythology stuff. So, for her um to have told me that, it made me feel real good,
188especially um with this being my first year. Um, and I was explaining to her that this was my
189first year, and you know she was like, "Well, you're doing a good job so far." Parents to give
190me that much feedback; um, I was ecstatic about that.

INTERVIEWER: *So, you're saying what boosted your confidence level or what boosts a teacher's confidence level is when they can reach those at-risk students or the ones that seem to be disconnected* [Ms. Davis—"Right."] *from learning or the or they're not enthusiastic about learning, but when you can reach that at-risk student, a student, like you said, that appears to be detached* [Ms. Davis—"Right."] *that really helps to imp--boost teacher confidence.*

191 Ms. Davis: Right, because as a teacher, um, those are some of the biggest challenges.Um,

192having to start from um a totally blank slate; that's one of the biggest challenges I know for **193**me; um, those students who are just not into it at all; they sometimes they just come in like **194**they're just here just to be here; their bodies are here, but their minds are somewhere else. So, **195**for, you know that change to have occurred in this short period of time, it was definitely an **196**ego booster for me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, very good. And our last question [Question #13] is how has your students' engagement affected or impacted your overall enjoyment of teaching. The fact that some of them are engaged; does that affect your enjoyment of teaching or that most of them are engaged? How does that affect your enjoyment of teaching itself?

197<u>Ms. Davis:</u> Umm, like I said, this was all new for me; um, so, so far, um [slight pause] some **198**days are a little bit better than others, but overall, I…I like teaching because I can see already **199**the changes um in my students' attitudes, and I can, you know, um feel the genuineness in **200**…in their take to me. Um, how much they like me; I can feel it. So, um, it's exciting and I'm **201**just ready to see how this second semester is gonna, you know, play out. But, I like it, um **202**[slight pause] the more engaged they are, if they come in just on a day that they don't feel **203**like they want to do anything and they're not gonna pay attention; just not gonna do the work **204**today, then that is one of those days that is not as good as the others. But, if they come in, **205**and everybody, um if it's a class where 80% of the students are engaged, then, um, that's fine **206**because my motto to them is always, "One hole in the boat makes the whole ship sink." So, if **207**80% are paying attention, and you have 20% that's just doing whatever they want to do and **208**disrupting the class, that 80% is gonna back me up in helping me get that other 20% right, **209**too. So, um, overall, it…I like it.

INTERVIEWER: And it feels, like you said, it feels good when your students are engaged, engaged, and you do enjoy teaching more [Ms. Davis—"I do."] *when all your students are engaged* [Ms. Davis—"Right"] *Alright, Ms. Davis, I appreciate your time and your cooperation.* [Ms. Davis—"You're welcome"] *I appreciate it so much, and um thank you very much.*

210<u>Ms. Davis:</u> You're welcome. [Ms. Davis gives a chuckle here]

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. MARCIA LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MR. DREW

INTERVIEWER: Okay, today is December 5, 2012, and I have the pleasure of interviewing Mr. Drew on the subject of Student engagement in secondary English classes: Teachers' perceptions and roles. Mr. Drew, in the following interview, I am interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation. So, we'll begin with question #1: Define student engagement for me. Define student engagement.

1Mr. Drew: Umm, I see student engagement as students being involved in any particular learning **2**activity that the teacher or whoever is working with that particular student is involved with. **3**Umm, being actively involved in, have some goal in mind, or some point that they're trying to **4**reach.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay. Umm, tell me of a time in which students were engaged in your class. [Question #2]*

5Mr. Drew: [slight pause] Well, I would have to answer by saying on a daily basis because every **6**day there is some form of activity, goals, and objectives that, that we're working toward trying **7**to accomplish, and it just goes without saying, that's what school and education is all about.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, umm, could you elaborate a little bit further, maybe um describe what's going on in the classroom when they are engaged.*

8Mr. Drew: They're um many activities, some of them are state-mandated; um, we have certain **9**goals and objectives that we have to cover, and they're mandated by the State Department of **10**Education, as well as other activities that we use outside resource, other resources, teacher **11**resources, um preparation for the standardized tests, state-mandated tests, they're just, **12**education is very evolved, involved in a lot of different kinds of activities. Students have to **13**meet certain writing requirements; they must be able to pass certain state-mandated tests. In **14**the state of Georgia, we have um mandated test for writing, um several other goals and **15**objectives that supposed to produce a type of liberal arts education that prepares students for **16**whatever it is that need to be prepared for after high school.

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INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, okay; thank you. Next question. You were talking about the activities that you have your students engaged in and involved in. [Question #3] Why do you think these students were engaged in the activities that you assigned; why are they engaged in these activities that you give them?*

17Mr. Drew: Uh, first of all, when a student comes to school, they should understand and have a **18**pretty good knowledge of what is expected of them. A lot of them are involved because they **19**come from backgrounds where they are really encouraged to learn, and they're really **20**encouraged to do well in school. And another part of it is, is the type of activities; some **21**activities are more interesting than others.[custodian opens classroom door and there is a **22**squeaking noise] Umm, students sometimes have a tendency to slack off on something that **23**they might not perceive as having a lot of fun while engaged in it, but then you have that **24**students who, no matter what the assignment is, they're gonna put forth their best effort. And **25**most of the time, these students come from backgrounds where education is stressed, is very **26**important to their parents or who whatever guardian that's in charge of them. [sound occurs **27**where custodian bumps one student desk with another desk]

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, I agree, um, that parental influence with, does impact to some degree the level of engagement in the um classroom. Okay, next question. [Question #4] What specific strategies, um, did you use or do you use to foster engagement?*

28Mr. Drew: When picking activities, I try to give my student a varied range, that is to say **29**different types of activities, umm, not just so much sitting and reading and answering **30**questions, but discussing questions, questions that's gonna engage them, questions that might **31**even pull from their own personal experience and backgrounds, um something that's they're **32**familiar with, something that they can talk about and feel comfortable talking about. And, I **33**guess a varied number of activities to kinda meet the students' needs and make things **34**interesting as well as informative.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir. Yeah, they like variety [*Mr. Drew: "Absolutely"*] because they will get bored with um, with the same team [interviewer meant to say "thing" instead of "team"]. Okay, next question. [Question #5] Are there some students in your classes who seem to be more likely to engage? [pause; sounds of the custodian's sweeper can be heard here] Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage in your act-, in the activities you give them?*

35Mr. Drew: [slight pause] Ahhh, yes, and here again, ah I think a lot of it depends on the type **36**of background the student comes from, um is from. Umm, the type of environment, whether **37**this environment foster and value education; then, naturally, they're gonna be more geared **38**toward working no matter what the task is. And, I found that over the years, being involved in **39**education, there are some students who will really try no matter what the situation is, no **40**matter what the activity is, and some students will tell themselves from the beginning, the **41**minute you give them an assignment; they'll tell themselves, "Hey, I know I can't do this; I **42**just don't understand." And they feel defeated before they even get started. [sounds of the **43**custodian's sweeper and moving of desks heard here] But, as educators, it's up to us to say to **44**them, "Look, you can do this." Young people need encouragement; they need to be told how

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45gifted they are, and it's not that you're giving them a false sense of themselves, but that
46encouragement goes a long ways because I am, I remember personally benefiting from being
47encouraged by my mom. She always told me how gifted I was, how smart I am, what I can do,
48and because of that, I, I, contributed to a great amount of my success.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir. I understand your point of, you know, how we can encourage them to be engaged, but just to add to that question um, further. These students who are engaged, do they exhibit certain um actions, or do they have certain characteristics that you recognize?*

<u>**49**Mr. Drew</u>: Yes, umm, the ones that are more likely to become engaged with the activity are
50the ones who feel very good about themselves. They have a positive outlook, you know; um,
51you can see it in the way they carry themselves, how they conduct themselves, in terms of
52behavior and what not; they're less likely to be troublemakers or get into trouble. Ahh, [Mr. D.
53clears his throat] these are the students who would exemplify the kinds of students I think
54most people would like to have in their classroom.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir; so, you're saying it hinges on, um, behavior, attitude….*

<u>**55**Mr. Drew</u>: Willingness, yes, attitude, willingness to work, and that type thing.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, and this next question is a follow-up to that question. [Question #6] Are there some students, you notice in your classroom, who seem less likely to be engaged?*

<u>**56**Mr. Drew</u>: Oh, absolutely, and it's not hard to pick those students out because most of the time
57they're going to be doing something that's off-task, they're not gonna be prepared in terms of
58having necessary materials, books, paper, pencil, and there always seem to be a confrontation
59or just something going on that's not positive. And I notice that's a characteristic of a lot of
60students who are less engaged, and for whatever reason, you know, [slight pause] public
61schools are a reflection of our society; so, we have to build with whatever come to us.

INTERVIEWER: *That's a good very good quote. Yeah, that um we have to work with [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Whatever we can…"*] what's given, you know, from that society, from that community, is going to impact, you know, how we teach them [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Yes."*] and how engaged they're going to be. Yes, sir, I agree. Next question. [Question # 7] Describe your picture, your own personal picture, of what an engaged student is, or looks like.*

<u>**62**Mr. Drew</u>: First of all, I would say that my personal opinion of an engaged student is one who,
63no matter what the task is, the first thing they're gonna take a look at is what is it that I really
64need to do. And, if they don't understand, they're gonna ask questions; they, they want, they
65have a, there's a willingness to understand, they want to figure it out. They want to learn.
66Whereas, on the other hand, some students just look at it, and they'll just say "Hey, I'm not
67gonna do this; I'm not gonna even try it; It's just too hard;" or it's, there's gonna be some type
68of excuse. "I don't understand, or this is boring." I, you know, there's always something that,
69that's, that's, that's wrong with someone else other than themselves.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, has to be a desire to understand, and a des-, a desire, a constant desire to understand, and a constant desire to learn. [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Yes."*] Yes, sir; the next question. [Question # 8] What does engagement mean in a school context, like, if you were looking at this school as a whole, from classroom to classroom, in the hall room [interviewer meant to say "hallway"], what would engagement look like on a school-wide level?*

70Mr. Drew: Um, on a school-wide level, [clears his throat],[*Interviewer interjects: "Yes, sir."*]
71I would think that that encompasses the teachers, the custodial staff, administrators, students
72as well. And you would see an active participating group of people working toward one
73common goal. Whether it be hall duty, breakfast duty, lunch duty, all of those things are
74intricate part of engagement. And when we're out there engaged with the students, that in
75terms, should say something to them, in terms of how they should conduct t themselves and
76how we should conduct ourselves and trying to lead and guide them in the direction that we
77have as a common goal as a school.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, that's a good, good point. Next question. [Question #9] What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase student engagement?*

78Mr. Drew: [slight pause] I think in this changing society of technology and all of the advances
79that has been made, we need to figure out a way to get students more involved with
80technology in terms of education. They really enjoy working with the new gadgets, the things
81that are available to them now. If we can somehow parley that into their educational process a
82little bit more, there is quite a bit being done, but just observing students on a daily basis, they,
83technology has just captivated them. And if we could take that and channel it into the
84educational process, that would really go a long ways, I think, and it would prepare them for
85the future. And, um, that's one of the things that I've noticed currently.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, that technology does capture their attention [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Yes."*] and does maintain their attention. And the only concern I have is that teachers need to, to be made to feel, they need to be trained, and teachers need to really get comfortable with using that technology so if they can get us on board with it, making us feel comfortable, then we wouldn't, we wouldn't hesitate to use it more [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Absolutely."*] with students. Yes, sir. Numb…, I mean, next question. [Question # 10] Which of these things that you just mentioned, and I know you used, um said technology is a big key to getting them more engaged; Which of these things do you think you are already doing and how well do you think you are doing them?*

86Mr. Drew: Umm, my approach to education is that I try to give the students a variety of
87activities on a daily basis, and I try to give them several different activities during a one
88particular, a particular class setting. Umm, I think that helps to get them more engaged into
89what they're doing. Umm, we're somewhat limited in technology; umm, there are a lot of
90good things, but all of the classrooms or schools are not quite set up. Some classrooms are
91more, I would say [slight pause], prepared than others; if you don't have some the necessary
92equipment to utilize, then you are putting yourself as a, at, at a disadvantage. Umm, and I'm

93thinking, as we move forward, those problems will be solved, you know, but, [slight pause]
94it's like anything, you're gonna have some issues, or some drawbacks where you have to be
95patient and try to wait and make, until you can get everything in place that you need in place.

INTERVIEWER: *And so you're saying that even though your classroom is not equipped with all the various technology, or it's not accessible, you feel like as an educator, you wouldn't have any problems going out of the way using various technology to get your students more engaged.*

96Mr. Drew: None whatsoever. Um, we do have, um programs where we bring computers into
97the classroom, and the kids work exclusively with computers. The media center is available;
98um, there are other resources like the computer lab, that type thing, so, you know, it's just a
99matter of you adjusting and adapting and trying to move forward and do the very best you can
100on a daily basis.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir.*

101 Mr. Drew: Keeping a positive outlook.

INTERVIEWER: *I agree, I agree. Next question. [Question #11] What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement?*

102 Mr. Drew: [slight pause] Umm, the way I see education now, in our society, we try to
103educate every child, whether they want it or not. And I think that is a good thing because
104we'll probably reach some kids that we would miss if it was like some of the other cultures.
105 Every culture don't try to educate all of their kids, but here, in our culture, we try to educate
106all our kids, and I think that is a good and positive thing. And [pause], I think um [slight
107pause], we need to lean more toward preparing schools for, students for the real world
108straight out of high school. Um, everybody is not going to college; everybody is not going to
109a four-year liberal arts institution. Some kids may go to a two-year technical college,
110whatever, but I think we need to move toward preparing a lot of our kids to leave straight out
111of high school and walk and be prepared to go straight into the workforce. And I think
112working with these technical colleges, these different companies, that's the way I think we
113should approach education, for the very near future.

INTERVIEWER: *[slight pause] Yes, sir; so, you're saying that um, not necessarily… [pause] Well, even though the question said what you could do to change your teaching practice, you're looking at it from a way of how the curriculum, overall curriculum, needs to be what revamped to not prepare everyone for college because everybody is not motivated or won't be disciplined enough to, to um, matriculate and have a college degree.*

114 Mr. Drew: Okay, and let me revisit that question. What would I do to change… what would?

INTERVIEWER: *What, Like, what teaching practices would you [slight pause] need to change in order to increase student engagement, [*Mr. Drew interrupts: "Umm."*] or what teaching practices would you want to change to increase student engagement?*

115 Mr. Drew: Umm, we're so driven by [slight pause] state-mandated [pause] courses, goals, or **116**standards, and sometimes, we realize that every new procedure, every new method may not **117**necessarily fit our students, in some cases. In other words, you can't take a student from **118**maybe deep South Georgia and compare them to one who's in North Georgia, who's been **119**exposed to a lot of different kinds of things. And I think we need to look at the students and **120**meet them where they are. If a student is not able to read, then we need to start working **121**toward getting that student more ready to read so he can be successful. Umm, meeting the **122**kids where they are, and looking at their abilities, their ability levels; they're so many things **123**that contribute to a young person's learning. You know, their economic situation, you know, **124**if he's sitting in a classroom, he hadn't had breakfast, or he don't have the proper clothing **125**on, where he don't feel good about himself or herself, and then they're just so many factors **126**we have to look at. But, I think as a classroom teacher, to make that student feel important, **127**make them feel loved, and make them feel that you are concerned about them; and , I think **128**any education [*I think Mr. D. meant to say "educator."*] worth their salt, is concerned about **129**each individual student [*Interviewer interrupts: "Yes, sir."*] that walks into their classroom.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, just a couple of more questions. [Question # 12] Um, the next question. How has your students' engagement or level of engagement affected your overall confidence level in teaching? So, that means to say the way they're engaged, does it make you feel more confident, less confident, how does it impact your confidence as a teacher, the level of student engagement?*

130 Mr. Drew: Umm, [slight pause] I'm [pause] I would say that [slight pause] I feel challenged, **131**more challenged. It's a challenge every day [slight pause] because [slight pause], it's like **132**[slight pause], you're out there, on the battlefield, trying to accomplish some things, and a lot **133**of students have so many things pulling at them, that's trying to distract them from what they **134**should be doing. And, so, it's a challenge, but I'm also encouraged, knowing that I can come **135**on a daily basis and do the very best that I can and work hard with those young people and **136**not give up on them. Like I said, it is a challenge; I feel like I'm being challenged, and um, **137**[slight pause], they really want structure; they really want someone to be concerned about **138**them, and they really want someone to work with them, even though they may kick and **139**scream like they're against it. But, the bottom line, those kids wants to be challenged, and **140**they need structure in their life, no matter how much some of their actions might say no to

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141that particular idea, but I know to give up on them; they really don't want us to do that as
142educators. And, so, that, that is a challenge for me.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir; so, sometimes your confidence level may be high; one day it's high, one day it's low; sometimes it's in between, it just depends on what challenges you have faced that particular day.*

143 Mr. Drew: Absolutely, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir, I understand fully as an educator myself. And the last question [Question #13]: How has your students' engagement or level of engagement affected your overall enjoyment of teaching?*

144 Mr. Drew: [long pause] Okay, umm [slight pause]. I'm a new teacher to this school; this is
145my first year here, and I have to answer that question like this. We had to get to know each
146other; I did not know them; they did not know me. And, naturally, young people will try you
147just to see how much they can get away with. And so, what I've done, I've met them half
148way. I've been stern with them at times, I've been friendly with them at times, I've been
149concerned with them at times, but they know that I have their best interest at heart. And on a
150daily basis, I try to be consistent, you know. If this is the procedure, this is what we need to
151do; they are some things that's just not acceptable. And so, my level of expectations differ,
152differs, you know, because you have to meet individuals based on what they're dealing with.
153 And so, I try to [pause] be consistent in dealing with them. Umm, I'm not gonna let our
154relationship get to a point where they think that they are an adult or they think that I'm a
155child. So, I have to, there, there are lines that we must draw as educators, but [slight pause] I
156really feel that I'm encouraged; I, I've had more good days than bad days; I'll put it like that.
157 And I look forward to working with them on a daily basis, and [slight pause] there is no give
158up; there is no quit. And, [slight pause] I will do what I can; I will do the very best job that I
159can because lives are at stake. And I just feel like they deserve the very best that we can give
160them. [Mr. Drew whispers: "Did I answer that question?"]

INTERVIEWER: *So, I'm assuming that you're saying that, just like confidence level, your enjoyment of teaching can also have its ups and downs. I mean, depending on you, how engaged they are for, for that particular day. One day they're more engaged than others; another day they might be less engaged, but, your enjoy, does your enjoyment of teaching [slight pause] change as a result or, you said, it might fluctuate. You might, you might enjoy teaching um [slight pause] one week more than the other, or one month more than the other, or one year you enjoy it more than the other; it just depends on…*

161 Mr. Drew: Depends on the type of students that you have, you know. Some people will say
162well, "Oh, I have all good classes this year"; you know, well, what constitutes a good class?
163 Maybe, for some people, a good class is kids who don't act up or who just kinda sit quietly
164and don't do anything to disrupt on a daily basis. There are some people who may see a good
165class as kids who are very active, you know; they are children and they cut up, but they do do
166their work, you know. But, um, [slight pause] I think , umm…, I enjoy coming to work
167because it's an opportunity to work with them, and I'm more encouraged than I am

168discouraged, you know, and um, [slight pause] I'll just continue to teach as long as I possibly
169can, you know, until something says, "Hey, [slight pause] um, maybe you've just lost your
170drive or your energy or what have you. So, um [slight pause], teaching is very rewarding, and
171it can be taxing, but it's very rewarding, you know, and it takes a very special person to walk
172into that classroom on a daily basis and deal with what they have to deal with, and not walk
173out angry, frustrated, discouraged, and that type thing. Sure, you have um incidents that
174occur from time to time; you know, you might get called a few names, but what's a name,
175you know. [*Mr. Drew chuckles here*] So, [slight pause] it's been very rewarding.

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, sir. [*Mr. Drew interjects: "Okay."*]Okay. Thank you, Mr. Drew; I appreciate all your time and cooperation with this interview, and I look forward to um communicating with you further at a later date, um, with this research project. Thank you, again.*

176 Mr. Drew: And thank you very much.

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. MARCIA LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MR. JEFFREYS

INTERVIEWER: Good afternoon, Mr. Jeffreys. How are you?

1<u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: Good.

INTERVIEWER: *Good. I'm glad you agreed to this interview for me, and the name of my research project is Student engagement in secondary English classes: Teachers' perceptions and roles. I'm interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation.*

So, we will begin with question #1. [Question #1]: Define student engagement.

2 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: (long pause and noisy shuffling of paper/folder/equipment by interviewer) I think **3**it means that the student is interested in pursuing the material on their own outside of class; that **4**you can spark a wonder for an imaginative approach to the material that they want to follow up **5**with in their own way.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, next question. [Question #2] Tell the story of a time in which students were engaged in your class.*

6 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: [slight pause] Last period, actually today, we were reading Hamlet and several of **7**them got into the role of King Claudio, the uncle who had murdered Hamlet's father, and [***Mr.*** **8***J. clears his throat*] when Claudio was talking with Laertes, one of the other students began to **9**rather personalize his, his reading of Laertes based on his own understanding of Laertes, um **10**kind of individual characterize his son who might want to get back at another father or for his **11**father who had been killed in a way that Hamlet couldn't; so, they were able to, to identify **12**with the roles in the play.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, so you're saying when they can see a personal connection with…*

13 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: [*interrupts interviewer's comment*] They can see a personal connection when **14**they can relate to it through another book that they've read or something that somebody's told **15**them or if they um, if they just are particularly intrigued by the character, then they may not **16**personally identify with it, but their imagination is, is grabbed.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay; next question. [Question #3]: In talking about this um incidence of engagement, why do you think these students were engaged in this particular way?*

17Mr. Jeffreys: [slight pause] I think it really goes back to the imagination, that they can [slight **18**pause] step outside of their own day to day concerns or the deadlines or whatever else might **19**be coming at them from the real, practical point of view, and they can get caught up in a **20**fantasy world, a world that they want to entertain just because it's fun and pleasurable for **21**them, so it has to do with imagination.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay; next question. [Question #4]: What specific strategies do you use to foster student engagement?*

22 Mr. Jeffreys: [longer pause] First of all, I try to select material based on the class; I don't **23**necessarily have a standard curriculum that I do for each class, and I look at the students **24**and figure out who the personality of the class is as a whole and choose material and then **25**try to just really get into it myself so that when I'm up there I'm, I'm showing just how **26**excited I am about the material, and that certainly as a leader rubs off on them. I give them **27**mini [*or "many"*] quizzes to make sure that they're reading on their own as much as I can to **28**get them to read on their own. And then we usually have more in depth discussions based **29**on their participation outside of the class and my own enthusiasm.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay [slight pause and sigh]; next question. [Question #5] Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage in the classroom?*

30 Mr. Jeffreys: Of course. [an unanticipated pause]

INTERVIEWER: *Can you um elaborate on certain student characteristics that they have that shows that they are more likely to be engaged?*

31 Mr. Jeffreys: The ones who already have a reading habit of their own, reading life of their **32**own; certainly come in, and their pump's already primed; and you can go with them and **33**take them in different um rhythms that you want. Those who have parents that read, those **34**who have parents that have a higher education, those who um, even if they don't come from **35**a family that um [slight pause] is actively academic, then they for whatever reason, maybe **36**they're not running with the mainstream; they find a solace or peace or a friend in, in **37**learning and in reading, and, and those who open up to you as a teacher because they may **38**not have very many peers who are their friends.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, and as a follow up question to that previous question. [Question #6] Are there some students who seem less likely to be engaged?*

39 Mr. Jeffreys: Sure, it's the ones who [slight pause], who don't have academic support at **40**home, who, who can't ask somebody at home a question about the material and have an **41**answer, or those who [slight pause] for whatever reason feel like they've never been **42**successful in education and in, in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER: *So, you're saying, basically that questions five and six relate to student background with reading and student background with their learning experiences as far as the level of engagement that they will have.*

43 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: Sure, I think that's fair to say.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay; next question. [Question #7] Describe your picture of an engaged student.*

44 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: [Pause] One who has his book in the no…, his nose in the book or his um, his **45**head in the clouds. [noticeable pause; interviewer waiting for him to add more to the response]

INTERVIEWER: *Could you elaborate a little bit further, like if you were observing an engaged student in your classroom, would they be exhibiting other behaviors to show their engagement?*

46 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: Yeah, if, if they're supposed to be taking notes, they'd still be taking notes; if **47**they were being asked a question, instead of just saying "I don't know," they would, they **48**would ask you a question back. Students asking you questions is always a, a giveaway if, if **49**they want to bring up an issue that you haven't brought up yourself, and ask you a question **50**that shows they're obviously thinking on their own. If they um, if they come up to you in **51**the hallway and ask you a question about the material, then you know that they're interested **52**in it for the love of it.

INTERVIEWER: *True. Okay; next question. [Question #8] What does engagement mean in a school context? Looking at this school as a whole context or in a learning environment in itself, what would engagement look like on a school-wide context? [*Mr. J. does not respond after a considerable pause, so the interviewer poses the question another way*] not just in the class-- your classroom, but if you wanted to say the whole school were engaged, how would you um, clarify that or describe that?*

53 <u>Mr. Jeffreys</u>: I think there'd be a real emphasis on [long pause]; well, I guess um my first **54**initial reaction would be there'd be less emphasis on the sports and there'd be more emphasis **55**on the, the art. Um, like this school, we have the infrastructure now for a big art program; and **56**will it get emphasized more rather than the sports? We don't have such a big sports **57**um…we're not very successful at sports now , but people talk as much about that as they do **58**about anything else still. So, I think it would…it would show those um conversations **59**opening up about, about um students doing well in the classroom. I think that you would see **60**much more order in the hall way, much more order in everything, there would be no **61**interruptions on the P.A. system; there would be [slight pause] students encouraging one **62**another to do well; there'd be a general morale and, and, enthusiasm and quickness about **63**the step in the hallway, and um before school and after school, you wouldn't have to have **64**three or four school resource officers; you ,you would have students who are dressing well **65**and, and are showing themselves like they're ready to enter the, the working world.

INTERVIEWER: *Um hmm, I agree. It's an atmosphere; it would be a totally different, it would be…you could tell that it's just a serious learning atmosphere soon as you walk in. [*Mr. J. interjects: "Um hmm."*] Everybody would be more so on the same page. I totally agree. Next question: [Question #9] What sorts of things do you believe, teachers like yourself, should be doing to increase student engagement?*

66 Mr. Jeffreys: [pause] Umm, I feel most of all like um [pause] for whatever reason sometimes **67**it may be the own teacher, the teacher who is , who is hired having lost something that he or **68**she once had, or it may have been that um the teacher never had this real love of academics. **69**And they may have lost it because of so much more paperwork being thrown on you and **70**our emphasis on standardized tests, but I think most teachers if they, if they had it to begin **71**with, they're strongly discouraged from really loving the, the literature, whatever subject **72**they're teaching, that um that it's not encouraged; there' s not, like in college, when you **73**have to publish papers to continue to be a professor, you have to be actively contributing to **74**the body of knowledge and that's perhaps not possible to that degree in the high school **75**environment, but I think that would really help is if if, if teachers were encouraged to be **76**researchers on their own, in their subject material. So, I think that, that would help [slight **77**pause] a lot.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay. Um, I was trying to get a handle; you were saying, you're saying that the….*

78 Mr. Jeffreys: Well, some teachers may not have had it to begin with. They may not have **79**really loved their subject to begin with; it just was a career or something opened up; you **80**know education doesn't particularly draw the brightest minds in the world; they go into **81**business or they go into something which is more profitable, and so, if we want to **82**distinguish ourselves in the, in the academics we have to be those who are the best at **83**reading Shakespeare or who are the best at reading this historical book. And that's encouraged **84**in college because you have to, if you're a professor, you have to publish papers, but, it's not, **85**you don't have to publish any papers in, in high school to keep your status as a teacher. Um, **86**but if the teachers did have that; some of them may not have ever had that to begin with; if **87**eachers did have that, it's not encouraged from the administrators. Administrators don't come **88**up and say, "Have you, have you been practicing reading Shakespeare on your own?" They're, **89**they're coming up to ask you for some report about student failure, this or that; so, it's not **90**encouraged from the top down.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, I think you're saying that the….*

91 Mr. Jeffreys: We don't love our subject material as much as we possibly could.

INTERVIEWER: *And you mentioned the research aspect as well. You feel that we as teachers need to be um involved in um academic research [*Mr. J.: "Yeah, yeah."*] ,going to conferences, learning about our craft, and….*

92 Mr. Jeffreys: Right, right, and not just learning about the standards; I mean if you, if, if if you **93**know, if you know your subject, standards are gonna take care of themselves; if you, if

94you don't , then teaching you GPS isn't gonna, isn't gonna make you know how to read
95Shakespeare or make you know how to read a novel. We need to be better at reading
96novels, or if we're teaching science, we need to be better at the scientific experiment. And,
97we need to really know our work, and, and more or less, from my experience in four years,
98it's, there's nobody that's encouraging me to learn how to read poetry better; it's always do
99you know your GPS standards; and, of course, I know them.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, so you're saying in order to have the best teachers, to foster that or increase that student engagement, you're going to have to have teachers who love their, love their jobs, they have a passion for learning, they have a passion for research; that we're going to have to foster that more in our teachers if we ex--, want our students to be more engaged, we're going to have to encourage that degree, I mean, well, at least in terms of doing more research,* [Mr. J.: "Um hm] *we're going to have to inspire that more in our teach…, give them some leeway to get that experience with research and make sure; well, I don't know if you can make sure they have a love or a passion for teaching, but it should show, you know, when they're in the class, when they're in the classrooms.* [Mr. J.: "Yeah."] *Okay, alright; thank you and the next question. [Question #10] Which of these things, that you, that, that we just talked about do you think you are already doing, and how well do you think you are doing them?*

100 Mr. Jeffreys: [long pause] Which ones am I only doing well?

INTERVIEWER: *It says which…the question, which of these things do you think you are already doing? It just says which of these, and how well do you think you are doing them? So, it could be more than one.*

101 Mr. Jeffreys: Well, I'm, I'm trying to figure out the personalities of each of my classes still
102cause it changes throughout the year. And, um, what I had planned on based on their um their
103participation in the beginning may change, so I'm trying always to, to measure what level of
104motivation, what level of interest, each one of my classes has, as a personality as a whole .
105 So, I'm trying to get them engaged, choosing material that I think will be accessible at this
106particular time in the course. Um, I'm always trying to, to reread the material, the plays and
107the poems myself, to, to understand them anew; um, I'm always doing research on my own
108topics of interest and bringing those in as I, as I go, reading magazines and journals, bringing
109articles, for instance, from the Wall Street Journal that are current.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay. Very good; next question. [Question #11] What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement? Any changes that you might make?*

110 Mr. Jeffreys: [short pause] Well, certainly umm, I guess it's easiest for me to think about
111what I've, what I've, changes I've made in the past week, for instance, um, trying to get
112them to talk more on a, on a textual level, trying to get them to not just to talk about what
113the story was or what the article was about, but to get them to understand how the story's
114being told, and, and, I'm really starting to understand just how um, how distant some of
115them are from understanding the tone, and how the same material can be recast in [Mr. J.
116clears his throat] a tone which is completely different from the subject. So, I'm trying to

117work on, um, re-explaining those difficult concepts in a way which can be palpable to
118them. Just going back through and saying, "Ah, okay, I think you didn't get this; so, I'll
119give you a new version of it."

INTERVIEWER: *Okay. Very good. Next question. [Question #12] How has your students'*
engagement affected or impacted you r overall confidence level in teaching? The way they're
engaged in the class, does that affect your confidence level at all?

120 Mr. Jeffreys : Well, it certainly makes you more confident about what, what you can do in a
121particular class period if you know that, that you have three students that are gonna be pretty
122much about to fall asleep if you read for more than twenty minutes, you start to lose
123confidence and then you start to rush through your explanations to the detriment of those
124other students who are, who are easily engaged. So, I mean overall, it doesn't make me say "I
125don't want to be a teacher anymore"; not, not that big sense of I'll lose my confidence as a
126teacher; it, it may make me speed up and become less confident about whether or not I can
127go into depth on this particular point, um but not overall, like I don't go home more
128depressed about it. You just perhaps look for different games, if it's not going to be an
129academic game, maybe you can just encourage them, and so, you got to look for ways to
130keep your confidence as a teacher or else you're gonna feel, feel pretty um feel
131prettydepressed; so, you may have to change your, your strategy and say, "Well, with him,
132I'm just gonna try to get him to read, to read five minutes; so you don't , you don't set an
133absolute bar, you make it child or class specific.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, I like your point because you, you, we say don't set students up for*
failure; so, even as a teacher you don't set yourself up for failure by, by pushing kids beyond
their ability levels or beyond their attention span. So, you try in, in boosting their confidence,
you are in the same way boosting your confidence as well.

134 Mr. Jeffreys : [*interrupts interviewer after the phrase "boosting your"*] Yeah, yeah, you
135have to have a class spirit. I think that's one thing that a lot of, a lot of teachers don't
136understand; it's just you gotta have a class spirit, there's gotta be a personality to each
137one of your classes. And, they're, they're a couple classes this year that I've, I've been
138able to joke around with them in an academic way more than I've ever been before just
139because of what we've read and how they've come in each day from the very get go.
140 Umm, I took a couple, took a couple of kids who want to joke around inside, and, and
141just from that very, from the very get go, I've had control, and they've looked to me to
142set the tenor of it, and when we can laugh about this or that, and, and you have to really
143create that, that personality each one of your classes has a… It's like a play; it's like a
144drama that has to be sculpted, and, and, you can do certain things with it, but you don't
145set them up for failure or else it will be just a sort of tragedy the whole year.

INTERVIEWER: *I like the way you put that, um, in literary terms so to speak. Okay, the last question. [Question#13] How has your students' engagement affected or impacted your overall enjoyment of teaching? Does their level of engagement affect how much you enjoy teaching?*

146 Mr. Jeffreys : Of course. Yeah, absolutely. There's, there's nothing, there's nothing more
147satisfying than a student coming to you in the hallway and asking you to explain
148something, and you saying "Well, let me get off this silly post and let's walk in the
149classroom and talk for a minute here." So, absolutely, yeah, they're enjoying it, and you
150can not just breeze through it, but you can deepen your own understanding and often
151times when, when I have those really good classes, for whatever reason, um, it's
152something that I'm really interested in and they've gotten into, like with one novel this
153year, we really were able to get into it, and I find myself stopping class and saying "Hold
154on just a second" and jotting down a note myself that I didn't want to forget. So, when I
155um, when I'm able to, to jot down a note and say "Yeah, that's something that I want to
156not forget when I get carried on and go to the next chapter." So, absolutely, when, when
I**157**feel like I've learned, and that's what I tell them in the beginning is that you can learn as
158much from your classmates as from me. And, I'm gonna try my best to make you **159**teachers
of each other and, and that, that helps them have a little bit more responsibility. **160**Now, all
classes you can't do that with, but every now and then, you might find a student **161**who really
can, can be almost like a um small teacher in the classroom, and, and you **162**really want to
cultivate that wherever you can find it.
INTERVIEWER: *That's true. So, you're saying that um a teacher's enjoyment of teaching is that you really do have those moments when a student can actually, you can learn something from your students* [Mr. J.: "Um hm."], *and they extend your knowledge or your experience of, of literature by adding their own viewpoint, and I've had those moments as well* [Mr. J.: "Yeah."]; *you just wish you had some more of them, but it really lets you know that you're just not in the um the learning business by yourself, when you can learn from your students as well*.

163 Mr. Jeffreys : Yeah, yeah, yeah; I think it, um, you know it's wrong to be the teacher as
164selling a product, and [pause] to some degree, that is the approach that's, the spin that's
165put on it, is that we're here to offer a product and you should be here to come pick it up,
166but there's a real ancient paradigm that I go back to, the teacher Socrates, he always went
167around talking to his students and saying, "Ah, I don't, don't know anything; I'm here to
168ask you questions, and maybe I can ask you the right questions, you'll say something that
169I can learn from." And, they always wondered "well, you don't know anything, you don't
170know anything." And his whole point was I'm not here, I'm not a pitcher to fill you up as
171a cup; I'm here to, at the very least, ask you the right questions, and so, that's, I try to
172have a real, real question-based um classroom, where, hopefully, the more questions and
173the right questions that I ask will help them to ask me the right questions.

INTERVIEWER: *True, very true. Well, Mr. Jeffreys, this includes, I mean, this concludes our interview, and I thank you so much for y our time and participation, and I look forward to um communicating with you again on this topic. Thank you so much.*

174 Mr. Jeffreys : Thank you.

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. MARCIA LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MS. SLADE

INTERVIEWER: Today is November 2, 2012, and I'm interviewing Ms. Slade. The title of the research project is *Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles. In the following interview, I'm interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation.*

And the time is approximately about **4:18, 4:19 p.m. And the first question that I want to ask you is for you to *[Question #1] define student engagement for me. Give me your definition of student engagement.***

1MS. SLADE: I define student engagement as students participating in the assignment where **2**they're giving feedback to what we're doing. Um, also, when the students are participating with **3**each other, when they're having, like having project group work, stuff like that, and students **4**are working together.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, alright; pretty good; thank you. Okay, the next question: [Question #2] tell the story of a time in which your students were engaged in your class; tell a story of a time when your students were engaged in your class.

5<u>MS. SLADE</u>: That's easy; we just finished working on a project for the Cant-- um Beowulf **6**where each, where the students worked in groups to write a poem, a long epic poem in the style **7**of Beowulf. They had to have at least 200 lines, and they worked in groups that were people **8**that they are not necessarily friendly with; they don't sit at the same tables or things like that. **9**So, the students just, they wrote the poems, and they had to type them and they had to put them **10**in the same lines, same stanza like Beowulf, and then they presented them orally, where they **11**were videotaped reading their presentations.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you did incorporate um technology as well [Ms. Slade: "Yes."] {the sound of interviewee's cell phone is heard here} **in that um cooperative learning activity.**

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, the next question is, Why do you think these students were engaged in this particular activity? Why do you think these students were engaged in that particular assignment or activity? [Question #3]*

12MS. SLADE: That's another easy one; after we finished the presentations today actually, I **13**asked the students what how did they feel about the assignments. The majority of the students **14**said they really liked the assignment because it gave them a chance to be creative, and they got

15to think, work on topics that were [slight pause] familiar to them and some that were not so
16familiar, and they got to do things that they wanted to write about; and so, they really enjoyed
17working in groups. Some of them also said that they would prefer to have worked alone.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay. So, even when you set up an activity for group work that doesn't
mean that everybody wants to work in a group, [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *some people work better
alone; okay. [interruption of the interview occurs when an announcement is made over the
intercom] okay, which means that we do have to allow for a little bit of differentiation [*Ms.
Slade: "Right."] *when we plan for cooperative activities. [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *Okay, the next
question is [Question #4] what specific strategies do you use as a teacher to foster or encourage
engagement?*

18MS. SLADE: Well, *[pause; interviewee asks that the question be posed again; Interviewer:
"What specific strategies do you use to encourage student engagement or foster student
19engagement, when you want them really to be engaged?"]* I do allow for some creativity; I
20allow for student input. I [slight pause] don't always let them pick their own groups for one.
21And the strategies that I use for that, I try to get them to work with people that they don't know
22anything about, so they don't, especially when they're doing groups, they always want to flock
23to the same groups, and I don't want them to do that, I want them to get to know other people
24and get to know different learning strategies from other people. And so, I don't want them to
25always to just enforce my way; it's my way or no way. I want them to do the way they learn
26best.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay. Very good. Taking student interest [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *in line with
um getting them to be engaged*. *Okay.*

27MS. SLADE: Because when they're, when they're, when they know, when they have an input
28in the assignment, they do better. That's my perspective.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, that's true; that's a good perspective to have. And the next question,
[Question #5]:   Are there some students… [interruption of the interview occurs when another
announcement is made over the intercom] Are there some students who seem to be, to be more
likely to engage than others? Do you find that certain students who are more likely to engage
in certain activities or almost any activity you give them. They just gonna engage anyway?*

29MS. SLADE: You have certain students, the ones that are usually leaders in every class;
30they're usually the ones that are [slight pause] more gung ho about doing assignments. Then
31you have the students that are listed as ESP, if you will, they're the ones that's gonna shy
32away; they don't, they either [slight pause] flock to students that are like them, have the same
33disabilities, or they'll prefer to do it at all or sometimes they won't do the assignment at all,
34especially if it involves public speaking.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay. Do you notice though when students are engaged, you say they're gung ho, they tend to be leaders; [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *are there other qualities that these students show you that that they're engaged? I mean they just have certain qualities or characteristics that other students don't have?*

35MS. SLADE: They're loud; they're loud. They're always involved in other activities in the **36**school, that's why I say they're usually leaders; so they're involved in a lot of extra curricular **37**activities, and those are the kids that are more to, are more prone to do well or better on the **38**assignments because they like to be seen.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, they like to be involved [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *in whatever they're doing, okay, natural born leaders, [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *or they just like to stand out [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *in the classroom. Okay and the next question is a follow-up, similar to that one: [Question #6] Are there some students who seem less likely to be engaged? And I think you hinted at a certain group, [*Ms. Slade: "Right."] *the ESP students, are there any other students that kind of though when.....*

39MS. SLADE: You have loners that are not necessarily ESP, they just don't do well in crowds **40**at all; they come to school because they have to. And you find those are the ones that they **41**usually don't do the assignments or they'll get with the group and expect the other person, the **42**other people in the group to do all the work, but they want to get credit, but they don't want to **43**stand and, [slight pause] like for group work, if they're doing an oral presentation, they don't **44**want to present, or they'll find a way to try to get out of it. And usually the day that it's time to **45**present, that student doesn't show up.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And are there other characteristics that identify..........

46MS. SLADE: They're shy. They're shy students; they usually don't talk much at all; it's not **47**necessarily that some of them......I've asked some of the students, they say they just don't, they **48**come because their parents make them. But, they don't like being in crowds; or they usually **49**try to sit alone, away from other students, and you find them with a book a lot of times, and **50**they're into science fiction, a lot of them, into those dungeons and dragons type video games **51**type things.

INTERVIEWER: Okay; okay. The next question is [Question #7]: describe your picture of the engaged student. You've been teaching for several years; desc…give me a picture of what an engaged student looks like?

52MS. SLADE: Physically?

 INTERVIEWER: Not, it can be…

53MS. SLADE: Or just visually?

INTERVIEWER: What are they doing?

54 MS. SLADE: An engaged student is one that's whenever you're talking, they're listening; **55**they're always ready to raise their hand, to answer questions, they give you feedback, whether

56you want it or not, and they're usually always the first ones to volunteer to read, and they
57always want to read, and you tell them you have to wait 'til everybody else reads, but they
58always g---, "can I read?", "may I read?", "is it my turn yet?", "did everybody read?", "Read!"
59They're always, they're eager, the eager beaver.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Very good. And the next question is [Question #8]: what does engagement, what does engagement mean in a school context, school-wide, what does that, what do you think that means for us at this school, school-wide. What does it mean for us, as a school, as a whole, engagement?

60MS. SLADE: It means participating in activities, whether it's extracurricular or in a class. It's
61teachers, as well as students, joining together to do things, not just having students sitting in
62the class and teachers lecturing to them , having students get involved in using their own
63creative juices. Umm, [slight pause] talking to the cafeteria workers, to the custodians; that's
64engagement, when you involve everybody. Now, I do the year book and I like having
65everybody participate. I don't like catering to a certain group or just some people are always
66left out of the year book and I've seen that at other schools, and I think everybody is a part of
67the school, from the custodians up to the principal.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what are you saying that?

68MS. SLADE: And they should all interact in different activities that are here at the school as
69well as the parents.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, so that's all stakeholders, parents, teachers, [*Ms. Slade: "Yes."] *and students working together [*Ms. Slade: "Yes."] *to participate in school-wide activities, not just limited to the classroom....*

70MS. SLADE: But, I think you should have students, I think you should have students' parents
71come into the classroom sometimes to give their perspective, not just have teachers standing
72up all the time because students value their parents' opinion; some of them do anyway, and
73you can have parents come in from outside just to come in and give a lecture one day on what
74they do. So, the students won't say "Oh, this is boring." You know, students get burnt out,
75teachers get burnt out; so, you should have people come in. I like having guest speakers in my
76class so it gives the students a different perspective other than just my view.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and the next question [Question #9]: What sort of things do you believe teachers, like yourself, should be doing to boost or increase student engagement?

77MS. SLADE: [slight pause] I like having kids do things, you know, not just sitting taking
78notes, I like to have projects, and it gives the k…, you always find something different about
79the student, find out something different about a student when you give projects because they
80bring in their outside knowledge, and they always bring in something that you are like "Wow,
81I didn't think of that." and it's not always your way, it's the students giving something and they
82like doing projects because it gives them an opportunity to show more of themselves.

INTERVIEWER: Very good, and that's something that, you know, even though I've been teaching for awhile myself, it's something I'm still not quite comfortable with. And I know you do that well, those cooperative groups and projects, you do that very well. So, that shows that, you know, we as educators gonna have to learn how to work together to design more of those cooperative group activities.

83MS. SLADE: What you have to do when you give them sometimes you can give them a, like **84**if you do the project with them, or you have a project that you can show them how the **85**completion of it will be; from the you tell them what you want, make sure you have it lined **86**out specifics because if you don't, they gonna try to sneak in those little things; they say, "well, **87**you didn't tell us that." And you have to be specific. Like, when I tell my kids at the beginning **88**of the project I say, "this will be recorded" [pause] so, [*interruption of background noise; ***89***sounds like a custodian beginning to clean theroom*] I say "this will be recorded," so they'll **90**already know there won't be any surprises and I tell them when I start recording there are two **91**cameras, so they were like, "oh, you're going to record me; don't look at my hair"; they, **92**they're get, you know, they're ready and they know up front what to expect from, so just be **93**specific.

INTERVIEWER: True. From beginning to the end.

94MS. SLADE: Don't try to candy; Yes. Don't candy coat anything.

INTERVIEWER: Very good. And the next question is [Question #10]: which of the things that you talked about, in terms of boosting student engagement, which of these things are you already doing, and how well do you think you're doing them?

95MS. SLADE: I think I just answered that one.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you just said that you do a lot of projects and cooperative...

96MS. SLADE: A lot of cooperative learning, and [*Interviewer interjects: "How well do…?"*] I **97**always change them up, I never let them work with the same people twice, and if it's a small **98**class, I still split them up. Like if they sit in groups at tables, ordinarily like in a seating chart, I **99**always, you can't work with someone at your table, they have to work with someone they don't **100**know. . . and being that this is a school where everybody lives in the same neighborhood and **101**stuff, it's hard to do that sometime, but, you always find that person that they don't, "Well, I **102**don't know that person", or sometimes you go ABC order. You have to find different **103**strategies to get them to work with different people.

*INTERVIEWER: True. **And it says**, Well, how well do you think you're doing these things? You have experience in designing these cooperative activities and group projects. How well, what kind of assessment would you give yourself in um, you know, carrying out these cooperative activities?*

104MS. SLADE: I think I do very well with it because I always ask the kids' opinion afterwards **105**to see how well it was received by them and most of the time they say "Oh, I like doing stuff **106**like this". Like last year, I gave a project where they had to make their own um children's

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107book and they found that very interesting because some of them had never read a children's
108book and they, they did that. And another time I did the children's book, I allowed my
109students to go to the elementary school and they read to the students; they read the books
110they made to the students to see how well it would be perceived by the public.

INTERVIEWER: So, student feedback is key.[MS. SLADE: "Yes."] ***Whenever you do a lot of
cooperative learning or projects, find out from the students how well did it work*** [MS. SLADE:
"Right."] ***or something that you may can tweak*** [MS. SLADE: "Right."] ***and make it better
later. Okay.***

111MS. SLADE: And we did, what we did with this project, I had them to go around and give
112constructive criticisms about other groups and then they had to tell what they did well and
113one thing they could do better and then they had to also critique themselves.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, assessment . [MS. SLADE: "Right, self-assessment."] ***Self-
assessment. That's also a part of that, um, I think that new common core as well, self-
assessment. Okay, we're almost finished. Okay, the next question [Question #11]: What kind
of changes might you make in your teaching practice as of today; what kind of changes might
you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement or further increase student
engagement?***

114MS. SLADE: I like, I wouldn't change too much because what I'm doing is working, and you
115just keep adding things to make, as technology changes, you have to change with the styles,
116but allow the kids to use the technology. I let some of the kids record the other groups, and so
117they, they were always volunteering every day, "Can I record?", "May I record?" And, you
118 know, let the kids have input on some of the assignments; that's what I find key. And I keep,
119I use, I do a lot of reusing my assignments because they work. So, and I, you know you go to
120the book, you tell them what your expectations are at the beginning of the year; you have to,
121because if they don't know what your expectations are, and you have to have discipline.

INTERVIEWER: *Okay, okay, very good. Um, the next question. [Question #12] How has your
students' engagement or the students' level of engagement affected your overall confidence in
teaching?*

122MS. SLADE: Hmm…[pause] when the kids are engaged, if it's a smaller group, you have
123more time to do one on one with the groups, when they're working in cooperative groups. If
124it's a larger class, it's hard to get with each student, unless it's on block scheduling. When you
125have block scheduling, you have more time to devote to each group so they'll, if they have
126questions. But in, like this 53 minutes, trying to do an opening, a work session and a closing;
127it's really hard to do that every single period. So, that's what I would say.

INTERVIEWER: So are you saying you feel more confident with smaller groups, [MS.
SLADE: "I do."] **and that you feel not as confident with bigger groups?**

128MS. SLADE: I feel confident with either group, but it's just if, if when you have a larger **129**group, it's better to have block scheduling because you can get more done, but when you **130**have smaller groups, then you have that six periods a day. Block scheduling will work either **131**way, but I just feel like, if you had more time with a particular group, then you can get more **132**done. So…

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and you feel like your confidence will probably be increased, too; the more time you have with them, you notice the more engaged they are. [MS. SLADE: "Yes, yes, yes."] *Okay, so, you believe that a teacher's confidence level, if you have..........*

133MS. SLADE: If you're uncomfortable with your students, if you're a new teacher, and you **134**don't really know the kids, I think the teacher has a lot, her body language and what she says **135**and does in her class, his or her classroom I think that has a lot to do with your confidence **136**level because if the kids are gonna respect you, you're gonna have more confidence, you're **137**gonna be more confident with the students, but if the kids aren't respected, if you have um **138**trouble-making kids in your classroom, then it lessens what the teacher can do, you know **139**what I'm saying. When, if I'm up lecturing and you have those, that one group that's back **140**there still talking while you're talking, you're not going be as confident in yourself because **141**you can't get that one person or that group of person, people to stop talking; so when you **142**have control of your class, you have the discipline down, you gonna be confident in what **143**you're doing.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and your students will be engaged. [MS. SLADE: "Right."] **The majority of them will be engaged.**

144MS. SLADE: Long as you're not a boring teacher, if you're not boring, if you're not sitting **145**up there monotone, and doing, you know, and you're not really talking to the students, you're **146**talking at them, then you'll gonna be better at what you do, long as you engage the students.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, like you say, keep knowing your students, [MS. SLADE: "Right."] *and having that respect and discipline. Okay, and um our final question for the interview is* *[Question #13]:* **how has your students' engagement affected your overall enjoyment of teaching? Do you find like when you first started teaching, you enjoyed teaching more, or is your enjoyment level pretty much the same, the same, or has your enjoyment of teaching decreased?**

147MS. SLADE: **[she whispers something to the effect (**"Do I really have to answer that **148**question?")] Oh my God. Before I moved to Georgia, I was really passionate about teaching, **149**but since I've got here, just the rules here, that the stress they put on the teachers here, and **150**teaching is changing so much. They want everybody to be robots; I don't enjoy it as much as **151**I used to, no. But when I first started, I loved teaching; I loved meeting new students every **152**year. But just being in, I guess it's the environment, I don't know what you would call it, but **153**since I've been here, I've lost a lot of passion for teaching.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, but does the student engagement impact your enjoyment? Like, when you have classes that have a low engagement, do you feel like......

154MS. SLADE: I feel like I'm pulling teeth; it's, you have to be, you have to be excited about **155**what you're teaching in order to get the students engaged.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so if they're excited, you're loving it, [MS. SLADE: "Right."] you're enjoying it, but if you see they're bored, they're not, non-enthusiastic......[MS. SLADE: "Right."]

156MS. SLADE: If you don't have, if the kids aren't participating, you're not gonna have much **157**engagement in these kids. Because they're all gonna be sitting, and like by the time you get **158**to seventh period class, with seven periods a day, kids are tired, teachers are tired, I think **159**that's too many classes per day. I think they need to lessen the amount of classes and [slight **160**pause] because when the students are awake, you know, after lunch, you lose a lot of **161**enthusiasm for the kids. They're ready to go home, they're tired; and the teachers are worn **162**out because they don't get a full break, so it depends on the time of day that you have those **163**kids when you have the more, most engagement.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, but do you feel that student engagement is crucial for you to enjoy teaching?

164MS. SLADE: No/Yes/No. I don't know. I mean if they're sitting here like lumps on a log, **165**you're not gonna get much out of it either, but if you're excited about what you're doing, and **166**you making it, even if it's the most boring story that you're reading, if you make it exciting, **167**the kids'll be excited, if it's something they relate to especially.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Alright, Ms. Slade, I thank you for your time and your cooperation. And this will end our interview. Thank you so much.

168MS. SLADE: You're welcome.

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MS. HENRY

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Good Afternoon, Ms. Henry.

1MS. HENRY: Good Afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: You doing pretty good?

2MS. HENRY: Fine.

INTERVIEWER: Good. I appreciate your time in this interview.

3MS. HENRY: No problem.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, ma'am.

INTERVIEWER: This interview deals with Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes, Teachers' Perceptions and Roles. In the following interview, I'm interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and I'm seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed, and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation. So, we'll go ahead and get started with um question #1: Define student engagement for me.

4MS. HENRY: Okay, um, student engagement is when all of the students are actively **5**involved in the les—[unidentified noise occurs here; maybe a shuffling of papers] the lesson **6**and the assignment. [slight pause] That's my definition.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, alright. Thank you. #2.Okay, tell the story of a time in which students were engaged in your class?

7MS. HENRY: Well, we can use today as an example; today they were working on a **8**project, um a RAFT project, in which they had to, they had different roles, audience, format, **9**and topic. Um, I split them up into groups depending on, you know, their performance, put **10**weaker ones with the stronger ones so that everyone'll balance out, and everyone had **11**something to do; **12**they were all um actively participating in the assignment, um whether it was writing **13**something down, giving their input or opinions, acting something out. Um, they were all **14**actively involved.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that cooperative learning seems to work pretty well in terms of getting students engaged?

15MS. HENRY: It does.

INTERVIEWER: #3. Okay, next question: Why do you think these students were engaged in this particular activity?

16MS. HENRY: I think um because they really enjoyed this story, the book, they loved it.
17They were alert throughout the entire story, um they wanted to know more; they, you know,
18answered questions, they asked questions, they had discussions um about the story, so once we
19started to do the project, since they loved the story so much they wanted to, you know,
20participate and add their input into it; they found it really exciting because they really loved
21the story.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, that's good. So we have to find things that, once we find something that appeals to them, [*Ms. Henry: "Right."*] really interests them, it's not, not that difficult, I think, to keep their engagement. [*Ms. Henry: "Right."*] #4. Okay. What specific strategies do you use to foster engagement?*

22MS. HENRY: Um, I, especially for reading, I like to stop and ask questions just to make
23sure that everyone is on the same page and they understand because once a student is lost, a lot
24of times, instead of asking questions to bring themselves up to speed, they kind of just fall
25back and fall asleep or, you know, start daydreaming; so, if you continuously ask questions
26and make sure that everyone is on the same page, everyone understands, um that helps in
27keeping them engaged. Also, I, if they're doing individual work or group work, I like to walk
28around and monitor what they're doing because they know if I'm coming around, that means
29they definitely need to be doing their work or focusing on what they're supposed to be
30focusing on, reading what they're supposed to be reading. So, I'll, also, actively managing or
31monitoring what they're doing helps.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, those seem, those seem to be some very good strategies that you are using to foster engagement. #5. And the next question: Are their some students who seem to be, who seem to more likely engage in your classroom?

32MS. HENRY: There are [slight pause] some students; um generally, I find the ones that
33actually have the [slight pause] the higher grades are the ones that seem to be more engaged,
34not to say that the others aren't, but um they choose when they want to be engaged, depending
35on whether or not they're interested in the topic or the story or the subject, or whatever it is
36that we're talking about. That has a big factor to do with whether or not someone is engaged.
37So, the ones that aren't really interested in a specific story might daydream while the ones that
38are actually here to get good grades no matter what, or, you know, succeed no matter what,
39they're the ones that are engaged regardless of what it is that's going on.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, outside of grades, I mean, they're motivated to engage because they want good grades; are there other personal characteristics these students have, well, that you see that, that makes them engaged or makes them want to engage?

 40MS. HENRY: [Slight pause] Personal characteristics, they, the ones that are driven, um **41**the ones that basically, you know, are driven to succeed, um the ones that are motivated, **42**dedicated, the ones that inquire, if they, they like to ask questions and figure things out, and **43**understand life or different things, they're the ones that are mostly engaged. Um, [slight **44**pause] the ones that have an open mind because a lot of times if your mind is closed, you're **45**not going to want to engage in anything that's going on; so the ones that have an open mind **46**that are open to learning new things those are ones that are mostly engaged.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, yeah, those were some of the characteristics that, you know, that I was thinking along the lines of myself. #6. And the opposite question, or the flip side of that question, are there some students who seem less likely to be engaged?

47MS. HENRY: There are. I mean, are you also asking for their characteristics as well?

INTERVIEWER: Yes ma'am.

48MS. HENRY: Okay, um, [slight pause] students that are, seem to have a low self esteem, **49**um a lot of times they're not as engaged, whether it's because of their looks or because of they **50**don't, they don't feel like they're as smart as the others; so instead of trying, or instead of **51**embarrassing themselves by trying, they kind of resort to putting their head down and going to **52**sleep. Um, those who are [pause; hearing of voices in the background] class clowns a lot of **53**times, rather than engaging in doing their work, they prefer to make others laugh around them **54**to get others' minds off of what it is they're supposed to be doing. Um, the ones that are, [long **55**pause] I, to me, in my experience, those two, are the ones that don't, don't get involved as **56**much as others, the ones that have low self esteem, um and also the ones that are the class **57**clowns.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay, for, for whatever reason, they don't, well, the class clown, they want the spotlight on them, [*Ms. Henry: "Right."*], but they're not necessarily concentrating on academics, [*Ms. Henry: "Right."*], and the person with low self-esteem is not going to want the spotlight [*Ms. Henry: "Exactly."*], so they kind of shy away or back away. [*Ms. Henry:*

"Exactly."*] Yes, ma'am. #7. Okay, the next question. Describe your picture of what an engaged student looks like, your picture of an engaged student.*

58MS. HENRY: My picture of an engaged student, they are looking at whatever the focal **59**point is, whether it's me, a power point, a video, another student presenting; they're looking at **60**that person, they're also sitting upright, um, occasionally nodding, you know, their head in **61**agreement or in disagreement; they would, you know, ask questions, raising hands, or um **62**taking notes, [slight pause] have, have a pleasant look on their face for the most part. Those, **63**those are characteristics of, that's what an engaged student looks like to me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you. #8. What does engagement mean to you in a school context, school-wide, if you were to um, you know, in terms of our school, what does engagement look like in the big picture, school wide, if you're looking in the hallways. What would that school-wide engagement look like to you?

64MS. HENRY: In the hallways, students diligently trying to get to class on time, not **65**strolling lackadaisically through the hallways, um students that actually have materials in their **66**hands, whether it's books, new um, paper, pens, pencils. Students who [long pause] in the **67**hallways, that would be it. Students who also [slight pause] aren't disrespectful um in the **68**hallways cause a lot of times there's a correlation with disrespectful students and their **69**engagement, for whatever reason, or their lack of engagement. So, students in the hallways **70**with materials, diligently trying to get to class on time, those are the ones that seem to be **71**engaged the most, or their conversation is academic rather than entertainment or social.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you would like to add, like in terms of the um professionals in the building, do you think they contribute to that school-wide engagement profile as well?

72MS. HENRY: I think so. I think um professionals who just stand by and watch anything **73**happen, those are the ones that are not as engaged in the school-wide engagement. Um, the **74**professionals or faculty members who are actively trying to hurry the students to class or, you **75**know, having conversations with the students about how their grades are looking or about how **76**they're doing that day. That also has something to do with helping to foster the engagement of **77**the school as a whole.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, very good. Okay, next question. #9. What sorts of things do you believe teachers, like yourself, should be doing to increase student engagement?

78MS. HENRY: In the classroom or in the halls?

INTERVIEWER: Classroom, English classrooms specifically.

79MS. HENRY: Okay, um, [slight pause] trying to choose literature or text that are **80**interesting to the student, relevant, is very important also. Um, now it's very difficult to help a **81**student understand how Martin Luther King's speech pertains to them at this moment when **82**they feel like they're so far removed. Um so, if we can, of course, we have to put those things **83**in the curriculum, but finding other works that are relevant to them helps with their **84**engagement. Also, actively moving around in the classroom helps with the students' **85**engagement. If they know that you're going to be at your desk for the whole 50 minutes, then **86**they're probably not gonna try to do much. But, if they know you're coming around soon, to as **87**they say, "bother them", then they'll try to do something so that you won't have to continue to **88**ask them questions about what's going on. Um, also, I like to play games; I don't understand **89**why a lot of teachers take that out. Um, games help them to become actively involved. It **90**doesn't have to be games like board games; you know, it can be jeopardy in which they're **91**reviewing for a lesson or something like that, that keeps them involved because they like **92**things like that. Using technology in the classroom also helps them to remain engaged. Um, **93**they like power points,

especially the ones that have pictures and music. They like to watch, **94**especially in literature class, if we have a video or a film that correlates with a book that **95**they've read or a story they've read. They also like to watch that; they get engaged because in **96**this technological age anything that has to do with technology, they're running towards it; they **97**like it. So I think those strategies would help to foster engagement in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, simply just helping them to connect by using the things that they like, [Ms. Henry: "Right."] *which helps them to engage and connect to the material better. Okay; thank you. #10. Um, next question; um you just talked about these things that teachers can do to increase student engagement. Which of these things do you think you're already doing and how well do you think you're doing these things to increase student engagement?*

98MS. HENRY: Okay, um, [slight pause] I currently show videos if there is a video that **99**corresponds with what we've been reading. I [slight pause] have them work in collaborative **100**groups; I monitor, facilitate, walk around, and make sure they're doing what they're supposed **101**to be doing. I ask them questions about what's going on just to make sure that they are **102**understanding because sometimes they can sit there with a pen and paper and make it look **103**like they're working, but, you know, they actually don't know what's going on. So, if, you **104**know, you just have a little conversation you can kind of figure out who knows, who doesn't. **105**Um [pause] different games, review games; we like to play those and those also work. As **106**far as, how well do I think I'm doing; [pause] can I say on a scale from one to ten; if that, **107**would that be fine? [**Interviewer: "Yes, yes."**] Um, with one being the lowest and 10 being **108**the highest, [slight pause] I think I'm probably at about a seven. Um, I say that because I do **109**have some classes where everybody is engaged, they're all interested, but I also have some **110**classes where there are a handful that still haven't gotten to the point where I feel like they **111**need to be as far as engagement; so, um, I put myself at a, at a seven.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And that's good, that as a new teacher, you feel, probably feel more comfortable using technology and games; whereas, a teacher who has been in the profession longer would not feel as um confident or capable in using some of the strategies that you use to engage the students. And that's good for a younger teacher to be that open-minded, you know, to reach their students in that way.

#11. And the next question: What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement? Any changes you might make in your teaching practice to increase student engagement? [Voices, talking and laughing, can be heard, indistinctly, coming from the hallway]

112MS. HENRY: Um, [pause] I would make changes; um I would probably add more **113**review games to make sure that everyone is on the same page. Um, I would probably [slight **114**pause] try to talk to some of the students a little more. Um, even though I do talk to them, try **115t**o figure out exactly, the ones that aren't engaged, try to figure out exactly what's going on as **116**to why they're not engaged. Um, from doing that I've heard a variety of answers, but I think I **117**should do it more frequently and also probably contact parents um a little more because **118**sometimes they might have insight into what's going on um a little more than the student **119**might be able to articulate. So, if you contact parents more, for the ones that aren't engaged,

120even though they may have a decent grade because they do their work, but the ones that
121aren't engaged, try to figure out exactly what's going on because there may be a deeper
122reason as to why they're not participating.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. True. Very good. Parental involvement can be used as a resource to engage students as well. Okay, thank you. We have a couple of more questions remaining. #12. The next question: How has your students' level of engagement affected or impacted your overall confidence level in teaching?

123MS. HENRY: It impacts it greatly. Um, if, if I see three or four students with their head
124down, or, you know, sleeping or something, then I'm gonna automatically assume that the
125way I presented the lesson isn't as interesting as it could be or should be. And so that
126definitely affects, that I go home and think about how I can change it for the next day; if I felt
127like they didn't think it was interesting, I need to revamp my plan and figure out how can I
128make it more interesting to them so that they'll [slight pause] grasp it and understand what
129I'm talking about. And, of course, if they're all actively engaged, then I do feel pretty good
130about myself and the lesson that I planned and um what the topic that we discussed that day.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and it's good that you use that as a way to reflect on how you can um edit lesson plans or revisit lesson plans to try to get those few engaged the next time. That's very good on your part. #13. And the last question: How has your students' engagement level affected or impacted your overall enjoyment of teaching?

131MS. HENRY: [Slight pause] Um, it impacted greatly as well. When the students are
132engaged, I'm excited about teaching; I love it, and I feel like I'm doing my job, I'm doing
133what I'm here to do. So it impacts it greatly. If I feel like they're not enjoying it at all, some
134days I kind of, you know, feel low down, but like I said I try to revamp and figure out what
135can I do to figure it out. Cause, you know, a lot of times, as teachers, sometimes we say "Oh,
136it's the students, it's the students.", but it's not always the students. You know, sometimes we
137have to look at ourselves and figure out what can we do differently that'll help incorporate
138everybody in the class and just not a percentage.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, alright. Thank you, Ms. Henry. [Ms. Henry: "You're welcome."] I appreciate your time and cooperation in helping me with this project, and I look forward to meeting with you in the future so that you can further help me, you know, try to probe this question more, how do we get students um more engaged in high school English classes. And thank you again. [Ms. Henry: "You're welcome."]

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Modification of Irvin's (2006) Dissertation, Teacher conceptions of student engagement in learning: A phenomenographic investigation

INTERVIEWER: MRS. LINDSEY
INTERVIEWEE: MS. SEAY

INTERVIEWER: Good Afternoon, Ms. Seay.

1MS. SEAY: Good Afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: I appreciate you engaging me in this interview. And in the following interview, I'm interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and am seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of your personal consent to be interviewed, and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation. And one thing that's unusual about you, different from the other teachers, is that you were recently removed from the classroom, but I know it's still fresh in your memory, those experiences you've had in the classroom. And now you have a new capacity as instructional coach for this school, and I really do appreciate your time. And the first question I have to ask you is to define student engagement. [Question #1]

2MS. SEAY: I think student engagement is um [slight pause] anything that prompts a student to **3**become interested in or to participate in their own learning process. Um, it may come, um, as a **4**motivator or just something that makes it relevant um to them, but anything that makes a **5**student want to participate in their own learning.

 INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay, next question [Question #2]: Tell the story of a time in which students were really engaged in your class.

6MS. SEAY: Umm, usually when I read novels that um I like [*interviewer clears throat and* **7***says "Excuse me."*] and that I know well, um students seem to be engaged; um I think they **8**feed off of my excitement. And um, whenever you can rel-- um pull things from the story that **9**um students can relate to; if you can break it down so it seems like it was something that they **10**have experienced before, then usually students are very engaged. But, um, yeah, most of the **11**time when it's something they can relate to.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I think you just answered this next question, but if you could maybe could elaborate a little bit further. [Ms. Seay: "Okay."] You said, you were talking about, they like to hear you read and they, when they see that you're interested in the reading and excited, they get engaged. But, is there any other reason why you think these students were, are engaged in these particular activities? [Question #3]

12MS. SEAY: Um, [pause] I think students like expressive um activities, where they can **13**express themselves. Um, if they can interact with you, like I said, if I'm interested in it and

14they feed off of that, [sounds like the opening of a door here] well, they'll even ask you "what
15do you like about it"; so whenever there's something where they can um, they can exchange
16with you and, and express how they feel and ask how you feel, they usually get um, become
17interested in it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you, and the next question [Question #4]: What specific
strategies did (do) you use to foster student engagement?

18MS. SEAY: Um, a lot of times, [*interviewer clears throat again and says "Excuse me."*] um
19incorporating technology because this is a digital world in which they live. Um, so technology
20is, is um a good, a positive tool when it comes to engagement. Um, also, um doing on the spot
21research where I would pull up the internet on our promethean board and allow students, you
22know.....okay, well, what, what key word can I punch in to search for whatever; so it's like this
23on the spot um research techniques; they usually like that also.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Alright. [Question #5] Are there some students, you know, from what
you remember in the classroom; are there some students who seem more likely to engage in the
classroom, like certain student characteristics that they have that make , that make them more
likely to engage in the classroom?

24MS. SEAY: I think um students with outgoing personalities, students who are well-liked by
25their peers, don't fear speaking out in class. Um, students who do, who shy away tend to um
26maybe not be as popular as the, as the other kids or um maybe they don't have friends in that
27setting. Um, but, usually students who um are outgoing, um and, and responsive and engaged
28are your students who um really ah don't have any [slight pause], I guess, personal inhibitions
29because they're already well-liked or just have that open personality.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and you just, you just [Ms. Seay laughs, realizing that she has already
anticipated the next question] yeah, you went ahead to the next question.[Question #6] It says,
are there some students who seem less likely to be engaged in the classroom. Any other
outstanding characteristics that you see for students who are less engaged in the classroom?

30MS. SEAY: Um, like I said, maybe if they're um, if they don't have friends in that setting, or
31um maybe less popular by teenage standards, um but sometimes um [slight pause] very smart
32students will um will shy to the back, not, not speak up as much, um but I think that may not
33be because they're um, they don't know; that's just their personality to kind of be like an
34introvert.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, um next question [Question #7]: Describe your picture of an
engaged student, your picture of what an engaged student looks like.

35MS. SEAY: Um, [slight pause] definitely one who is prepared, who comes to class with their
36tools um for education. Um, [slight pause] I think that um an engaged student um is, is one
37who participates. Um, I think that um that student would be a, a good listener. Um, [longer
38pause] I don't know, I'm thinking.......

INTERVIEWER: Well, you've given me some good qualities that, you know, all teachers look for, preparation, somebody who participates, they listen well, you don't have to repeat instructions over and over. [Ms. Seay states, "Exactly."] So, I mean, I mean that's pretty, a pretty good picture of what an engaged student would look like. Okay, the next question. [Question #8]: **What does engagement mean in a school context? Like you consi--, consider this school as a whole, what, what would you expect engagement to look like school-wide?**

39MS. SEAY: Um, school-wide, I think..... .well, you're talking about on the classroom level, **40**but for the whole school?

INTERVIEWER: Beyond the classroom, [Ms. Seay says, "Okay."] like through the halls of this school [Ms. Seay interjects, "Oh, okay."] full engagement.

41MS. SEAY: Um, I think maybe um utilizing the technology that we have in the halls, we have **42**these um televisions in the hallways; we have them but we're not utilizing them. I think that **43**that would increase engagement if students saw um something educational all around them, **44**um bulletin boards that reflect what they're actually doing in different subjects, um student **45**work displayed around the school, um [slight pause] just academic slogans, you know, "Be **46**Prepared", "Do your Best", you know, things like that. Motivational slogans around the walls, **47**I think that, school-wide, that would in--make students become more engaged. Maybe **48**influence them to get into classrooms and participate.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, I agree. To become academically motivated [Ms Seay says, "Yes."]. that's a term another colleague of our used, another colleague used, to be academically motivated. And the next question [Question#9]: What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase student engagement?

49MS. SEAY: I think teachers should um remain um [slight pause] be involved with the **50**research, stay abreast of new [slight pause] techniques, or new strategies, um new **51**methodologies as they relate to education. Um, we can't do. . .gone are the days of chalk **52**boards, and Mary Jane shoes, and the hair bun; we got to do things differently with our **53**students, so we have to stay um knowledgeable of what [a cellular phone begins to ring] new **54**techniques are out or new strategies are out for teaching.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and I agree with that. I just don't think that um time is set aside for teachers to get that, profes-- that time for professional development. Where we can attend conferences and be made more aware. Even though we have had some in-house, but still it doesn't hurt for us to go to like maybe one or two conferences a year to see other, meet with other professionals.

55MS. SEAY: I think that [*Interviewer: "Yes ma'am."*] we do, I think you can always benefit **56**from dialoging with other teachers um because they may do something differently in a **57**demographic similar to ours that works. And so, you need, we need to do that, we need to see **58**um see other environments, see other teachers, exchange with other teachers.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, we do, we do, to increase our own professionalism. Okay, the next question [Question #10], and you may have already hinted to this, um looking back on your

past teaching experience. Which of these things, to increase student engagement, have you done in the past? You mention um staying abreast of current res—I mean current um instructional strategies. Which of these things have you done in the past to increase your own student engagement?

59MS. SEAY: Okay, um, like I said, I do, [slight pause] I do frequently or did frequently resort **60**to technology, because they like that and um and then it gave them the opportunity to teach **61**me, because whenever I couldn't navigate something, students, oh, they're really engaged **62**when they can show a teacher how to do something. [Ms. Seay laughs/chuckles here] Um, **63**and, of course, um, I do um read a lot of educational literature, um being in school myself, um **64**so I, I do um stay abreast of the new of the literature regarding um instructional strategies and **65**educational issues, whatever it is, but more than anything, I, I like to resort to technology **66**because the students like that and they' usually are engaged when you give them something **67**they like.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and the second part of that question was how well do you think you were, you were in implementing technology and all the strategies you used in the classroom. How well did you, did you perform those, I mean those activities in the classroom? How would you rate yourself?

68MS. SEAY: Um, if I had to rate myself I would say that I was um [slight pause] I guess at **69**least proficient, what I'm thinking about are those teacher keys terms, at least proficient with **70**the use of technology. Um, they're always other things that I would want to know about **71**technology and how to incorporate it in my lessons, but I think I was pretty proficient with the **72**use of technology and I think it went over well with the students.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Okay, next questions, [Question #11] What, if you, if you had the opportunity, or if you do have the opportunity in the future as an educator, what kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase student engagement?

73MS. SEAY: I think I would um incorporate more collaborative assignments to allow students **74**to work together more to create for me, as opposed to um telling them this is what I want, **75**maybe um allow students to be a little bit more creative and work together, and I think that **76**would increase engagement. I wish I had done more collaborative assignments with them.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you; that's something I can relate to as well. Um, next question; [Question #12] um when you were in the classroom, how did your students' engagement affect or impact your confidence level in teaching?

77MS. SEAY: Um, it, it [slight pause] when a student, when students are engaged, it does make **78**um a teacher more confident, um because not only do you, do you realize that you're reaching **79**them, because they are, you know, participating and interacting with you. But, um, I think it, **80**it makes you more confident because you know it's something that they'll retain. Usually, if

81they're engaged in it and they are in, you know, sort of driving their learning, they retain that
82information more or longer, and I think that that's what um, you know, it makes me more
83confident that they'll know it later.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, very good. And the last question [Question #13], also relating back to your past teaching experience. When you were looking at that student engagement, how did that affect or impact your overall enjoyment of teaching, looking at the level of student engagement in the classroom?

84MS. SEAY: Um, what definitely made it more enjoyable for me when I'm not the only one
85passionate about it. Um, um, and[slight pause] when, when students show you that they like it
86or that they're interested in what you're doing, you know you're having fun with it; they're
87having fun with it. Your relationship, your teacher and student relationship is um a different
88type of relationship; when you're, you, it's more friendly, if I can use for a lack of a better
89word. Um, but when you're telling them or showing them something that they're not interested
90in, you, it almost feels forced, but when they like it, too, um, it just seems like a better total
91atmosphere in your classroom.

*INTERVIEWER: Okay. Um, that concludes our interview. And I appreciate for your time. Thank you, Ms. Seay, [*MS. SEAY: Thank you so much.] *and I look forward to dialoging with you in the future.*

92MS. SEAY: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

93MS. SEAY: Thank you.

APPENDIX F:

Focus Group Interview Transcripts

Student Engagement in Secondary English Classes: Teachers' Perceptions and Roles

Focus Group 1

INTERVIEWER: MRS. MARCIA LINDSEY

INTERVIEWEES: MR. JEFFREYS, MS. SLADE, MS. DAVIS, MR. DREW, MS. SEAY

INTERVIEWER: Okay, today is May 13, 2013. I'm meeting with English teachers to discuss further student engagement. And give me a second. [interviewer is getting papers organized]. In the following interview, I am interested in finding out your perspective on student engagement and seeking to view the concept from your point of view. To gather this information, I will be asking you the questions below, and will also ask further questions as needed to clarify things that you say in the interview. Participation in this interview is acknowledgement of personal consent to be interviewed and consent for your views to be used as research data and in the final dissertation.

This focus group session will be recorded for the purpose of data collection. Thank you for your voluntary participation in this research study.

Are you all ready to begin? The question to, the question I pose to the group:

1. *Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms.*

1Ms. Davis: [group pause] Um, for, for me, um, student engagement is where students are fully
2immersed in a task. Um, they understand what the task is that they're being asked to do; um, a
3majority of the class is listening, um they're open-minded and they're observant.

4Ms. Slade: [longer group pause] I think today's um student engagement looks like where
5orking on the same task, trying to achieve the same goal. However, they may work on different
6levels for the differentiation, but they all know what they're doing, what the um outcome of the
7project or the assignment is.

Focus Group 2

INTERVIEWER: Okay, any other comments; I'm sorry.

8Ms. Slade: And teachers walking around.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, any other comments? Are we ready for the next question? Okay, number two.

2. *Discuss an instructional strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students.*
9Mr. Drew: [group pause] I think that one instructional strategy that all secondary teachers,
10English teachers could use would be something that's in line with a sponge activities, at the

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11beginning of class, something that's very interesting that's gonna capture their attention. At
12the same time, it speaks to the particular standards that they're working on. Ahh, for example,
13my class I had um this newspaper scramblers; they had a little where you unscramble words.
14You can substitute maybe [slight pause] vocabulary that's related to the standard, to have them
15unscramble that work, do that type thing; a variety of things, something that's going to keep,
16get them excited, compete against each other, maybe give them a timeframe on unscrambling
17some of those words. That's just one thing.
18Ms. Davis: [slight group pause] Um, I use something called "Agree and Disagree"; um, which
19has helped my kids with their writing. Usually, when you give them a narrative or something
20that they're writing in first person, they do pretty well with that, but if you give them an
21argumentative essay, they kind of struggle with that; so, with each topic that we um go over, if
22it's a story or whatever it is that we're working on, I'll come up with different themes that may
23be present in it, and um, you'll have, either I'll let half of the room go to this side of the room;
24go to the left if you agree; go to the right if you disagree. Um, and if you disagree, or maybe I
25put numbers in the bag and put them in groups, pull the numbers out of the bag, so all of my
26ones; either I may tell you that you have to agree or disagree, but you have to be able to um
27use evidence to support your point. [***Ms. Seay enters the conference room and the focus
group session almost five minutes late***] **28**And that way in writing, they're able to have those
29counterpoints in their head, maybe they can picture um having that agree or disagree moment
30in Ms. N...'s room; so another person would say this, but I would argue this. Um, so, agree or
31disagree is something that I always use.
INTERVIEWER: [group pause] ***Okay. Any more responses for that question? Discuss an
instructional strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their
students. [interviewer waits for any additional responses] Okay, we'll move on to question
number three.***

Focus Group 3

> *3.* ***What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve
> student engagement?***

32Ms. Davis: [group pause] Um, I think that's quite simple, establish a positive learning
33environment so that everyone would be encouraged to become engaged and to participate with
34them. Just for me.

35Ms. Seay: I also think that um teachers should embrace technology as an instructional tool um
36because our students are um digital natives born in a world of technology, and they know
37technology; so to embrace that as an instructional tool is um important for teachers.

38Ms. Slade: [slight group pause] What I used to do to improve their engagement, when I give
39out an assignment, I already have the assign---, I would have done the assignment first, so that
40they'll know how it's supposed to turn out or what they'll expected to do.

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] ***Okay.***

41Mr. Jeffreys: I think it's pretty important to [pause] as much as possible have a book in their
42hand, where you can look at specific paragraphs and go over it and then go over it again and

43then come back to it maybe tomorrow and then see how your later discussions enlighten your
44previous readings of it, and then as much as possible, to write papers almost immediately upon
45finishing a book or a short story. And let that, that, as much as possible be an open assignment
46where they can reflect on it and then give them more um [pause] more like expository writing
47because that's so much of what secondary or college education is really focused on.

INTERVIEWER: [pause] *Okay. Ready to move on to the next question? And we've already hinted at this one, but I think it's important for us to address.*

4. *How important is the use of technology for student engagement in the high school English classroom?*

48Ms. Seay: [group pause] Um, like I said before, um that's what our students know and that's
49what they like; so, um, technology is one of those things we could use to motivate them or to
50intrigue them. Um, you know sometimes we have to meet them where they are sometimes;
51you have to use what it is that, that motivates them or that um interests them and um use those
52things to bring in the, the literature, to bring in the writing.

53Mr. Drew: [group pause] Technology, I think, well, I know it's the wave of the future; and um
54it's amazing how kids will respond to it, you know how they just become so engaged. Ahh,
55daily basis, you know, they can, in some instances; my grandkids can

Focus Group 4

run rings around me **56**with certain things. They take my cell phone and pull up games I didn't know was in there, **57**you know, so that type thing. So, it's very important, you know; I think it's gonna help better **58**them, prepare them for the future [slight pause] by engaging with that technology.

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] *Any other responses? Okay, we're ready to move on to the next question.*

5. *What role do you think students' personal backgrounds, in such case as education, family, home, and other outside influences; what do you, role do you think students' personal backgrounds and personal experiences play in shaping their level of engagement?*

59Ms. Davis: (group pause) Um, I think it plays a major role because the more they can relate to
60it, the more interesting or the more interested they are in the subject. Um, students like to show
61off something that they're really good in; so, if they relate to it more, then they'll be more
62actively engaged in it; um, they'll be happier to show off something that they actually know or
63that they'll good in. And in that way, um they can help other students relate to it too; so,
64instead of the teacher always being that one that leads off, you allow the kids to kind of
65sometimes show off what they know and you can just monitor and correct them when
66necessary.

67Mr. Jeffreys: [brief group pause] I think your question about engagement really has a lot to do
68with [slight pause] theories of acting and drama because [slight pause] most people, or a lot of
69actors in the past, have tried to make characters walk in their own shoes. And, I think, one of
70the things I've tried to do this year more is, is not bring other things to your experience, but
71really to help you imagine and then you walk in somebody else's shoes, which is very, very
72difficult if you don't have a lot of background from which to even begin to imagine these
73characters or um these foreign concepts in science, things like that; so, um, I think the more
74limited, the more they're gonna just try to bring things that are foreign and make them walk in
75their own shoes; whereas, if they have a big background, really diverse, or um a lot of things
76going on at home that are um creative, then they'll be able to really step outside their own
77experience more.
78Ms. Seay: [very brief pause] And also, um, when you're talking about their personal
79experiences and their personal backgrounds, I think the desire to learn initially starts at home,
80and um, so, um, and, of course, teachers foster it once you, once they get here, but it initially
81begins at home and so, um, I really think it, it plays a major role what, what background the
82student comes from, um when it comes to engaging in school and even liking [another
83participant coughs] um school. It comes from, you know, how important education is at your,
84at your home.

Focus Group 5

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] ***Okay, any more comments?***

85Mr. Drew: I'll just piggy-back a little bit of what was just stated, you know. If education is
86not stressed at the beginning, if it's not something that's pushed in the home, then you pretty
87much can see it in the students, as opposed to the ones who have, they come from a different
88experience. [Slight pause] Good homes, good parents that stress education, you can see it just
89as good in any student, and it's the opposite when the situation don't exist.

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] ***Okay, we're ready to move on to the next question.***

> 6. ***How does the teacher demonstrate or model active engagement in his or her***
>   ***classroom?***

90Ms. Davis: [group pause] Um, I think that teachers would demonstrate active engagement by
91using a variety of strategies, um, in interaction mode. I think that teachers should express high
92expectations; umm…, and just give continual feedback and assessments to students.

93Ms. Seay: [very brief pause] And I think it was mentioned earlier that um doing the
94assignments with the students; um, sometimes they need to see that we're not asking them to
95do something that we wouldn't do or that we haven't done; so, um, actually allowing them to
96see you as a researcher, pulling it up on the promethean board and researching things right
97there in the classroom with them, um, because they'll throw out a website, so, we're actually
98doing it together. And um, I think so, actually seeing that um you're not asking them to do
99isolated um assignments that you wouldn't even do yourself, um, is a way to demonstrate
100active engagement.

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] *Any other comments, responses, before we move on?*

101 Ms. Slade: Just modeling the assignment for the students.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, the last question.

> 7. *How important do you think professional development seminars and/or activities will be in the future toward helping English teachers improve student engagement?*

Focus Group 6

102 Ms. Seay: [group pause] Um, I think our, because our profession is always evolving, um **103**standards, teacher evaluation, um, the CCRPI (College Career Readiness Performance Index) **104**now; I mean it's constantly evolving, so I think um professional learning and professional **105**development is gonna be a very intricate part in preparing teachers and keeping teachers um **106**prepared for, to teach the students that we have to teach. Um, we have to stay current to be **107**relevant and um, and I think the professional learning is going to um help keep teachers um **108**abreast on what they need. [another participant coughs]

INTERVIEWER: [long group pause] *No other comments or questions. Are there any questions that you all would like to go back to, revisit, [slight pause], a particular question that, that you feel like um needs more um further probing, by the group?*

109 Ms. Davis: [brief group pause] No.

110 Mr. Jeffreys: I guess um one thing I just would make, one comment I would make is that **111**engagement really does look different for different students, and so, um, I didn't answer on **112**question one because [slight pause] I know sometimes um my students don't look like **113**they're engaged, but they're, they're just really thinking, or they may even be daydreaming, **114**or it may be that you've said something which is worthwhile to daydream on for a while. **115**And, um, so I guess, your question, I like your question, but I think it's very, very personal **116**question, which is what education has to be; but it is so individual, I think.

INTERVIEWER: [group pause] *True. Any others? If not, I thank you for your time and participation, cooperation with me through this research study, and I look forward to sharing the results with you in the near future. Alright, thank you, thank you.*

APPENDIX G:

Interview Data Analysis Chart

Major Themes for Student Engagement	Interview Questions that Correspond to the Theme	Specific Teacher Quotes and Field Notes that Correspond to the Theme
1. Active Student Participation	1. Define student engagement. 2. Tell the story of a time in which students were engaged in your class. 3. Describe your picture of an engaged student. 4. Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms.	• Actively participating • Being actively involved in, have some goal in mind • All of the students are "actively" involved in the lesson and the assignment • Where students are fully immersed in a task; • They were all "actively participating" in the assignment,… • An engaged student is one who participates • Fully immersed Ms. Davis—2,3 • They "wanted" to read ahead; • They had the opportunity…decide which format they were going to use; • …they were actually battling each other about.; • Give them an opportunity to actually do something that they see (rap) Ms. Davis—Field Notes • Students are flipping pages • A male student asks • A female student asks; • One group is more verbal • One female student is reading aloud in her group • A male student says, "Stop talking to people in our group." • Several students are jotting down the teacher's summary notes • Students ask clarifying questions, especially female students

		Mr. Drew—2,3
		• "…first of all, when a student comes to school, they should understand and have a pretty good knowledge of what is expected of them." • "A lot of them…come from backgrounds where they are really encouraged to learn,…." • you have students who, no matter what the assignment is, they're gonna put forth their best effort." Mr. Drew—Field Notes • Approximately five students working during the work session; • Students help each other with the crossword puzzle; • Several students work independently • Four or five students use dictionaries; • Female student calls the teacher's name twice for help; asks a question about a word • Two male students help each other with the handout • Some students do not hesitate to work cooperatively Ms. Henry—2,3 • Working on a project, a RAFT project; They were all "actively participating" in the assignment,…writing something down, giving their input or opinion, acting something out • Since they loved the story so much they wanted to,…, participate and add their input into it; Ms. Henry—Field Notes • Raise their hands to respond; • Tell the teacher they have a grasp of rhyme scheme;

		- Immediately get to work on the Closing; - Give oral/choral response to rhyme scheme - Participate in recap of Chapter six by answering review questions - Respond to questions in unison; - Listen as the teacher reads - Answer Chapter seven questions as the teacher reads Slade—2,3 - working on a project for Beowulf - where the students worked in groups; - They presented them orally,…were videotaped; - it gave them a chance to be creative; (a chance) to think, work on topics that were familiar… really enjoyed working in groups - Slade—Field Notes - Work on assigned vocabulary from certain text; - Take turns reading aloud - Others follow along in their text; - Male student asks for help with a word in the text - Male student knows exactly where to pick up with reading - Few students respond to teacher's question; - One or two students try to help with text vocabulary Jeffreys—2,3 - got into the role of King Claudio; - One of the other students began to rather personalize his reading; able to identify with the roles in the play; - their imagination is grabbed; - can step outside of their own day to day concerns; can get caught up in a fantasy world

		Jeffreys—Field Notes
		- Female student asks a question - Male student asks - Students respond to questions about Macbeth; - Help each other with locating metaphors and identifying specific lines; - Students take notes and mark up the text - Female student asks (separate question) - Female student raises her hand for help - Two female students listen to the teacher's feedback Seay—2,3 - Usually when I read novels that I like; they feed off of my excitement; - Most of the time when it's something they can relate to; - like expressive activities where they can "express" themselves; If they can interact with you,…they feed off of that - Lake—Field Notes (substitute for Seay's field notes) - Female student says, "I don't understand #5 (on the test)." - Asks for clarity on yesterday's assignment - Still working to complete the test or the assignment from 11/6/12; - Female student responds; - Male student responds to the teacher's question; - Female student raises her hand to answer - Three female students attempt to answer the teacher's question; Male student makes a statement about a character; - Raised hands to show their pens; - Female student reads; - Share ideas/experiences
2. Student Connections	1. Why do you think these students were engaged?	- They really enjoyed working in groups - Students like expressive activities where they can "express" themselves - It's fun and pleasurable for them

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	2. Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage? 3. How important is the use of technology for student engagement in the high school English classroom? 4. What role do you think students' personal backgrounds, in such case as education, family, home, and other outside influences; what role do you think students' personal backgrounds and personal experiences play in shaping their level of engagement?	• They really "enjoyed" this story • they found it really exciting • always involved in other activities in the school, • …, if they relate to it more, then they'll be more actively engaged in it; • if they have a big background, really diverse,… • Students know it and like it (technology); • Students find something they can relate to in the literature/the subject; • Importance of education in the home impacts engagement
3. Technology as an Instructional Tool	1. What specific strategies did (do) you use to foster engagement? 2. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase	• A lot of times incorporating technology • Technology is a good, a positive tool • ;…technology…we could use to motivate them or to intrigue them;… • allowing them to see you as a researcher, researching things right there in the classroom with them,…, • Technology,…; it's amazing how kids will respond to it, become so engaged; • They really enjoy working with the new gadgets

	student engagement? 3. What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement? 4. Discuss an instructional strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students. 5. What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve student engagement?	• "Using technology in the classroom also helps them to remain engaged." • They get engaged because…anything that has to do with technology, they're running towards it • just keep adding things…, as technology changes, but allow the kids to use the technology • Teachers should embrace technology as an instructional tool (FG)
4. Student Characteristics	1. Describe your picture of an engaged student. 2. Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage?	Davis—5,7 • They will be able to go to other students and say, 'Well, what she meant is….'; help them to understand; • The kids who sit in the front of the classroom • Raising their hands; • Giving me that eye to eye contact • Probably nodding their head and letting me know that they understand; • They're attentive…alert will be a better word

		Drew—5,7
		"…I think a lot of it depends on the type of background the student comes from,…,; - Some students who will really try no matter what the situation is; - The ones who feel very good about themselves - They have a positive outlook,…; they're less likely to be troublemakers or get into trouble - Yes, attitude, willingness to work; - There's a willingness to understand; They "want" to learn Henry—5,7 - The ones that actually have the higher grades - The ones that are driven,…driven to succeed - Ones that are motivated, dedicated, the ones that inquire; - Ones that have an open mind - Open to learning new things; - They are looking at whatever the focal point is,…me, a power point, a video, another student presenting (attentive) - They're also sitting upright, occasionally nodding,… (alert, responsive) - They would,…, ask questions, raising hands, or taking notes (inquisitive, physically involved) Jeffreys—5,7 - ones who already have a reading habit of their own; - those who have parents that have a higher education; - they're not running with the mainstream; - Those who open up to you as a teacher; - One who has his nose in the book or his head in the clouds;

		• Students asking you questions is always a giveaway…they're obviously thinking on their own; …that they're interested in it for the love of it Seay—5,7 • outgoing personalities; popular • Don't fear speaking out in class; • outgoing,…, and responsive…don't have any…personal inhibitions…have that open personality; • Definitely one who is prepared; one who participates; would be a good listener (attentive) Slade—5,7 • usually leaders in every class • More gung ho about doing assignments • They're loud;…always involved in other activities in the school;…more prone to do well or better on the assignments because they like to be seen (outgoing); • they're listening; they give you feedback (attentive, responsive) • first ones to volunteer to read; They're eager
5. Teacher Engagement	1. What specific strategies did (do) you use to foster engagement? 2. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase student engagement? 3. What kind of changes might you make in your teaching	Davis—4,9,11 • I came up with a rewards program; I let them give me feedback on things that I need to work on as well…they won't be afraid to approach…whatever task it is… • Becoming more engaged as a teacher; • If you could just build that relationship with the parents..."they'll take care of whatever it is that they need to take care of at home…."; • If you show them,…a sample of something that you want them to do, then they're gonna mock it • "…I've handicapped them…I've become a little bit too engaged with them."

	practice to increase engagement? 4. What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve student engagement?	• "…if I take myself out of the equation, then all they have to depend on is their minds and each other." Focus Group 3 • Establish a positive learning environment so that everyone would be encouraged to become engaged and to participate • Davis' Field Notes • Leader role—leads, initiates • Director role—directs, gives directions • Questioner role—asks questions • Summarizer role—summarizes, reviews • Group facilitator role—organizes, informs • Passive role—sitting at desk; organizing papers • Proactive disciplinarian—conferences with two females outside classroom • Dialogues with students; • Conferences with students; • Assists the students; • Shares information with students • Helps organize students into groups • Provides verbal feedback to male student Drew • "…I try to give my student(s) a varied range,…different types of activities,…discussing questions, questions that's gonna engage them,…pull from their own personal experience and backgrounds,...." • To figure out a way to get students more involved with technology; "…channel it into the educational process,…, and it would prepare them for the future." • We need to lean more toward preparing schools for, students for the real world straight out of high school; • Meeting the kids where they are, and looking at their abilities, their ability levels

		Focus Group 3—N/A Drew's Field Notes - Passive role—overlooks, did not engage with students - Democratic role—asks students to choose - Provider role—a handout, pencil, a clue, a quote - Facilitator role—handouts on desks, circulates to help - Provider role—gives examples, provides acknowledgement or awareness - Selective, distant instructor—attention **(only)** to concerned students, isolated attention/assistance at his desk - Wants to keep students on track, motivated, and/or satisfied - Not sufficient evidence of teacher interactions - Helps two male students and one female student at his desk - Conferences with two female students and one male student Jeffreys - I try to select material based on the class; - figure out who the personality of the class is as a whole; - Try to just really get into it myself so…I'm showing just how excited I am about the material,…that certainly (as a leader) rubs off on them - I think that would really help…if teachers were encouraged to be researchers on their own in their subject material; - If you know your subject, standards are gonna take care of themselves; - We need to be better at reading novels - Trying to get them to talk more on a textual level

		Focus Group 3
		• It's pretty important to have a book in their hand, where you can look at specific paragraphs…to write papers almost immediately upon finishing a book or a short story…; then give them more like expository writing because that's so much of what secondary or college education is really focused on
		Jeffreys' Field Notes
		• Director-gets students to focus; redirects student; directs a male student
• Democratic-opportunity to choose; students' suggestions
• Provider-teacher suggests; gives a hint
• Summarizer- summarizes a passage; tells students what notes to write
• Guide-guides students; guiding questions
• Provider-suggests, makes connections, gives his notes to student
• Questioner- asks guiding questions; asks her a question
• Conferences with students**;**
• Provides feedback;
• Helps students to identify;
• Uses questioning of students;
• Conferences with students one-on-one;
• Assists students with writing an essay;
• Assists students with examining and analyzing the text
		Henry
		• If you continuously ask questions…, that helps in keeping them engaged;
• "actively" managing or monitoring what they're doing helps;
• Finding other works that are relevant to them helps with their engagement;
• "Using technology in the classroom also helps them to remain engaged.";

| | | …anything that has to do with technology, they're running towards it I would probably add more review games; Try to talk to some of the students a little more…to figure out ,…what's going on as to why they're not engaged; Also probably contact parents a little more because sometimes they might have insight Did not participate in Focus Group Interview Henry's Field Notes Encourager of active student participation- Modeler of examples and proper behavior-gives examples; raises her hand Time manager for flow of instruction-sufficient time, extra time, about a second Time manager-automatic timer; she pauses and gives students time Facilitator-have questions posted; students work together on questions Reviewer-re-caps; re-reads; reviews; Allows for different forms of student participation; Participates in the learning process with students; Monitors and checks for students' reading comprehension Slade "I do allow for some creativity; I allow for student input." "…, when they have an input in the assignment, they do better." "I like having kids do things,…I like to have projects…." …they like doing projects because it gives them an opportunity to show more of themselves …if you do the project with them, or you have a project that you can show them |

		how the completion…will be
		• just keep adding things…, as technology changes, you have to change with the styles, but allow the kids to use the technology
		• ...let the kids have input on some of the assignments
		Focus Group 3
		• When I give out an assignment,…, I would have done the assignment first
		Slade's Field Notes
		• Provider-gives help or assistance to students as needed; gives clear directions
		• Mobile teacher-circulates to tables around the room; goes to a female student
		• Active participant-follows along in the text with students
		• Monitor-checks for comprehension of reading/vocabulary
		• Provider-help with vocabulary; a real life example
		• Modeler of reading for students
		• Provides assistance
		• Conferences with a student;
		• Conferences with ESP teacher
		• Assists readers with text's vocabulary
		• Assists ESP teacher during his reading
		Seay
		• A lot of times incorporating technology because this is a digital world in which they live;
		• Also, doing on the spot research; they usually like that also
		• I think teachers should remain involved with the research, stay abreast of new techniques, or new strategies, new methodologies as they relate to education;
		• …you can always benefit from dialoguing with other teachers

		• "I think I would incorporate more collaborative assignments to allow students to work together more to create for me,…allow students to be a little bit more creative and work together,...." Focus Group 3 • Teachers should embrace technology as an instructional tool; students are digital natives born in a world of technology, and they know technology Lake's Field Notes • Director-gives specific instructions; repeats directions; instructs them on what to do with completed work • Provider- gives students paper; a correction to the definition; logical reasoning about failure to complete work • Selective-distant instructor- does not circulate around the room • Provider- reminders, connections, and explanations • Summarizer- conducts oral review; summarizes the text and a passage • Passive- not commanded students' attention; • Conferences with students • helps a student • demonstrates to a student • Participates with students during instruction • Guides instruction • Interacts with a few students in isolation

NOTE: Interview question number eight was considered an outlier in the evaluation of student engagement because the question specifically addresses student engagement on a school-wide level versus engagement in an English classroom. In addition, interview question number ten was considered an outlier in the evaluation of student engagement because the question addresses a teacher's personal assessment of his or her performance in using strategies to engage students.

APPENDIX H

Sample of Thematic Coding Process

First Cycle Coding of Individual Interviews: Question One		Second Cycle Coding of Comparative Interviews	First Cycle Coding of Focus Group Interview	Second Cycle Coding of Focus Group Interview	Thematic Coding Analysis by Interview Questions
Define student engage-ment.

Teacher: Davis | Fully participate and understand Actively participating Giving me feedback "…that I can do better to help you understand…." Giving me signals that you understand Full, active participation Giving teacher feedback and signals understanding | 1. Define student engagement.

Teacher: Slade

Student participation

Students giving feedback

Student interaction/collaboration

Teacher: Davis

Fully participate and understand

Giving me feedback

Teacher: Seay

Student interest in learning

Student participation in learning

Student desire or motivation to | Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms.

Teacher: Slade

Where they're working in group work; all students are working on the same task, trying to achieve the same goal; may work on different levels for the differentiation; they all know what they're doing, what the outcome of the project or assignment is; teachers walking around | Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms

Major Themes/Categories:

Working; fully immersed

Knowing the task; understanding the task

Discuss an instructional strategy that | Theme One: Active Student Participation

1. Define student engagement.

2. Tell the story of a time in which students were engaged in your class.

3. Describe your picture of an engaged student.

4. Describe what student engagement looks like in today's high school English classrooms.

Theme Two: Student Connections

1. Why do you think these students were engaged?
2. Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage? |
| Teacher: Drew

Students being involved in any particular learning activity that the teacher…is involved with

Being actively involved in, have some goal in mind, or some point that they're trying to reach

Students being actively involved | | | | | |

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Students have some goal in mind	learn/participate	Teacher: Davis	you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students.	3. How important is the use of technology for student engagement in the high school English classroom?
	Learning is relevant to students' interests, backgrounds, lives	Where students are fully immersed in a task; they understand what the task is; majority of the class is listening; they're open-minded; they're observant	Major Themes/Categories:	4. What role do you think students' personal backgrounds, in such case as education, family, home, and other outside influences; what role do you think students' personal backgrounds and personal experiences play in shaping their level of engagement?
Teacher: Henry				
All of the students are "actively" involved in the lesson and the assignment	Teacher: Jeffreys		Offering "variety" is evident from these two contrasting responses; activities with a degree of challenge	
Actively involved in lesson/assignment	Extends/applies learning outside the classroom			
Teacher: Jeffreys	Imaginative approaches to learning	Discuss an instructional strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students.		
The student is interested in pursuing the material on their own outside of class	Teacher: Drew			Theme Three: Technology as an Instructional Tool
You can spark a wonder for an imaginative approach to the material	Students being actively involved	Teacher: Davis		
They want to follow up with in their own way	Students have some goal in mind	"Agree and Disagree"; helped my kids with their writing; I'll come up with different themes that may be present in it (a topic or a story); go to the left if		1. What specific strategies did (do) you use to foster engagement?
Extends/applies learning outside the classroom Imaginative approaches to learning	Teacher: Henry			2. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be
Teacher: Seay	Actively involved in lesson/assignment		What is the most important thing that secondary	
Anything that prompts a student to become "interested" in or to participate in their own learning process	2. Tell the story of a time in which students			

It (student engagement) may come as a motivator or just something that makes it relevant to them Anything that makes a student "want" to participate in their own learning Student interest in learning Student participation in learning Student desire or motivation to learn/participate Learning is relevant to students' interests, backgrounds, lives Teacher: Slade Students participating in the assignment They're giving feedback to what we're doing Students are participating with each other Students are working together Student participation Students giving feedback Student interaction/collaboration	were engaged in your class. Teacher: Slade Where they're working in group work; all students are working on the same task, trying to achieve the same goal; Teacher: Davis Most engaged when they can relate to something They had the opportunity …decide which format they were going to use Where students are fully immersed in a task; majority of the class is listening; Teacher:	you agree; go to the right if you disagree; I put numbers in the bag and put them in groups, pull the numbers out of the bag; use evidence to support your point; have those counterpoints in their head Teacher: Drew Something that's in line with a sponge activities; something that's very interesting that's gonna capture their attention; it speaks to the particular standards that they're working on; a variety of	English teachers can do to improve student engagement? Major Themes/Categories: Participants vary in opinion or perception about what English teachers can do to improve student engagement. The responses range from the following activities: completing assignments before students attempt them, establishing a positive learning environment, using technology during instruction, and having students write freely or write in exposition mode. How important is the use of technology for student	doing to increase student engagement? 3. What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement? 4. Discuss an instructional strategy that you think all secondary English teachers should use to engage their students. 5. What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve student engagement? Theme Four: Student Characteristics 1. Describe your picture of an engaged student. 2. Are there some students who seem to be more likely to engage? Theme Five: Teacher Engagement

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	Seay	things, something that's going to keep, get them excited, compete against each other	engagement in the high school English classroom?	1. What specific strategies did (do) you use to foster engagement?
	Reading literature the teacher likes/knows well		Major Themes/Categories:	2. What sorts of things do you believe teachers like yourself should be doing to increase student engagement?
	Teacher excitement as a catalyst	What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve student engagement?	One participant stated that technology can be used to engage students in reading and in writing; another participant said that technology will prepare students for the future.	3. What kind of changes might you make in your teaching practice to increase engagement?
	Making literature relevant to students' lives			4. What is the most important thing that secondary English teachers can do to improve student engagement?
	Helping (when) students connect literature to life			
	Teacher: Jeffreys	Teacher: Slade		
	Connection to literature/characters on a personal level, in a personal way	When I give out an assignment, …, I would have done the assignment first		
	Students' imagination is stimulated/captured	Teacher: Davis		
	Teacher: Drew	Establish a positive learning environment so that everyone would be encouraged		
	On a daily basis			

	many different activities	to become engaged and to participate		
	Certain goals and objectives we cover state-mandated activities	Teacher: Seay		
	Preparation for standardized tests	Teachers should embrace technology as an instructional tool; students are digital natives born in a world of technology, and they know technology		
	Teacher: Henry			
	Working on RAFT project	Teacher: Jeffreys		
	Collaborative/flexible grouping	It's pretty important to have a book in their hand, where you can look at specific paragraphs …and then go over it again; then as much as possible, to write papers almost immediately upon finishing a book or a short		
	Differentiated roles/activities			
	Multiple intelligences used			

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		story…let that,…be an open assignment; then give them more like expository writing because that's so much of what secondary or college education is really focused on		