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### The Teacher's Role in Student Engagement

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# THE TEACHER'S ROLE IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

By  
Anita Grove

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2019

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Anita Grove under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **Abstract**

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This research study examines teacher expectations and perceptions and provides an understanding of the teacher's role in student engagement. A wide array of factors—both within and beyond the classroom—can influence student engagement. To begin the process of improving student engagement, it is essential for educators to reflect on the elements that contribute to student engagement. Research questions addressed associations between the variables of teacher expectations, teacher perceptions, and student engagement measured by a Likert Item Teacher Survey; Teacher Expectations, Perceptions and Instructional Practices Questionnaire; and a Student Engagement Observation Tool. The results indicate there is a need for resources and strategies to engage and motivate students. Professional development that explores the concept of learning theories is recommended to provide the teachers with the knowledge and information needed to design instruction that engages students. It is necessary for teachers to adjust instructional practices and expectations so all students can learn. It is essential for teachers to create the right classroom culture for learning by establishing routines, getting to know their students, having high expectations for all their students, and challenging their students to take risks (Goss, Sonnemann, & Griffiths, 2017).

The researcher was able to conclude that the ability to engage and motivate students comprises more than knowledge of the subject matter; teachers should possess affective characteristics that improve their ability to design instruction that engages students.

*Keywords:* teacher perceptions, teacher expectations, student engagement

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

Student engagement consists of many elements that may have an impact on student performance, such as motivation, social engagement, self-efficacy, and teacher expectations, and perceptions. Faced with students who appear to lack motivation, interest, and personal investment in their learning causes one to ponder how teacher expectations and perceptions impact student engagement. It is common for educators to misplace the blame for underperforming students. Often, students are accused of lacking engagement and not working hard enough (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). This study provided a better understanding of teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement. Studies by Robert J. Marzano have shown an association between student engagement and student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2004). Engagement is a central aspect of effective teaching. If students are not engaged, there is little chance they will learn from the lessons in class (Marzano, Pickering, & Heflebower, 2010).

Students who show a lack of engagement have inconsistent attendance, poor achievement, behavioral issues including aggression, and violence (Christenson, Reshly, & Wylie, 2012). Students who are not engaged also exhibit behaviors that include disrupting classes, failing to complete assignments, and dropping out of school. Research has shown that a student drops out of school every 9 seconds (Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004). African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans have higher dropout rates than that of their White cohorts. One variable that is associated with the dropout rate is a lack of engagement (Hoff, Olson, & Peterson, 2015). Students who lack engagement also show no commitment to mastery of the curriculum, while engaged students take the time to invest in their learning.

Engaged students take pride in earning good grades, understanding the material that is presented in class, and incorporating it into their daily lives (Newmann, 1992). To optimize learning, students must be engaged in the learning process. Active engagement in academic tasks is the kind of engagement that optimizes task performance—actively doing the work at a nonsuperficial level and making strides toward task accomplishment (Greenwood et al., 1987).

Teacher expectations and perceptions have been found to influence student engagement. Research confirms that teacher expectations influence student behavior, engagement, and achievement. Brophy (1982) asserted that teacher expectations made a positive or negative difference to student achievement of 5% and argued that the accumulation of such an effect over time could have a noticeable influence on student achievement.

Good and Brophy (1984) expressed that self-fulfilling prophecies are a form of teacher expectation effects, which involves changes in student behavior. Sustaining expectations refers to situations in which teachers fail to recognize student potential and for this reason do not respond in a way to encourage some students to fulfill their potential. “Self-fulfilling expectations bring about change in student performance, whereas sustaining expectations prevent change” (Good & Brophy, 1984, p. 93).

Bernhardt (2004) defined perception as “a view, judgment, or appraisal formed in mind about a particular matter” (p. 54) as well as “a belief stronger than impression and less strong than positive knowledge” (p. 54). When thinking of teacher perception, Bernhardt concluded that “to change student behaviors and perceptions, teacher perceptions must change, which requires teacher behavior to change” (p. 56).

There is cause for concern when the expectations and perceptions of teachers adversely impact student engagement (Rubie-Davies, 2007).

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problem is the lack of student engagement placing students at risk of poor academic performance. Engagement is vital to improve student chances for success. Although motivation and engagement are intrinsic to the student, a significant portion of student engagement lies with the teacher (Hill & Rowe, 1996).

The Glossary of Education Reform defined student engagement as “the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education” (Great Schools Partnership, 2016, p. 1). Engaged students create, evaluate, analyze, apply, understand, and remember (Schlechty, 2011). Student engagement is centered on the belief that learning improves with student engagement and learning suffers when students are otherwise not engaged (Great Schools Partnership, 2016). A longitudinal study by Finn and Rock (1997) found that students who displayed engagement characteristics of coming to class, being prepared, and making an effort on school assignments were more likely to be academically successful.

To improve student achievement, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; U.S. Department of Education, 2015) amended No Child Left Behind with different accountability standards and indicators that include measures such as student engagement. Other than student assessment results, proficiency levels, and graduation rates, the law says states are required to include an additional indicator of student success in its accountability method. ESSA contains provisions that will help in schools where students are making unsatisfactory progress. It also provides that all students in America be taught to academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

This research analyzed the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students.

### **The Context of the Problem**

This research focused on a high school located in an area that has grown from a small, rural county supported by textiles and tobacco farms to one of North Carolina's emerging counties. The district spends \$8,726 per pupil. The district has 16 students for every full-time equivalent teacher, with the North Carolina state average being 15 students per full-time equivalent teacher. The student population of 1,972 is 11% Native American, 1% Asian, 45% African American, 14% Hispanic, 5% 2 or more races, and 24% White. The school has a 50% average pass rating compared to the North Carolina average of 54.5% (Access public-schools.startclass.com, n.d.).

The 2016-2017 performance data (Appendix A) for this high school show that the percentage of students who pass the North Carolina End-of-Course (EOC) tests across all subjects is less than 50%. The performance data describe student performance in various tested subject areas. Student performance falls into one of five levels of achievement. Student performance identified as levels 1 and 2 are below grade level. Level 3 is at grade level. Levels 4 and 5 indicate career and college readiness. Students scoring at Level 3 are considered proficient for the course but may still need some help in the next grade. Students scoring level 4 and 5 are ready for the next grade level and are also on a path to graduate being college and career ready (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2016-2017).

Shown in Table 1 is the percentage of students taking the EOC test in English II, Math 1, and biology who met level 3 performance standards.

Table 1

*Level 3 Student Performance on the North Carolina EOC Tests*

Level 3	School	District	State
English II	10.3%	10.3%	10.6%
Math I	14.2%	17.1%	10.3%
Biology	9.2%	10.3%	8.7%

Table 1 shows that the school involved in this research had lower proficiency than the district on the 2016-2017 EOG tests in Math I and biology. In English II, the students are performing equally with the district. Approximately 44% of the students are performing at or above grade level, and 56% are performing below grade level.

Shown in Table 2 is the percentage of students taking the EOC test in English II, Math 1, and biology who met level 4 performance standards.

Table 2

*Level 4 Student Performance on the North Carolina EOC Tests*

Level 4	School	District	State
English II	34.5%	37.8%	44.8%
Math I	48.4%	48.8%	38.1%
Biology	25.8%	28.7%	30.7%

Level 4 performance indicates the percentage of students who are considered college and career ready, performing at or above grade level with a solid command of knowledge and skills. The school had lower proficiency than the district on the 2016-2017 EOG tests in English II, Math I, and biology. The school and the district proficiencies in Math I are higher than the state proficiency by more than 10%. Proficiency appears to be improving in Math I at this school.

Students performing at level 5 are performing at or above grade level and also meet

North Carolina Standards for College-and Career-Readiness. Biology is the only course with data presented at this level.

With the most significant percentage of students performing at levels 1 and 4, the student performance data indicate a significant divide in student achievement. The North Carolina schools report card data also indicate that 69.5% of students at this school are economically disadvantaged compared to 49.2% per students across the state. The percentage of students graduating in 4 years at this school is 80%. These struggling students provide challenges to teachers as they strive to close achievement gaps.

Research supports the concept that the expectations of teachers affect the achievement level of students (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006). It is important to understand how teacher expectations of engagement impact instruction, because teacher expectations may influence subsequent teacher behavior and student performance (Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Lavoie & Adams, 1973). It is often claimed that teachers use information related to a host of individual student characteristics in the formation of their expectations (Bandura, 1997; Keogh, 2000; Muller, Katz, & Dance, 1999). These include gender, ethnicity, social class, stereotypes, diagnostic labels, physical attractiveness, language style, the age of the student, personality, social skills, the relationship between teacher and student background, names, other siblings, and one parent background (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). Students who already have risk factors connected with academic failure are the least likely to receive the type of schooling that encourages engagement (Goodwin, 2000). Other than student abilities and background, not much is known about other factors that shape teacher expectations of engagement and academic performance (Hecht & Greenfield, 2002; Hughes et al., 2005; Rubie-Davies, 2010).

Subgroup performance data obtained from the school's School Improvement Plan are



provided in Table 3. The data are a compilation of ACT reading and math results for the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students who took the ACT. There are gaps in achievement among the different subgroups of students at every level. The long-term goal of the school is to require each subgroup to increase academic performance to attain improvement for all students; to educate every child to perform at or above proficiency.

Table 3

*Subgroup Performance on ACT Reading and Math*

Subgroup Targets		2014- 2015 Baseline	2015-2016 Performance	2016-2017 Performance	2017-2018 Target Goal
Total		n=326	n=368	n=370	n=421 Based on 10% gains
	Reading	45%	49%	47%	54%
	Math	49%	58%	67%	70%
Native American		n=36	n=40	n=41	n=46
	Reading	40%	25%	30%	30%
	Math	37%	44%	58%	60%
Asian		n=3	n=4	n=4	n=4
	Reading	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Math	80%	N/A	N/A	N/A
African American		n=147	n=166	n=166	n=189
	Reading	39%	47%	38%	52%
	Math	46%	49%	62%	65%
Hispanic		n=46	n=52	n=52	n=60
	Reading	37%	42%	49%	53%
	Math	44%	70%	79%	83%
2 or More		n=16	n=18	n=18	n=21
	Reading	46%	70%	51%	77%
	Math	59%	67%	53%	74%
White		n=78	n=88	n=89	n=101
	Reading	59%	64%	73%	77%
	Math	61%	70%	75%	78%

It is the teacher's responsibility to engage the students, as opposed to the teacher expecting students to come to class naturally and automatically engaged (Jones, 2008). The lack of engagement has an impact on the lives of young people beyond the compulsory education. Today's global economy is fast-changing and requires students entering the workforce to be able to synthesize, analyze information, and solve problems (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). There are many instances in which the students who lack engagement in school become school

dropouts, which frequently defines a negative life's course for students dropping out of school. Students who drop out have a greater risk of unemployment, low wages, social exclusion, unhealthy behaviors, and crime. As these students go on to begin families, their ability to support their families becomes a struggle (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015). Although many students who drop out do overcome these obstacles, engagement remains a significant issue for the intergenerational persistence of being disadvantaged. Conceivably, this is why student engagement is viewed as an antidote to student lack of motivation and academic achievement (Hancock & Zubrick, 2015).

Student engagement has been found to be one of the most robust predictors of student achievement and behavior in school, a conclusion which holds regardless of whether students come from families that are relatively advantaged or disadvantaged economically or socially. (Klem & Connell, 2004, p. 5)

Researchers have determined that student engagement is a crucial link between active student learning and student achievement (Finn & Rock, 1997; Fredricks et al., 2004). By examining teacher expectations of engagement, schools may be able to increase achievement. Educators are challenged to create a setting in which students are excited, enjoy learning, and believe in the value of the information and skills they are taught.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Research suggests that students who demonstrate engagement behaviors have higher academic achievement, lowered risk of misbehavior and criminal activity, and reduced risk of dropping out (Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012). The National Research Council's (2004) Committee on Increasing High School Students' Engagement and Motivation to Learn clarified that "research on motivation and engagement is essential to understanding some of the most

fundamental and vexing challenges of school reform” (p. 14). Students who are engaged have increased college and career opportunities. Research also demonstrates that caring and supportive educators also contribute to higher levels of student engagement (Hill & Rowe, 1996). The purpose of this research was to analyze and provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students.

### **Research Questions**

The focus questions for this research were

1. How do teacher perceptions of student engagement impact instruction?
2. What instructional practices lead to student engagement?

The researcher used a variety of instruments, including a survey, questionnaire, and observations, to measure the variables in this research. These measures provided a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students.

### **The Significance of the Research**

This research is significant because improving student engagement increases student achievement. The number one priority of the district and the school at the center of this research is that every student graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education, work, and citizenship. The suggestion that engagement behaviors can be used to enhance educational achievement promises a significant payoff for students at risk of school failure. Engagement behaviors are about what educators can do to improve practices that allow for the possibility of raising the achievement of students experiencing difficulties (Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

One of the primary roles of an educator is to facilitate learning. If learning is to take place, students must pay attention and engage in the task at hand. When students are genuinely

engaged in meaningful, quality work, the likelihood for them to learn something and remember what was learned increases (Hancock & Betts, 2002). Research has shown that caring teachers are contributors to higher levels of student engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2004).

Marzano et al. (2004) identified student engagement as the continuous involvement of students in learning. Student engagement was described as a cyclical process, planned and facilitated by the teacher, in which students move between periods of action and reflection. Marzano's assertion illustrates the significant relationship the teacher plays in engaging students. This research focus relied on the understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. Student engagement is active learning; and if students are not actively engaged in their learning, all of the testing, data analysis, and teacher meetings in the world will not motivate students to learn (Kidwell, 2010).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Many variables impact student engagement: motivation, self-efficacy, cognition, emotion, and behavior. Studies have also revealed connections between “noncognitive factors” (e.g., motivation, interest, curiosity, responsibility, attitude,) and “cognitive” results (e.g., improved academic performance, skill acquisition; Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Regarded as one of the most influential psychologists on the theory of cognitive development, Jean Piaget envisioned knowledge based on units of linked mental representations of the world. These units of knowledge are used to organize past experiences and serve as a basis for understanding new ones (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Students experience various levels of engagement. Schlechty (2011) stated that different types of effort and learning produce a difference in the degree of response. Well-managed classrooms do not necessarily produce the best results. Higher academic success correlates with

higher levels of student engagement (Schlechty, 2011). Research has proved that the more time students spend engaged during instruction, the more they learn (Gettinger & Ball, 2007).

Even though there is considerable research on the impact of engagement on student achievement, research on teacher variables affecting engagement is minimal. Having minimal research on teacher variables affecting engagement is surprising when most consider that teachers are the most significant people in schools for improving student engagement and achievement (Brandt, 1998; Hill & Crevola, 1999; Louden et al., 2005). Despite increasing interest in student engagement, there is no clear understanding of the construct. Depending on the researcher, engagement can be defined differently and include many different variables. In actuality, there has been much confusion regarding its definition and measurement (Briggs, 2015). Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, and Wellborn (2009) stated, “There is, of course, no single correct definition of engagement” (p. 224). To help conceptualize the framework for this research, the constructs of behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement will be used to articulate an understanding of student engagement.

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** The examination of student engagement presents several challenges and deficiencies. One deficiency is whether or not teachers will be honest about misdiagnosis of student potential to learn and low expectations, and will they be willing to change? Another deficiency is the discrepancy and lack of consensus regarding how student engagement is measured. In addition to these deficiencies is that engagement places great emphasis on self-efficacy and student persistence to learn (Bandura, 1977). In the majority of the studies on student engagement, the behavior is merely observed by researchers in the classroom and rated using a figure scale. In other studies, researchers use existing definitions of the variable by measuring attendance versus absenteeism (Heppen & Therriault, 2008) or

involvement in school activities (Klare, 2008). These studies have also concluded that students who lack engagement in school are linked to the student's potential future in crime, drug, and alcohol use. One report listed no relationship between engagement behavior and learning (Sabourin, Rowe, Mott, & Lester, 2009).

There should be a measure of cognitive engagement that produces reliable scores and demonstrates the validity of the implications made from those scores to make a valid conclusion of student levels of cognitive engagement on different tasks. A large number of the instruments used to measure cognitive engagement is focused on a specific task and cannot be used across a variety of disciplines. Cognitive engagement can change across contexts (Smiley, Madison, & Anderson, 2011).

Behavioral measures often place conduct, persistence, and participation into a single scale, which can be problematic because conduct represents a different element of behavior than participation and persistence. Also, conduct and behavior are judged by teachers and other adults allowing true engagement to get mixed up with teacher expectations of "good" students (Fredricks et al., 2004).

### **Definition of Terms**

**Analyzing.** Breaking information down into elements (Schlechty, 2011).

**Applying.** Using strategies, concepts, principles, and theories (Schlechty, 2011).

**Attention.** A condition of readiness involving a selective focusing of consciousness and receptivity (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

**Behavioral engagement.** Engaged behavior we can infer through observation; student participation, effort, attention, compliance, and persistence during learning (Davis, Summers, & Miller, 2012).

**Cognitive engagement.** “Minds-on”; using different strategies for learning that increase understanding (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

**Creating.** Putting together ideas or elements to develop an original idea or engage in creative writing (Schlechty, 2011).

**Curiosity.** Interest that leads to inquiry, the desire to know (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

**Disengaged.** The act or process of withdrawing from involvement in an activity or situation.

**Dropout.** Youth 16- to 24-year-old who is not enrolled in school and has not earned a high school credential (either a diploma or an equivalency credential such as a GED certificate (Snyder & Brey, 2019).

**Emotional engagement.** Emotional engagement involves interest, boredom, happiness, anxiety, and other affective states that affect learner involvement with learning or their sustained effort to learn (Gardner & Strayer, 2017).

**Engaged.** To hold the attention of, induce to participate.

**Evaluating.** Judging the value of ideas, materials, and methods through the development and application of standards and criteria (Schlechty, 2011).

**Interest.** A feeling that accompanies or causes special attention to something, wanting to know or learn about something or someone.

**Motivation.** The act or process of giving someone a reason for doing something. The condition of being eager to act or work.

**Optimism.** Positive thinking. A feeling or belief that good things will happen in the future.

**Passion.** A strong liking or desire for or devotion to some activity, object, or concept.



**Remembering.** Recalling and recognizing given information (Schlechty, 2011).

**Schemas.** A mental codification of experience that includes a particular organized way of perceiving cognitively and responding to a complex situation or set of stimuli (Merriam-Webster, 2017).

**Self-efficacy.** Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as a belief in one's ability to succeed or accomplish a task. Self-efficacy can play a significant role in how one approaches goals, tasks, and challenges.

**Student engagement.** “Student engagement represents the capacity and inclination for students to take ownership of their past, present, and future educational experiences by enlisting their cognitive, behavioral, and emotional investment in learning” (Parsi, 2015, p. 1).

**Understanding.** Inferring, exemplifying, classifying, and comparing (Schlechty, 2011).

**Intrinsic motivation.** Internal motivation, doing a task out of interest and enjoyment.

**Extrinsic motivation.** External motivation such as money or grades.

## Summary

A requirement for meaningful learning in the classroom is that students be engaged in their learning. Given the primary purpose of this research, to provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students, the results of this research provided significant feedback to educators implementing changes to increase academic rigor. For educators to begin this process of improving student engagement and performance, they must reflect on their perceptions and expectations and the elements that contribute to student engagement (Jones, 2008).

A major role of an educator is to facilitate learning in the classroom. Achievement can be examined through assessments, test scores, and other quantifiable measures. Student

engagement, however, depends heavily on interaction, collaboration, and perception (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006).

Studies have shown the association between student engagement and student achievement. Engagement is used to describe internal behaviors such as an effort to learn and the quality of understanding. There is value in this study because a closer look at the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students may make the difference in teachers increasing the chances of their students' academic success.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Engagement is a multifaceted construct that has many variables that can influence student achievement. Many of those variables fall under one of three components of engagement. Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) described engagement as having three components, which include behavioral, cognitive, and motivational. Comparable to Fredricks et al. (2004) and Jimerson, Campos, and Greif (2003), Linnenbrink and Pintrich described behavioral engagement as observable behavior that can easily be seen, such as completing class assignments and class participation. Cognitive engagement is defined as paying attention and more profound thinking. Motivational engagement as defined by Linnenbrink and Pintrich is similar to emotional engagement as defined by Fredricks et al.

Engagement is integrally related to effort. The success of our country depends on citizens who can think, reason, reflect, create, and solve problems. It is not enough to train students to memorize material and to mark answers on a test (Schlechty, 2011). The goal is for long-term retention which requires a willingness to persist when challenged by a task. Persistence, evaluation, and creation require a concentrated effort over a period, and memorization requires only sporadic investments of effort. For this reason, critical thinking, problem-solving, synthesizing, and evaluating are all associated with cognitive skills that develop in the context of engagement (Schlechty, 2011).

Engaging in an activity for the enjoyment, challenge, interest, or natural fulfillment of curiosity is intrinsic motivation (Barry & King, 1998). Research indicates that intrinsic motivation can be enhanced using appropriate strategies and specific educational materials to increase student learning and performance. Cordova and Lepper (1996) suggested four methods

for enhancing intrinsic motivation: challenge, curiosity, control, and fantasy. Challenge involves finding a balance between learner competence and the difficulty of the goals. Goals attained too easily do not encourage skill development. Curiosity can be nurtured by presenting a conflict with prior knowledge or beliefs that prompt students to seek information that will help resolve the discrepancy. Control involves giving the learners responsibility to make meaningful choices in the learning process. Fantasy created in the design of simulations and games that involve fantasy can increase intrinsic motivation. Extrinsically motivated students perform to receive something such as candy or money. The effectiveness of extrinsic motivators varies depending on other factors such as self-efficacy and control. Research has shown that if extrinsic incentives are introduced, intrinsic motivation will decrease over time (Cordova & Lepper, 1996).

The term student engagement continues to ping in the minds of those who want students to get the most out of their education. Research on student engagement has established its link to student success. Perhaps an increased understanding of the role that intellectual, emotional, behavioral, physical, and social factors play in the learning process can make a difference in the strategies that educators use to engage students (Great Schools Partnership, 2016).

Engagement is essential to learning, and it becomes crucial as students approach adulthood. The connection begins by building on what students already know and believe, what they care about now, and what they hope for in their futures. Improving meaningful learning experiences depends on the ability of educators to engage the imaginations of students, to involve them in new realms of knowledge. Increasing student engagement improves academic achievement, attendance, attention, and completion of school work (National Research Council, 2004).

For educators to begin this process of improving student engagement and performance,

they must reflect on the elements that contribute to student engagement: student beliefs and values, student motivation and feelings, and student habits and skills (Jones, 2008).

Students who are engaged show sustained behavioral involvement in learning activities accompanied by a positive emotional tone. They select tasks at the border of their competencies, initiate action when given the opportunity, and exert intense effort and concentration in the implementation of learning tasks. These students show positive emotions during the ongoing action, including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest (Skinner & Belmont, 1993, p. 572).

Increasing student engagement while connecting with them on an emotional level is vital to student success. When educators create a nurturing, supportive environment, it helps every student feel confident in their abilities and empowered to take ownership of their learning. Marzano et al. (2010) asserted that to foster student engagement, classroom instruction decisions should be based on four typical questions: How do I feel? Am I interested? Is this important? Can I do this? The first two questions focus on the attention of the student, while the last two questions gauge the engagement of student interest in the topic. The attention questions deal with whether or not information from the outside world gets into working memory. If the information presented is not considered interesting, the working memory will not process it. According to Marzano et al. (2010), engagement is defined by importance; if the information is not deemed important, the working memory will not maintain it for long. “If students do not believe they can perform the tasks, the brain will eventually reject it” (Marzano et al., 2010, p. 19).

Over the last 20 years, students have changed; perhaps as a result of technology, they appear to have “different” goals and learning preferences than students in the past. Educators

hope students will become successful learners; however, experiences tell them students are not engaged and appear not to be so for a variety of reasons: not interested, bored, or the lack of a challenge. Several types of engagement exist – behavioral, cognitive, and emotional, to name a few (Taylor & Parsons, 2011).

Many students are considered “digital natives,” accustomed to communicating and finding information online. Parents and teachers can verify that students are attached to their cell phones and other technology devices. Despite the benefits, technology has introduced an increased sense of distraction and information overload. Educators must play a role in raising student awareness of how they can use this technology wisely. We must master technology, rather than allow it to master us (Strang, 2013). Jensen (2009) told us that “engaging instruction is any strategy that gets students to participate emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally” (p. 134).

Bandura (1994) believed that a person's cognition, environment, and behavior play essential roles in learning new knowledge and skills. The idea of self-efficacy is central to Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of observational learning, social experience, and reciprocal determinism. Self-efficacy beliefs influence our effort, persistence, and the cognitive resources we activate in our attempts to interact with the world around us. Research has reliably shown that self-efficacy is correlated with measures of meaningful cognitive engagement. Self-efficacy is “the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1994, p. 71); in other words, a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in any situation. Bandura (1994) described these beliefs as determinants of how people think, behave, and feel. Bandura (1994) and others have found that an individual's self-efficacy plays a significant role in how

goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. In this conceptual system, expectations of personal mastery affect both initiation and persistence. The strength of people beliefs in their effectiveness is likely to affect whether they will even try to deal with a given situation. Perceived self-efficacy influences choice. People fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills and, on the other hand, get involved in activities and behave unquestionably when they judge themselves capable of handling situations they had otherwise deemed to be intimidating (Bandura, 1977).

In 2015, Gallup surveyed nearly a million U.S. students; the results indicate that schools need to build supports to keep students invested in their education. The study found that only half of adolescents feel engaged in school, and a fifth are actively disengaged. The survey revealed that a student's level of engagement consistently decreases as the student gets older (Brenneman, 2016). The degree of interest and desire to engage in learning is influenced by teachers, administrators, and the school environment. Younger children appear to be propelled by curiosity, driven by a need to explore, interact with, and make sense of their environment. Middle and high school students fail to invest in the experience of learning; they are less likely to engage in activities in which they are not sure they will be successful. Their passion for learning seems to shrink. A high number of students are physically present in the classroom but mentally absent (Lumsden, 1994). A student who shows up on time for school and listens respectfully might appear fully engaged, but the student's emotional and cognitive involvement with the instruction may indicate students are not engaged. Understanding student attitudes and beliefs about learning and what facilitates learning can assist educators in increasing student engagement. Education is a necessary lifeline, it prepares students for the demands of work and lessens the risks of poverty and other negative societal issues (Jacob & Ludwig, 2009).

Educators everywhere are tasked with preparing children to participate in our democracy as productive, law-abiding citizens. Student engagement is a fundamental component essential to the process of learning and paramount to the successful academic advancement and achievement of students (National Research Council, 2004).

### **Behavioral Engagement**

Behavioral engagement can be a reliable predictor of school achievement. Behaviors such as attendance and completing assignments on time directly impact student grades. Earlier research identified a positive relationship between behavioral engagement and achievement (Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994; Marks, 2000) and a negative relationship between behavioral engagement and discipline problems (Finn, Pannozzo, & Voelkl, 1995) and dropping out (Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, & Usinger, 1995). Additionally, Finn (1993) found a strong positive relationship between participation and school achievement, including the fact that the resulting positive impact was greater when the student engaged in a high degree of participation rather than a more moderate degree of participation.

Behavioral engagement comprises students' behavioral and emotional dispositions to school. Behavioral engagement is easier to recognize compared to cognitive and emotional engagement because behavioral patterns can be defined and observed. Behavioral events can be interpreted and recorded (Fredricks et al., 2004).

“Behavioral patterns in the early years can persist and have long-term behavioral consequences” (Fredricks, 2013, p. 42). A 25-year study, The Beginning School Study, showed that teacher behavioral ratings in the first grade were related to gains in achievement scores and the decision to drop out of high school (Fredricks, 2013). Behavioral engagement in learning in the early years of a student's education leads to higher identification with school. Worries about



dropout rates have led to a focus on identifying the factors that lead students to no longer engage in school. Behavioral school engagement is positively related to academic achievement and school retention (Fredricks et al., 2004).

There are three definitions of behavioral engagement that stand out. One definition involves positive behavior, such as following the rules, and the absence of disruptive behaviors such as skipping. A second definition reflects involvement in learning which includes behaviors such as effort, persistence, concentration, and attention. The third definition involves participation in school-related activities (Fredricks et al., 2004). In the analysis of Hoff et al. (2015), behavioral engagement is a reliable predictor of a student's educational outcomes.

**Effort.** Student engagement represents the effort students commit to educational activities (Kuh, 2001). The basic understanding of student engagement is that student activity, involvement, and effort in their learning are related to their academic achievement. Because learning requires committed effort by each student, student engagement is critical (Newmann, 1989). Engagement might be a cause for differences in the effort that we observe between students. Krause and Coates (2008) mentioned that student engagement is the quality of effort students devote to educational activities that contribute to desirable educational outcomes. In other words, the more students spend quality time to study a subject, the more they will know about it. In the same way, the more students interact academically with teachers, the deeper they tend to understand what they are learning (Kuh, 2009). According to Marzano et al. (2004), effort can serve as a powerful motivational tool that students can apply to any situation, and teachers can help students make the connection between effort and achievement.

As individuals, we tend to invest our most precious resources into those areas we consider most important to us. For many students, education has never been a priority for them.

A large number of these students rarely think, observe, interact, or experience life where education and a quest for knowledge are valued (Bland, 2017). How do we raise awareness about the value of education so that students will make the investments of time, energy, passion, and the effort necessary for academic achievement?

On the other hand, research by Schunk (1991) concluded learners who attribute success to effort and who perceive the ability to be changeable and controllable are likely to deal with failure.

**Curiosity.** Curiosity makes learning effective and enjoyable. Curious students ask questions and actively seek out answers. Without curiosity, Sir Isaac Newton would have never formulated the laws of physics; and Alexander Fleming probably would not have discovered penicillin (Stenger, 2014). Research has shown that curiosity is as important as intelligence in determining how well students do in school. Gruber, Gelman, and Ranganath (2014) explained that curiosity puts the brain in a state that allows it to learn and retain any type information, like a vortex that sucks in what you are motivated to learn and also everything around it.

**Student attendance.** Research supports the undisputable link between attendance and student achievement (Attendance Works, 2017; Leonard, 2017; Roderick et al., 1997). Emergencies, illness, family vacation, and court appearances may keep children out of school from time to time and are a common occurrence in North Carolina classrooms (Leonard, 2017). Excessive school absences negatively affect a child's ability to learn, grow, and eventually graduate, which may lead to unemployment and other negative outcomes as an adult. School attendance is a persistent concern in schools. Average daily attendance rates are used to determine school funding, so schools funded on the basis of average daily attendance have less resources to do the job. Students who are absent from school cannot receive instruction.

Academic achievement scores are correlated with school attendance (Gottfried, 2010).

Excessive school absence is a precursor of school dropout. Some students who are absent from school engage in behaviors that are illegal; and the negative connections to school attendance problems go on and on (Roderick et al., 1997). Schools, school districts, and states have policies regarding attendance. The policy in this district states that student attendance and participation in class are integral parts of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Through regular attendance, students develop behavior patterns essential to personal and professional success. Regular attendance is mandatory, and the State of North Carolina requires every child between the ages of seven (or younger if enrolled) and 16 to attend school. Student attendance and class participation are critical elements of the educational process and may be taken into account in assessing academic achievement (Board of Education, 2016).

**Responsibility.** Student responsibility is fundamental to have successful and meaningful learning experiences. Students should accept responsibility for their academic progress by managing their time and preparation for class. Coates (2005) summed this up in the following quote:

The concept of student engagement is based on the constructivist assumption that learning is influenced by how an individual participates in educationally purposeful activities. Learning is seen as a "joint proposition" ..., however, which also depends on institutions and staff providing students with the conditions, opportunities, and expectations to become involved. However, individual learners are ultimately the agents in discussions of engagement. (Coates, 2005, p. 26)

**Dropouts.** Dropping out of school is the last step in a lengthy process for students who lack engagement (Finn, 1989). Measuring engagement helps identify at-risk students.

Awareness that there is a connection between a lack of engagement and dropping out explains the increased interest in student engagement. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are at risk because these students are less likely to graduate, increasing their risk of economic dysfunction (Fredricks & McColskey, 2011).

The problem with the study of behavioral engagement is distinguishing the behavior, persistence, and participation. This is problematic because students who follow all the rules but do not meet the academic requirements are different from students who are disruptive but persist and complete the work (Fredricks et al., 2004). Research shows that positive behaviors, such as completing homework and complying with school rules, indicate behavioral engagement (Finn et al., 1995). Also, negative behaviors, such as truancy, fighting, getting in trouble, and interfering with peers' work, indicate a lack of behavioral engagement (Finn, 1993; Finn et al., 1995; Finn & Rock, 1997). Researchers have measured levels of engagement by asking teachers to rate student levels of participation and to utilize them to assess student behaviors (Finn et al., 1995; Lee & Anderson, 1993; Newmann, 1992; Stipek, 2002; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990).

### **Cognitive Engagement**

The research on cognitive engagement is similar to research on motivation. For instance, Brophy (1986a) examined student motivation to learn and their desire for mastery and acquisition of knowledge, which is similar to the concept of emotional engagement as well as cognitive engagement in academic pursuits. A great amount of evidence exists on intrinsic motivation and how it connects with student learning. The significant feature of cognitive engagement is that learning is strategic or self-regulating. Students are cognitively engaged when they use metacognition strategies to analyze their learning or an academic task (Zimmerman, 2010). The effort in cognitive engagement refers to student effort that focuses on

learning (Fredricks et al., 2004). Not many studies address cognitive engagement, as determined by a psychological investment in learning. An article by Connell and Wellborn (1991) described survey items that address psychological investment, but no empirical studies have been performed using these measures (Fredricks et al., 2004). Fredricks et al. (2004) indicated that several issues complicate the measurement of cognitive engagement. In observational techniques used in classrooms, it is difficult to detect if students are trying to get work done to master the content or instead to complete an assignment. It is also difficult to measure a student's metacognition due to the lack of reliable and valid instruments. It may be easier to say that cognition is hard to assess. A researcher can only infer student cognition from student self-reports or student academic behavior. Cognitive learning involves the development of intellectual skills. These skills include creating, evaluating, analyzing, applying, understanding, and remembering (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956).

Cognitive engagement involves how students feel about themselves, their work, their skills, and the strategies they use to complete their work. Students who are cognitively and behaviorally engaged will attend to the task at hand and simultaneously think about similar tasks they have done to bring about a successful outcome (Davis et al., 2012). Stimulating cognitive growth means encouraging students to review and question their beliefs as well as others, providing an organizing structure for students to construct new understandings (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

Cognitive capacity is measured in different ways and is affected significantly by socioeconomic status. Studies show that low socioeconomic status children perform below higher socioeconomic status children on tests of intelligence and academic achievement and are more likely to fail courses or drop out of school (Jensen, 2013).

Recent instructional standards have highlighted the importance of teaching cognitive skills. Cognitive skills, such as generating conclusions, problem-solving, experimenting, and decision-making, are thinking processes that promote comprehension of complex ideas. Teachers can directly teach cognitive skills helping students engage and understand content in complex ways. Cognitive skills filter into student lives outside of school and can influence their success in college and future careers (Scott & Marzano, 2014).

Marks (2000) defined cognitive engagement as “a psychological process, specifically, the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning” (pp. 154-155). Newmann et al. (1992) defined cognitive engagement in school as “the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote” (p. 12). Both definitions involve mental investment and effort. Some students are able to complete school work satisfactory without being engaged in mastery of material. There is a great body of research that indicates that “students invest much of their energy in performing rituals, procedures, and routines without developing substantive understanding” (Newmann et al., 1992, p. 12). Students who display behaviors aimed at mastery of academic work are believed to have deep cognitive engagement, while students who practice behaviors such as rote memorization and rituals without mastery also do well. A student can be motivated without being engaged in a specific task (Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Newmann et al., 1992).

Learning requires an investment by the learner to improve. One of the critical influences on student cognitive strategies is their motivation to learn. Motivation is where teachers need to begin. People are motivated to engage when they are interested or have a real purpose for doing so. Understanding student needs for choice, autonomy, purpose, voice, competence,

encouragement, and acceptance can provide insight into some of the conditions that are required to get students engaged. Motivating students is important as a point of entry, but it is engagement that is critical. Over time, the level of engagement is the strategy through which classroom instruction influences student outcomes (Irving, Meltzer, & Dukes, 2007).

### **Emotional Engagement**

Emotional engagement research is similar to research related to attitude, motivation, values, and interest. Emotional engagement is often considered synonymous with motivation (National Research Council, 2004). Research in the area of emotional engagement examines student feelings towards and attitudes about schools using surveys with questions asking whether students liked or disliked school, teachers, and schoolwork. Researchers also posed questions about student emotions, e.g., feeling happy or sad in school and whether they felt bored or interested in schoolwork (Epstein & Mcpartland, 1976). The difficulty in measuring emotional engagement is that a student's source of emotional reaction may be attributed to a variety of academic factors such as success, friends, school, or their teachers (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Kahn's (1990) study of people at work parallel students at work. He identified emotional engagement as people empathizing with others or feeling satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their performance. He explained how negative emotional experiences could influence engagement. Kahn also proposed that the three dimensions of engagement be arranged in a hierarchy, with emotional engagement as the "deepest" level. Emotional engagement occurs when people identify with their work and want to do a good job (Kahn, 1990).

Skinner and Belmont (1993) defined emotional engagement as student feelings of interest, happiness, anxiety, and anger during achievement-related activities (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Sciarra and Seirup (2008) defined emotional engagement as the extent to which students

feel a sense of belonging and “the degree to which they care about their school” (p. 218).

Research confirms that there is a strong connection between teacher behavior and student engagement in the classroom. Teacher interactions with students predicted student behavioral and emotional engagement in the classroom, both directly and through their effects on student perceptions of their interactions with teachers (Sciarra & Seirup, 2008).

All children need strong, active adults in their lives. Jensen (2013) believed that children who grow up with positive adult relationships learn appropriate emotional responses to everyday situations. Healthy emotional responses are often not present in children raised in poor households because of absent or stressed caregivers. When these positive relationships are absent, it can negatively affect student engagement and achievement. Students living in poverty are not evasive about what motivates them. They want a connection to the teacher, and they want instruction that connects to the world as they see it. When teachers fail to connect personally, students are less likely to trust them and often experience a demotivating disconnection between the school world and their home life. As a result, they give up (Jensen, 2013).

**Motivation.** Motivation is a necessary element for student engagement. If educators want to know how to make schools engaging places, they should listen to what students are saying about their classes (Mitra & Serriere, 2012). Motivation arises from needs, cognitions, emotions, and environmental events. Motivation is linked to student psychological needs for satisfaction (Reeve, 2012). Students who believe themselves to be acting with a sense of independence, competence, and relatedness in learning experience high motivation, while those who have these three needs neglected or are frustrated during instruction experience low motivation. Motivation is a private, unobservable psychological process that serves as an



antecedent cause of the publicly observable behavior that is engagement (Reeve, 2012).

In the classroom, motivation refers to the degree to which a student puts forth effort into and focus on learning for academic success. Sternberg (2005) believed that motivation is essential for school success; in its absence, the student may never make an effort to learn. Students have different quantities, along with qualities of motivation that can vary from time to time depending on the learning and teaching (Ryan & Deci, 2000) (Schlechty, 2001). If teachers have a thorough understanding of different types of student motivation in any given setting, they are better equipped to provide an environment that promotes learning (Marsh, 2000). Kohn (1999) asserted that “the implicit premise of the words ‘intrinsic’ and ‘extrinsic’ is that there are qualitatively different kinds of motivation, and the kind matters more than the amount” (p. 257).

Intrinsic motivation is stimulation of behavior that comes from within an individual, out of will and interest for the task at hand. No external rewards are needed to provoke the intrinsically motivated student to act. The reward is the behavior itself (DeCharms, 2009). Unfortunately, not every classroom behavior stems from intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation stems from the support of an individual's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are unsatisfied with external controls, manipulations, and negative feedback, intrinsic motivation will be challenged.

There are three elements of motivation: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. These elements are required for meaningful engagement (Pink, 2009). According to Pink (2009), autonomy is the desire to be self-directed to improve ourselves; mastery is the urge to improve continually while being challenged; and purpose is the desire to do things that matter. Pink noted that you do not have to coerce motivation or create mandated expectations of students when these elements are in place; a student will be intrinsically motivated to work and persevere

with a task until a goal is met. Instruments designed to increase motivation can dampen it. Strategies aimed at boosting creativity can reduce it. Instead of restraining negative behavior, rewards and punishments can often give rise to cheating and dangerously parochial thinking.

An experiment conducted by Cordova and Lepper (1996) examined the effects on the learning process of three complementary strategies for enhancing student intrinsic motivation, contextualization, personalization, and provision of choices. In the control condition, material was presented abstractly. In the experimental conditions, the identical material was offered in a generic or modified form. Half of the students were offered choices concerning instruction; the remainder were not. Contextualization, personalization, and choice all produced dramatic increases, not only in student motivation but also in their depth of engagement in learning, the amount they learned in a fixed amount of time, and their perceived competence and levels of aspiration (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). Studies suggested that from childhood through adolescence, those with high academic intrinsic motivation show evidence of higher academic achievement, lower academic anxiety, and less extrinsic motivation (Gottfried, Gottfried, Cook, & Morris, 2005).

In contrast, extrinsic motivation results from being motivated to perform or complete a task to earn a reward or to avoid punishment (Cherry, 2018). Extrinsic motivation is not necessarily bad, even though some studies have shown that excessive external rewards for an already internally rewarding behavior can lead to a reduction in intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation can be helpful in situations where an individual finds a task to be unpleasant. External rewards can create interest and participation in something in which the individual had no prior interest. External rewards can be used to motivate students to acquire new skills or knowledge. Extrinsic motivators should be avoided in situations where the individual is already

intrinsically motivated (Cherry, 2018).

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation exists negative motivation. Negative motivation is explained by the research of Aronson, Fried, and Good (2002) as an idea known as stereotype threat. Stereotype threat promotes a lack of engagement in motivation and promotion of performance-oriented goals (Osborne & Walker, 2006). Stereotype threat is the association of a self-characteristic, i.e., being a female or a member of a racial group and how this association validates a negative stereotype about one's social group (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

These stereotypes lead many students to not value an area of study like math or science (Aronson et al., 2002) and could also lead to the narrowing of student career options by supporting their perceptions that they cannot be successful in certain academic disciplines. The latter causes many students to withdraw interest in school (Osborne & Walker, 2006). When stereotype threat occurs, performance can be undermined because of fear of confirming the negative stereotype (Cole, Matheson, & Anisman, 2007). For example, a female student who gives into stereotype threat perceptions about math may disengage in math because females are stereotyped to be less successful in math than males (Seal, 2012); therefore, the female student may not put forth as much effort toward being successful in math and may be less motivated in the course.

Many of the educational activities taking place in schools are not designed to be intrinsically interesting, and the quest becomes how to motivate students to value and self-regulate in such activities without external pressure. Extrinsically motivated behaviors must be externally provoked, and individuals who are likely to complete the behavior are those who are valued by significant others to whom they feel connected. The significant others can be family, a peer, a group, or society. In the classroom, this means that student feelings are respected and

cared for by the teacher, which is essential for their willingness to accept the given classroom values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In support of this, Ryan, Stiller, and Lynch (1994) found that relatedness to teachers was associated with greater internalization of school-related behavioral principles (Ryan et al., 1994). Emotions are the mental and physiological feeling conditions that direct our attention and guide our behavior (Lamia, 2013).

**Attitude.** Student attitudes toward school are shaped by teachers, the learning environment, self-concept, peers, and parental influence (Glick, 1970; Haladyna, Olsen, & Shaughnessy, 1983; Jackson & Getzels, 1959). Attitude is believed to be related to student achievement, motivation, and interest (Glick, 1970; Harty, Beall, & Scharmann, 1985; Jackson & Getzels, 1959). Other theories on attitude development and attitude change support the premise that beliefs provide the cognitive basis of attitudes (Petty & Cacioppo, 1996; Shrigley, 1990). Additionally, influencing a change in attitude requires a modification of the belief system (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1996).

**Interest.** Paul (2013) described interest as a psychological condition of engagement, a predisposition to engage repeatedly with specific ideas, events, or objects over time. Schiefele (2009) summarized much of the research on interest and made a distinction between situational interest and individual interest. Schiefele described situational interest as “a short-term psychological state that involves focused attention, increased cognitive function, persistence, enjoyment or affective involvement, and curiosity” (p. 198).

Paul Silvia, a University of North Carolina professor in the area of social psychology, speculated that interest pulls us toward what is new, edgy, and exotic (Paul, 2013). When we are interested in what we are learning, we pay attention and process the information more proficiently; we employ effective learning strategies, e.g., engaging in critical thinking, making

connections between old and new knowledge. When we are interested in an assignment, we work hard, persist longer, and bring more of our self-regulatory skills into play (Paul, 2013).

### **Teacher Efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1994) as the beliefs teachers possess in their collective capabilities to influence the lives of their students. Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon (2011) argued the need for continued improvement included finding the sources of teacher efficacy, creating a connection between teacher efficacy and student outcome, and the relevance of teacher efficacy to educational practice.

The role of the teacher is vital in the engagement of students. A substantial portion of student engagement and achievement can be explained by the teacher and classroom-level variables (Hill & Rowe, 1996). A teacher's enjoyment of and confidence in teaching have been shown to positively impact their affective orientation towards their students, creating positive student-teacher relationships. Positive student-teacher relationships result in increased student motivation and engagement. Teven and McCroskey (1997) found that students who believe their teacher is caring also believe they learn more. Positive relationships between teachers and students predict improved social and cognitive development in young children (Kontos & Wilcox-Herzog, 1997). According to Flink, Boggiano, and Barrett (1990), those teachers who support a student's autonomy are inclined to facilitate greater motivation, curiosity, and desire for challenges. Positive teachers are associated with emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in the classroom setting (Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Research by the Rand Corporation (Armor et al., 1976) focused on teacher self-efficacy as a determinant of student engagement and achievement. The idea behind this assumption is that teacher self-efficacy as a personal characteristic mainly affects student and teacher outcomes

through patterns of teacher behavior and practices that define the quality of the classroom environment (Guo, Connor, Yang, Roehrig, & Morrison, 2012). Other research indicates that teacher self-efficacy decisions may act on raising the classroom quality by applying shared influences over teacher feelings of well-being and accomplishment (Bandura, 1997).

Instructional support commonly reflects the degree to which teachers can advance student meta-cognitive skills, apply their thinking to real-world situations, provide additional support for struggling students, and expand their understanding. Over time, efficacy-influenced processes are presumed to affect student academic adjustment (Hamre & Pianta, 2010).

According to Bandura (1997), confidence is parallel to self-efficacy. Those teachers who are confident or self-efficient demonstrate the ability to generate and test alternative courses of action, enhance functioning through elevated levels of effort and persistence, and deal with a problem situation by influencing cognitive and emotional processes (Martin, 2007). On the other hand, teachers with low confidence are prone to dwell on their shortcomings and see situations as more difficult than they are (Bandura, 1997). It stands to reason that teachers high in confidence (self-efficacy) are more likely to engage in pedagogy that is positive and preemptive, resulting in increased student motivation and engagement.

**Teacher expectations and perceptions.** Teacher expectations and teacher judgments both represent subjective teacher estimates about student achievement. The difference is that expectations are usually predictions about future achievement, while judgments are a current estimate of student performance. Judgments are most likely made in situations in which the teacher has taught the student for a period of time and can take into account a variety of different types of information. In contrast, teacher expectations focus on expected improvement or performance and are predictions of the possible academic progression of a student rather than an

assessment of their existing skills and knowledge. Teacher expectations and judgments are important because they are used to determine the instructional level planned for students which can have a substantial impact on student outcomes (Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Sibley, & Rosenthal, 2015).

Research on teacher expectations has established that teacher expectations about student abilities are subject to bias. The bias can be related to student ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and special needs and towards students whose first language is not English (McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Rubie-Davies et al., 2012; Südkamp, Kaiser, & Möller, 2012). This finding is not without noting that that students' actual achievement in earlier studies was often not controlled, causing misinterpretation and limiting the power of the studies (Jussim & Harber, 2005; Rubie-Davies et al., 2012). Teacher expectation researchers also note that negatively influenced expectations are likely to be problematic for reasons beyond simple bias. It is argued that when teachers underestimate students' current achievement level, they are likely to plan lower level learning opportunities for those students (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006). This expectation behavior directly affects how much students learn because these differential learning opportunities accumulate over time and ultimately reduce student life chances (Rubie-Davies, 2015). The implications of bias are particularly serious since teacher judgments are regularly formalized for high stakes decisions such as a particular educational track or grouping level.

Other studies have established that teachers were indirectly influenced by student gender when judging academic skills (Bennett, Gottesman, Rock, & Cerullo, n.d.; Beswick, Williams, & Sloat, 2005). Some studies concluded that behavioral factors such as student engagement and motivation can influence teacher expectations and judgments (Brenner & Mistry, 2007; Dompnier, Pansu, & Bressoux, 2007). Limited studies have examined the effect that English

language learner or special needs status has on teacher expectations and judgments, but research has indicated negative associations. Hurwitz, Elliott, and Braden (2007) contended that teachers consistently underestimate the performance of students with special needs; however, Martínez, Stecher, and Borko (2009) found that teachers marked students with English language learner or special needs status lower in mathematics than standardized achievement test results suggested. Furthermore, data have seldom been collected within the usual classroom context, comparing between-group differences in teacher judgments of their students. This information is significant because when teachers make judgments of students in experimental studies, the descriptions they read are not of their own students. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the responses of teachers in experimental studies would be the same as in naturalistic studies where they know their students well and interact with them daily (Rubie-Davies et al., 2014). Little research has examined teacher judgments in naturalistic settings (Hopkins, George, & Williams, 1985; Meisels, DiPrima Brickel, & Nicholson, 2001); and even less research has considered specific student group characteristics, classroom, and school-level factors within a naturalistic setting (Ready & Wright, 2011).

The purpose of this research was to analyze and provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The focus questions for this research were

1. How do teacher perceptions of student engagement impact instruction?
2. What instructional practices lead to student engagement?

The measurement of student engagement tends to focus on the quantity and quality of academic tasks. Although there are numerous methods to study engagement, data are generally collected through surveys or questionnaires. The quantity of student engagement may



be gauged through questions on the amount of time spent on a task or answering questions.

Quantitative engagement measures focus on factors that impact learning. Qualitative engagement measures might focus on the perceived value of tasks, assessments, and feedback.

Other measures can be obtained through direct observation of participants. This research can be invasive; it tends to focus on behavior; it is resource demanding and is difficult to generalize (Assor & Connell, 1992). Questionnaires are a common means of collecting feedback and are unobtrusive, inexpensive, and an easy means of gathering valid, rich, and representative data.

### **Summary**

This literature review provides researched facts about the variables being analyzed in this study. Research proves that student engagement is essential for learning and academic success and that educators play a role in getting students to engage emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally (Jensen, 2009). Bandura (1997) and others have found that an individual's self-efficacy plays a major role in how goals, tasks, and challenges are approached. The RAND Corporation in 1976 was influential in research that has continued to establish a relationship between teacher self-efficacy and student engagement and its impact on student achievement (Armor et al., 1976). Student engagement is about building motivation and helping students develop their learning identity. In this process of exploring student engagement, it is possible to find out more about what students need to learn, which will help us focus on how to bring student energy into the classroom to improve learning outcomes (Morton, 2009). A wide array of factors—both within and beyond the classroom—can influence student achievement. In recent years, engagement and motivation in schooling have become an increasingly prominent part of conversations about academic success. This study analyzes and provides a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that

engage students.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to analyze and provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The focus questions for this research were

1. How do teacher perceptions of student engagement impact instruction?
2. What instructional practices lead to student engagement?

A key stimulus of learning is active participation and engagement in the learning process. When students are not engaged, learning is delayed and students are not well equipped for future educational experiences. It is important to foster learning experiences in the classroom that attract student interest and draw them into the process of gaining knowledge. Engaged students acquire the knowledge needed to experience academic gains and are more equipped to thrive in and out of the classroom setting (Chen & Looi, 2011).

Teachers hold the responsibility of creating classrooms that foster student engagement and subsequently achievement. Research indicates that the teacher has a direct role in levels of student engagement (Van Amburgh, Devlin, Kirwin, & Qualters, 2007). There is a need for teachers to understand the elements of engagement in their context. This study explored student engagement as a multidimensional construct through a systematic study of the expectations and perceptions of teachers.

### **Participants**

The participants in this study were fully licensed teachers from a high school located in a rural school district located in the southeastern part of North Carolina. The participating teachers provide instruction for a wide range of subject material, to include math, science, English, social

studies, the arts, and a variety of career and technical education courses. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Report Card data, there are over 1,900 students and approximately 144 teachers in the school. Seventy-five percent of the teachers are fully licensed, and 15% have advanced degrees. In this school, 44.9% of the teachers have over 10 years of teaching experience, and 55.1% have less than 10 years of experience. The North Carolina Report Card data list the average class size as 23 students per section.

The 144 certified staff members of this school include 75 females and 69 males. The ethnic background of these staff members is 12.5% Native American, 6.2% Hispanic, 32% White, and 49.3% African American. The ethnic makeup of the faculty closely resembles that of the student body. Of the 144 certified staff members, 127 are classroom teachers. For this study, only the data received from classroom teachers were examined. Each specialized department is broken down as follows: English (16), math (15), science (14), social studies (15), special education (16), foreign language (4), career and technical education (23), and other (18; e.g., art and music,). The purposeful sampling of the teachers in each of the eight departments listed above brought the sample size to 121 participants.

The researcher is a member of this faculty working in a teaching capacity under the career and technical education umbrella. Because the risk of bias exists and increases the likelihood of error, the researcher did not become a respondent and remained neutral by avoiding inserting one's thoughts and ideas. Questionnaires and surveys were structured to avoid subjectivity and allowed respondents to reveal their honest thoughts and feelings without misrepresentations. As a member of this faculty, the researcher ensured adherence to the ethical principles and professional standards essential for responsible research by examining the data with objectivity and was guided by the results rather than by the researcher's own preconceived

notions.

The purposeful sampling technique was used to select participants who provided information that best answered the research questions and enhanced the understanding of the phenomenon of this research. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research for the selection of cases with limited resources (Patton, 2002). The process included identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals who are knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Bernard (2002) identified the importance of availability, willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an expressive and reflective manner in addition to knowledge and experience.

### **Research Design**

This research study used a mixed method that combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Mixed methods research uses multiple techniques to explore a research problem. In 1959, Campbell and Fisk (1959) prompted others to begin collecting multiple forms of data in their study of psychological traits. Early thoughts were that all methods had bias and that the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data neutralized the weaknesses of each. Data collection can involve any available technique and interpretation is continual and reflective (Creswell, 2014).

During the late 18th century, philosophers William Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Immanuel Kant, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty believed that life consists of our experiences, our reflections, and our complex relationships with others. These philosophers reasoned that humans cannot be studied as isolated units but must be understood in the context of their cultural and social connections. The work of these philosophers paved the way for qualitative inquiry (What Is Qualitative Research, 2017). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) defined qualitative research in the

Handbook of Qualitative Research as an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world, the attempt to interpret phenomena and the meanings people bring to them in their natural settings. Qualitative research is designed to expose a target audience's variability of behaviors and the perceptions that drive it concerning specific topics. It uses studies of small groups to guide and support the creation of hypotheses. The results of qualitative research are more descriptive than predictive (Qualitative Research Consultants Association, 2017). Qualitative research can take a phenomenological approach when the purpose is to come to an understanding of how humans experience something. There are no specific methods for gathering data to develop a phenomenological analysis; interviews and observations provide ample material for review. Qualitative researchers are concerned with making an inference based on perspective. Questionnaires are designed to generate participant perspectives about ideas, opinions, and experiences and to encourage complete and accurate information (Foddy, 1999).

The quantitative method of data collection and analysis, as defined by Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), is explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data and analyzing it using mathematically based methods. Data that do not naturally appear in quantitative form can be collected quantitatively. The quantitative collection can be done by designing research instruments aimed at converting the phenomena into quantitative data, which can then be analyzed statistically. Examples of this are attitudes and beliefs that can be transformed into quantitative form by using measurement instruments such as Likert scales.

Survey research is a favorite quantitative research design. Survey research design is flexible because it can appear in a variety of forms. A survey is characterized by the collection of data using standard questionnaire forms administered in multiple ways, by telephone or face to face, by postal pencil-and-paper questionnaires, with more and more using web-based and

email forms. Chances are that we have all had some experience with survey research, either as developers or participants. Using survey methods allows the study of a wide range of research questions. Survey research does not set up a simulation like an experiment; it is easier to generalize findings to real-world settings, as this is where the research takes place. Survey studies are also efficient in terms of being able to gather large amounts of data at low cost and effort compared to other methods. Using survey research can guarantee respondent anonymity, which may lead to more candid answers. Survey research is therefore particularly suited for canvassing opinions and feelings about particular issues. The use of standardized questions allows for easy comparability between respondents (Muijs, 2011).

### **Instrumentation**

The researcher used three data collection instruments: a classroom behavior observation tool (Appendix B), a teacher survey (Appendix C), and a questionnaire (Appendix D).

Observation is an organized data collection approach researchers use to examine people in their natural settings or naturally occurring situations by recording one's observation. Observation data collection is appropriate when the actual behavior of the participants has the potential to be different from what participants might report (Grand Canyon University, 2018). The nonparticipant observation method was used since the researcher did not participate in classroom activities. This permitted the researcher to focus fully on the behaviors being observed.

The survey is a web-based Likert item survey. The survey is a quantitative instrument consisting of three demographic questions and 10 Likert items about teacher expectations and perceptions. Likert scales were developed in 1932 and include groups of categories asking whether an individual agrees or disagrees, approves or disapproves, or believes something to be true or false (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Surveys are considered to be a cost-effective method of

data collection. Web-based surveys allow respondents to take their time to complete the survey. The web-based survey also permits a faster transmission of the survey. The survey was used to examine teacher expectations and perceptions regarding student engagement. Surveys are an excellent way to gather lots of information from many people (Blackstone, 2012).

A questionnaire created by the researcher was used to collect qualitative data about teacher expectations, perceptions, and instructional practices related to student engagement in English, math, science, the arts, and CTE courses in this school. The questionnaire sought to determine the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices in which students engage. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire was measured based on content. Content validity is qualitative and sometimes referred to as logical or rational validity. It is the estimate of how much a measure represents every single element of a construct (Shuttleworth, 2009). Qualitative methods combine well with questionnaires and survey design techniques as a way to evaluate findings on a broader scale. District administrators in the career and technical education department of the district validated the questionnaire and the survey to ensure that both instruments effectively captured the investigation of this study.

The questionnaire consisted of two demographic questions and five open-ended questions that defined the areas to be explored; it allowed the participant an opportunity to provide more detail. This format allowed for the discovery of information that is important to participants but may not have been initially important to the researcher (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). According to Bernard (1988), a questionnaire is useful when you will have one chance to collect data and when you will be sending several questionnaires out into the field to collect data. Allowing participants to complete a questionnaire without the presence of the researcher allowed participants an opportunity to share personal anecdotes and experiences involving student



engagement objectively. The questionnaire allowed the researcher to more accurately collect data in the participants' own words (Carey, 2012).

## **Procedures**

After obtaining approval from the principal of the school at the center of this research, the researcher obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board of Gardner-Webb University.

The mixed method design used for this research was the sequential exploratory design. Using qualitative and quantitative data together helps to understand the research questions better. The sequential exploratory design method is a two-phase design. The qualitative data were collected first, followed by collection and analysis of quantitative data. The purpose of this design was to help identify the variables (Creswell, 2014).

Questionnaires can be used to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Skillful open-response questions are high on validity because they get comprehensive answers in respondents' own words. Open-response questionnaires provide data the researcher can quote (Carey, 2012).

Each participant was assigned an identification number. The identification number and the teacher assigned to it have been kept confidential. Once data were collected, any electronic file that could disclose identity was password protected; hard copies of research documents have been kept in a locked file cabinet. After 3 years, electronic data will be deleted, and hard copies will be burned.

Identifying an individual participant is often the source of potential harm to participants in social, behavioral, and economic sciences research (Sieber, 2001). The questionnaire, survey, and observations posed no risk of physical injury to a respondent. The Belmont Report (Office for Human Research Protections, 2016) identified three ethical principles for research on humans: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect is the obligation to treat

individuals as self-governing agents and their decisions on whether or not to participate with respect by obtaining voluntary informed consent. Beneficence is the obligation to secure participants' well-being by protecting them from harm to the extent possible by obtaining IRB approval. Justice is the obligation to show fairness in the selection of research participants concerning the distribution of the benefits and burdens of the research by equitably selecting participants.

The researcher hand delivered consent forms (Appendix E) and the questionnaire to each willing participant. The researcher allowed 2 weeks for participants to complete the questionnaire. After 1 week, the researcher followed up and collected completed questionnaires and did so again after the next 2 weeks. After the questionnaires were collected, the researcher used an Excel spreadsheet to analyze and review the data to identify relevant variables and themes. In addition to gender and the number of years teaching, the questionnaire included the following questions.

1. Describe the behavior of students who you would consider engaged in your classroom.
2. Tell me about your perceptions of personalizing student learning experiences.
3. How do you respond to students who you consider lacking engagement in your classroom?
4. What evidence do you have that your students are engaged?
5. What are your best instructional strategies for engaging students?

Survey data collection is a quantitative method used for developing generalizations about populations. Its strengths are in collecting demographic and socioeconomic data and in describing people's general perceptions and attitudes. Surveys are useful for describing patterns

in large groups rather than in-depth analysis of individuals' views (Guthrie, 2010). The survey was administered using SurveyMonkey©; the access code was distributed to all participants via email explaining the purpose and intent of the research. The researcher allowed 2 weeks for participants to complete the survey. After 1 week, the researcher followed up with an email requesting participants complete the survey within the 2 weeks. After the survey was closed, the researcher began analyzing the data using SurveyMonkey©.

Classroom observation is a quantitative research method that permits researchers to study behaviors in their natural settings; it provides more precise evidence than other data sources and can be used to stimulate change and verify that the change occurred (Anderson, Burns, & Duncan, 1989). The observation tool, created by the researcher, was designed to observe on-task and off-task student behaviors during instruction. Observation data collection is often used in combination with other data collection techniques. The focus of the observation is on behavior and then on ideas about why specific behaviors occurred. Nonparticipant observation requires the researcher not to participate in group actions. Not being an active participant allows the data collection to be complete because the researcher's attention can focus fully on their observation (Guthrie, 2010).

A central component of all observational research is a behavior code, which is a detailed description of the behaviors to be observed and recorded. This code is referred to as a taxonomy of behavior (Salkind, 2010). Every instance of an observed behavior will fit into one of the available categories of on-task behaviors and off-task behaviors. The researcher observed in eight classrooms for at least three 15-minute snapshots of student engagement. The observations did not take place on consecutive days. There were 1-2 weeks between observations that provided an opportunity to observe student behaviors with different types of instruction. The

researcher collected all data using teacher codes without student names. The data were collected using the observation tool, tallied, and analyzed. The analysis helped determine the frequency of on-task and off-task behaviors.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this study was initiated using the questionnaire, a survey, and classroom observations. The questionnaire was prepared by the researcher to ensure that the same points of inquiry were tracked with each participant. The questionnaire consisted of seven open-ended questions that allowed each participant an opportunity to provide a detailed response without limiting participant freedom in answering the questions. The researcher hand delivered the questionnaire to the participants explaining the purpose and intent of the research. The researcher allowed 2 weeks for participants to complete the questionnaire. After 1 week, the researcher followed up and collected completed questionnaires and then again after another 2 weeks. SurveyMonkey© was used to deploy and collect data from the Engagement Survey. The Engagement Survey consisted of 12 Likert item questions. Respondents rated in the areas of teacher expectations, perceptions, instructional practices, and student engagement based on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 2 (disagree) to 3 (agree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The survey code was emailed to the participants explaining the purpose and intent of the research. The responses to the survey were collected via SurveyMonkey©. The researcher sent e-mail reminders after the first week to remind teachers to complete the survey and then again after the next 2 weeks. The SurveyMonkey© collection tool provided summary data exports that contained response percentages, response counts, and Excel exports that also included graphs and charts. Every response was carefully analyzed and compared to better understand teacher

expectations, perceptions, and methods of instruction that impact student learning.

The researcher negotiated a time for short observations of student behavior. Students were identified by a letter of the alphabet and not by name, e.g., Student A, Student B. The researcher sat in an area of the room where all students could be observed and scanned students at 5-minute intervals to record student behavior.

The Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations section on the protection of human subjects in research states that researchers and review boards must ensure adequate provisions to protect respondent privacy and maintain confidentiality (Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, 2017). Issues of confidentiality were addressed during data collection and data cleansing and in the dissemination of the results by replacing the names of respondents with an identification number to protect their identities. The questionnaire and the Engagement Survey included informed consent documentation which defined the purpose and intent of the research. The researcher was sure to explain that all information that was shared was strictly confidential and would not be shared with any other individual. The results were assembled to keep individual confidentiality. The participants had the option to complete the questionnaire and survey or not to complete them. Consent was considered given once consent forms were collected or the survey was submitted.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Glesne (1999), data analysis is effective when conducted parallel to data collection; it allows the researcher to focus and shape the study as it unfolds. The researcher began analysis as questionnaires and surveys were received from participants in the study. Collecting data from multiple sources reduced the risk of generating conclusions that reflect systematic biases (Maxwell, 2005). The questionnaire, survey, and observations enable

triangulation. Triangulation occurs when data are obtained from various sources and data from one data source are employed to check and interpret the data from the other sources (Creswell, 2002). According to Creswell (2002), triangulation defends the validity of the study because information is drawn from multiple sources.

As the researcher engaged in the process of analyzing the data, the researcher identified and categorized the data based on common themes. The researcher used an Excel worksheet to organize the data. The identification numbers assigned to protect respondent identities were used for each respondent in the dataset. This categorization process in the analysis is called coding. According to Glesne (1999), coding helps to create a strong focus. Categorizing the data helped the researcher organize the data to reveal vital information that permitted interpretation and the identification of implications.

Descriptive analyses using frequency distribution and charts helped draw the conclusions that helped answer the research questions and showed categories of interest in the research. The results were broken down based on the identified variables, counting the frequency of responses to each option. The responses were measured based on student engagement, engagement strategies, etc.

Inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the survey and make inferences based on the sample data. Inferential statistics are for making inferences about your findings and will help to determine whether the differences between groups in the data were substantial enough to provide support for making inferences based on relations found in the sample (Rugg, 2007). The results were broken down based on the identified variables.

### **Delimitations**

Understanding that delimitations define the parameters of the research and are choices

that are made by the researcher, survey data from the student population were not collected. Time restraints and ethical concerns related to gaining consent gave the researcher reason to forgo gathering survey data from the students.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are possible weaknesses in the research that are out of the researcher's control along with limitations and restrictions that cannot be easily dismissed (Creswell, 2014). This research was focused specifically on the phenomenon of student engagement and teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement in a rural high school setting in southeastern North Carolina. One major limitation of this study was that it focused on teacher perceptions and not student perceptions. EOC and End-of-Grade (EOG) measures of student achievement were not available for reporting in the final analysis because of time restraints. Observations of engagement activity may have affected the behavior of those being observed because of the researcher's presence. In order to preserve staff confidentiality, teacher course curriculum was not a part of the survey results. Leaving out the course curriculum data prevented the researcher from analyzing possible relationships between course curriculum and perceptions of student engagement.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the process used to collect and analyze teacher perceptions of student engagement that helped to determine the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The research design was a mixed method study that combined both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The participants in this study consisted of certified staff members at a rural high school in southeastern North Carolina. The instruments used to aid this research were a questionnaire,

survey, and an engagement tool for observation. After IRB approval, the data collection instruments were used to gather and analyze teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement, along with instructional practices used to engage students.



## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Introduction**

The problem identified in this research is the lack of student engagement placing students at risk of poor academic performance. There is a strong link between teacher perceptions and what teachers do in and out of the classroom to impact student engagement (Hardre' et al., 2006).

Teacher perceptions of student engagement can influence how they respond to the student and impact their teaching strategies (Skilling, Bobis, Martin, Anderson, & Way, 2013).

Understanding the role of the teacher in student engagement is therefore critical to improving teaching and successful student outcomes. Engagement is vital to the learning process and promotes meaningful educational experiences. It is not the sole responsibility of the student to become engaged; a significant portion of student engagement lies with the teacher (Hill & Rowe, 1996). This study analyzed the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The research aimed to focus on the following questions:

1. How do teacher perceptions of student engagement impact instruction?
2. What instructional practices lead to student engagement?

The tools used to gather data during this research were a teacher survey, a questionnaire, and classroom observations. This chapter outlines the results collected from these three instruments. The data were collected during the months of September, October, and November 2018.

### **Survey Results**

The survey was launched on October 23, 2018 and closed on November 13, 2018. After 1 week, a reminder to complete the survey was emailed; and a final reminder was emailed on November 6, 2018. Collection from this instrument ended on November 13, 2019. The survey

was used to examine teacher expectations and perceptions regarding student engagement. The survey (Appendix C) was a web-based Likert item survey consisting of three demographic questions and 10 Likert items about teacher expectations and perceptions. The scale of Likert item responses included strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. An email with the link to the survey was sent to 121 classroom teachers who were asked to complete the survey. The survey was completed by 54 respondents for a response rate of 45%.

**Survey Question 1.** Approximately how many years have you been in your current position? Table 4 shows the number of years participants have been in their current positions.

Table 4

*Participant Number of Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	Count
< 1 year	6
=>1 <4 year(s)	11
=>4 <10 years	14
=> 10 years	23

The data show that 37 of 54 (68.5%) participants have 4 or more years in their current position. Seventeen of 54 (31.5%) have less than 4 years in the current position. Only six participants (11.1%) are new to their position.

**Survey Question 2.** What is your gender? This variable examined the gender of participants. This variable gave the researcher an opportunity to determine if there was a gender gap which would have been helpful in identifying gender bias. Table 5 shows the gender of participants.

Table 5

*Gender of Participants*

Gender	Count
Male	24
Female	30

With respect to gender, the data show that there is no significant gender gap between males and females in the participant sample.

**Survey Question 3.** What grade levels do you teach? This variable examined the relatedness of perceptions of participants who teach different grade levels. One participant did not respond to this question. This variable gave the researcher an opportunity to examine teacher perceptions of student engagement who teach students of varying grade levels. Table 6 shows the grade levels taught by participants.

Table 6

*Grade Level(s) Taught by Participants*

Grade Level(s) Taught	Count
Grade 9	3
Grade 10	2
Grade 11	1
Grade 12	4
Grades 9-10	8
Grades 10-11	0
Grades 11-12	5
Grades 9-12	30

The data related to grade levels taught indicated that only 10 of 53 participants (18.9%) taught in a single grade level, while 43 of 53 (81.1%) participants taught classes consisting of

multiple grade levels.

**Survey Question 4.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is your responsibility to engage and motivate students? This variable examined teacher perceptions about their responsibility to engage and motivate students. One participant did not respond to this question. Table 7 illustrates male and female responses to the perception that it is the teacher's responsibility to engage and motivate students.

Table 7

*Teacher's Responsibility to Engage and Motivate Students by Gender*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is your responsibility to engage and motivate students?									
Gender	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	3	12.50	3	12.50	8	33.33	10	41.67	24
Female	0	.00	1	3.45	13	44.83	15	51.72	29

The data in Table 7 show that for males six of 24 (25.0%) disagreed with the assertion that the teacher has the responsibility to engage and motivate students, while one of 29 females (3.4%) disagreed. Forty-six of 53 participants (86.8%) agreed that teachers have the responsibility to engage and motivate students. Table 8 illustrates the responses to teacher responsibility to engage and motivate students by years in current position. These data offered an opportunity to examine whether or not there was a difference between disagreeing and agreeing of expert and novice teachers about teacher responsibility to engage and motivate students.

Table 8

*Teacher's Responsibility to Engage and Motivate Students by Years in Current Position*

		To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is your responsibility to engage and motivate students?							
Years in Current Position	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year					2	33.33	4	66.67	6
=>1 <4 year(s)	1	9.09			5	45.45	5	45.45	11
=>4 <10 years	1	7.69	1	7.69	4	30.77	7	53.85	13
= > 10 years	1	4.35	3	13.04	10	43.48	9	39.13	23

The data in Table 8 show that one of 17 (5.9%) teachers with less than 4 years in the current position and six of 36 (16.7%) teachers with 4 or more years in the current position disagreed with the assertion that it is the teacher's responsibility to engage and motivate students. The results indicate that 46 of 53 teachers (86.8%) agreed that they are responsible for engaging and motivating students.

**Survey Question 5.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged? This variable examined teacher perceptions of having adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged. Three participants did not respond to this question. The data in Table 9 illustrate the extent that teachers agree or disagree that they have adequate resources and strategies to address students who are not engaged. These data offered an opportunity to compare male and female responses to having adequate resources and strategies to address unengaged students.

Table 9

*Adequate Resources and Strategies to Address Unengaged Students by Gender*

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged?									
Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
Gender	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	1	4.35	5	21.74	10	43.48	7	30.43	23
Female	1	3.57	4	14.29	18	64.29	5	17.86	28

The data in Table 9 show six of 23 (26.0%) of the male teachers and five of 28 (17.9%) of the female teachers asserted that they did not have adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged. Overall, 40 of 51 teachers (78.4%) agreed that they have adequate resources and strategies to engage students. Table 10 illustrates participant responses to adequate resources and strategies to address unengaged students by years in current position. This variable provided an opportunity to determine if there was a difference between disagreeing and agreeing of expert and novice teachers to having adequate resources and strategies to address unengaged students.

Table 10

*Adequate Resources and Strategies to Address Unengaged Students by Years in Current Position*

	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged?								
Years in Current Position	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year			1	20.00	3	60.00	1	20.00	5
=>1 <4 year(s)			1	9.09	7	63.64	3	27.27	11
=>4 <10 years	1	7.69	2	15.38	7	53.85	3	23.08	13
= > 10 years	1	4.55	5	22.73	11	50.00	5	22.73	22

The data show that two of 16 (12.5%) of the teachers with less than 4 years in the current position along with nine of 35 (25.7%) of the teachers with 4 years or greater asserted that they do not have adequate resources and strategies to use to engage students. Overall, 40 of 51 (78.4%) of the teachers asserted that they have adequate resources and strategies to use to engage students.

**Survey Question 6.** In your opinion what percentage of students in your classes are highly engaged and motivated? This variable examined teacher perceptions about the percentage of students in their classes whom they perceived to be engaged. Table 11 illustrates participant perceptions of the percentage of engaged and motivated students by teacher gender.

Table 11

*Percentage of Engaged and Motivated Students in My Classes by Gender*

In your opinion what percentage of students in your classes are highly engaged and motivated?									
	<= 25%		26 - 50%		51 - 75%		> 75%		Total
Gender	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	5	20.83	8	33.33	9	37.50	2	8.33	24
Female	3	10.00	7	23.33	14	46.67	6	20.00	30

The data indicate that 13 of 24 (54.2%) of the male teachers and 10 of 30 (33.3%) of the female teachers perceived less than 51% of their students to be highly engaged and motivated. Of the male and female teachers combined, 31 of 54 (57.4%) perceived that 51% or greater of their students are highly engaged and motivated. Table 12 illustrates participant perceptions of the percentage of engaged and motivated students in the classroom by years in current position. This variable gave the researcher an opportunity to examine the percentage of engaged and motivated students in the classrooms of expert and novice teachers.

Table 12

*Percentage of Engaged and Motivated Students in My Classes by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	In your opinion what percentage of students in your classes are highly engaged and motivated?								
	<= 25%		26 - 50%		51 - 75%		> 75%		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year			1	16.67	4	66.67	1	16.67	6
=>1 <4 year(s)	1	9.09	2	18.18	7	63.64	1	9.09	11
=>4 <10 years	2	14.29	3	21.43	6	42.86	3	21.43	14
= > 10 years	5	21.74	9	39.13	6	26.09	3	13.04	23

The data from this question indicate that four of 17 (23.5%) of the teachers with less than 4 years in the current position along with 19 of 37 (51.4%) of the teachers with 4 years or greater asserted that less than 51% of their students are highly engaged and motivated. As a whole, 31 of 54 (57.4%) of the teachers identified 51% or greater of their students as engaged and motivated.

**Survey Question 7.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have high expectations for all of your students? This variable examined the relatedness of perceptions of high teacher expectations and engagement. One participant did not respond to this question. Table 13 illustrates the degree to which the participants agreed or disagreed that they have high



expectations for all students.

Table 13

*High Expectations for All Students by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have high expectations for all of your students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	1	4.17	2	8.33	4	16.67	17	70.83	24
Female					7	24.14	22	75.86	29

The data indicate that of the male teachers, three of 24 (12.5%) do not have high expectations for all students. Twenty-nine (100%) of the female respondents have high expectations for all their students. Overall, 50 of 53 (94.3%) agreed that they have high expectations for all students. Table 14 illustrates the degree that teachers agree that they have high expectations for all students by years in current position. This variable provided an opportunity to examine differences of the teacher's high expectations for all students based on years of experience.

Table 14

*High Expectations for All Students by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have high expectations for all of your students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year					3	50.00	3	50.00	6
=>1 <4 year(s)			1	9.09	1	9.09	9	81.82	11
=>4 <10 years					2	14.29	12	85.71	14
=> 10 years	1	4.55	1	4.55	5	22.73	15	68.18	22

The data for question 7 indicated that one of 17 (5.9%) of the teachers with less than 4

years in their current position and two of 36 (5.6%) of the teachers with 4 years or greater do not have high expectations for all students. Overall, 50 of 53 (94.3%) of the teachers asserted that they have high expectations for all students.

**Survey Question 8.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that you care that all your students learn? This variable examined the degree male and female teachers agreed or disagreed that they care that all students learn. One participant did not respond to this question. Table 15 illustrates the perceptions of participants that all students can learn by gender.

Table 15

*Belief That All Students Can Learn by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you care that all your students learn?							
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Male	1	4.35			5	21.74	17	73.91
Female					3	10.00	27	90.00

The data indicate that only one male teacher, one of 53 (1.9%), did not care that all students learn and 52 of 53 (98.1%) do care that all students learn. Table 16 illustrates the degree that participants agreed or disagreed that they care that all students learn by years in current position. This variable provided an opportunity to examine differences in teacher perceptions about caring that all students learn based on years in current position.

Table 16

*Belief That All Students Can Learn by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you care that all your students learn?									
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	
< 1 year					1	20.00	4	80.00	5	
=>1 <4 year(s)					2	18.18	9	81.82	11	
=>4 <10 years					1	7.14	13	92.86	14	
= > 10 years	1	4.35			4	17.39	18	78.26	23	

The data indicate that 16 of 16 (100%) of the participants with less than 4 years in their current position care that all student learn, and one of 37 (2.7%) of the participants with 4 years or greater did not care that all students learn. Taken as a whole, 52 of 53 (98.1%) do care that all students learn. The years in the current position did not make a difference in the teachers caring that all students learn.

**Survey Question 9.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that the skill level of students in your class is below your expectations? One participant did not respond to this question. The variable examined the perception of participants on the skill level of students being below expectations. Table 17 illustrates the degree to which participants perceive that the skill level of their students is below their expectations.

Table 17

*Skill Levels Below Expectations by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that the skill level of students in your class is below your expectations?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	2	8.33	6	25.00	11	45.83	5	20.83	24
Female			8	27.59	13	44.83	8	27.59	29

The data indicate that eight of 24 (33.3%) of the male teachers and eight of 29 (27.6%) of the female teachers disagree that the skill level of the students in their classes was below their expectations. Male and female teachers combined, 37 of 53 (69.8%), indicate that the skill level of their students is below their expectations. Table 18 illustrates the degree to which participants perceive that the skill level of their students is below their expectations by years in current position. This variable provided an opportunity to examine the perceptions of participants based on expert and novice teachers.

Table 18

*Skill Levels Below Expectations by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that the skill level of students in your class is below your expectations?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year			3	50.00	2	33.33	1	16.67	6
=>1 <4 year(s)			4	36.36	5	45.45	2	18.18	11
=>4 <10 years			4	28.57	5	35.71	5	35.71	14
= > 10 years	2	9.09	3	13.64	12	54.55	5	22.73	22

The data indicate that seven of 17 (41.2%) participants with less than 4 years in their current position and nine of 36 (25%) participants with greater than 4 years in the current

position disagreed that their students' skill level is below their expectations. Overall, 37 of 53 (69.8%) agree that the skill level of students in their class is below their expectations.

**Survey Question 10.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that your students need more support than you can give them during class? This variable examined participant perceptions of students needing more support than the teacher can provide. Table 19 illustrates the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed that their students need more support than they can provide.

Table 19

*Students Need More Support Than Teacher Can Provide by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that your students need more support than you can give them during class?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	2	8.33	5	20.83	11	45.83	6	25.00	24
Female			2	6.67	20	66.67	8	26.67	30

The results show that seven of 24 (29.2%) of the male teachers and two of 30 (6.7%) of the female teachers do not believe that students need more support than they can provide during class. Overall, 45 of 54 (83.3%) believe that students need more support than can be given during class time. Table 20 illustrates the degree to which participants perceive that their students need more support than they can provide by years in current position.



Table 21

*Technology Helps Engage Students by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that technology helps to engage students in your class?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	2	8.33	3	12.50	12	50.00	7	29.17	24
Female	2	6.67	5	16.67	14	46.67	9	30.00	30

The data indicate that five of 24 (20.8%) of the male respondents and seven of 30 (23.3%) of the female respondents do not believe that technology helps to engage students. Overall, 42 of 54 (77.7%) of the respondents believe that technology helps to engage students. Table 22 illustrates participant perceptions by years in current position that technology helps to engage students.

Table 22

*Technology Helps Engage Students by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that technology helps to engage students in your class?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year	1	16.67	1	16.67	2	33.33	2	33.33	6
=>1 <4 year(s)	1	9.09	1	9.09	3	27.27	6	54.55	11
=>4 <10 years	1	7.14	2	14.29	7	50.00	4	28.57	14
=> 10 years	1	4.35	4	17.39	14	60.87	4	17.39	23

The data indicate that four of 17 (23.5%) of the respondents with less than 4 years in the current position and eight of 37 (21.6%) of the respondents with 4 years or more in the current position do not believe that technology helps to engage students. Overall, 42 of 54 (77.7%) of

the respondents believe that technology helps to engage students in their class.

**Survey Question 12.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that your classroom culture supports learning for all students? This variable examined the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed that their classroom culture supports learning for all students. Table 23 illustrates participant perceptions that their classroom culture supports learning for all students.

Table 23

*Classroom Culture Supports Learning for All Students by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that your classroom culture supports learning for all students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	1	4.17	3	12.50	13	54.17	7	29.17	24
Female			1	3.33	16	53.33	13	43.33	30

The data indicate that four of 24 (16.7%) male respondents and one of 30 (3.3%) of the female respondents do not believe that their classroom culture supports learning for all students. Overall, 49 of 54 (90.7%) believe that their classroom culture supports learning for all students. Table 24 illustrates participant perceptions by years in current position.



Table 24

*Classroom Culture Supports Learning for All Students by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that your classroom culture supports learning for all students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year					3	50.00	3	50.00	6
=>1 <4 year(s)			1	9.09	8	72.73	2	18.18	11
=>4 <10 years					6	42.86	8	57.14	14
=> 10 years	1	4.35	3	13.04	12	52.17	7	30.43	23

Only one of 17 (5.9%) respondent(s) with less than 4 years in their current position asserted that the classroom culture did not support learning for all students. Of the respondents with 4 or more years in the current position, four of 37 (10.8%) do not have a classroom culture that supports learning for all students. Overall, 49 of 54 respondents (90.7%) asserted that their classroom culture did support learning for all students.

**Survey Question 13.** To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are good at engaging students? This variable examined participant perceptions of self-efficacy to engage students. Table 25 illustrates participant perceptions of being good at engaging students.

Table 25

*Participant Good at Engaging Students by Gender*

Gender	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are good at engaging students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Male	1	4.17	2	8.33	16	66.67	5	20.83	24
Female					24	80.00	6	20.00	30

The data indicate that three of 24 (12.5%) male respondents are not good at engaging

students, while 51 of 54 (94.4%) male and female respondents combined are good at engaging students. Table 26 illustrates participant perceptions by years in current position.

Table 26

*Participant Good at Engaging Students by Years in Current Position*

Years in Current Position	To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are good at engaging students?								
	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
< 1 year					4	66.67	2	33.33	6
=>1 <4 year(s)			1	9.09	8	72.73	2	18.18	11
=>4 <10 years					9	64.29	5	35.71	14
= > 10 years	1	4.35	1	4.35	19	82.61	2	8.70	23

The data indicate that one of 17 (5.9%) of the respondents with less than 4 years in the current position and two of 37 (5.4%) of the respondents with greater than 4 years in the current position are not good at engaging students. As a whole, 51 of 54 (94.4%) asserted that they are good at engaging students.

### **The Questionnaire Results**

The questionnaire created by the researcher was used to collect qualitative data about teacher expectations, perceptions, and instructional practices related to student engagement. This instrument sought to determine the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. Participants had the opportunity to provide detail in their responses. The researcher distributed the questionnaire on September 24, 2018. The first response was received on October 16, 2018. The responses from the questionnaire include those received from October 16 through November 30, 2018, when the last questionnaire was received. A total of 16 questionnaires were received from 54 participants for a response rate of 29.6%.

**Question 1.** The first question in the questionnaire asked for the gender of the

respondent. Table 27 identifies the gender of the respondents to the questionnaire.

Table 27

*Gender of Respondents*

Gender	Count
Male	2
Female	14

The data indicate there is a gender gap between males and females in the respondent sample. Male respondents responded disproportionately to the questionnaire.

**Question 2.** What is the number of years you have been teaching? Table 28 illustrates the respondents' number of years teaching.

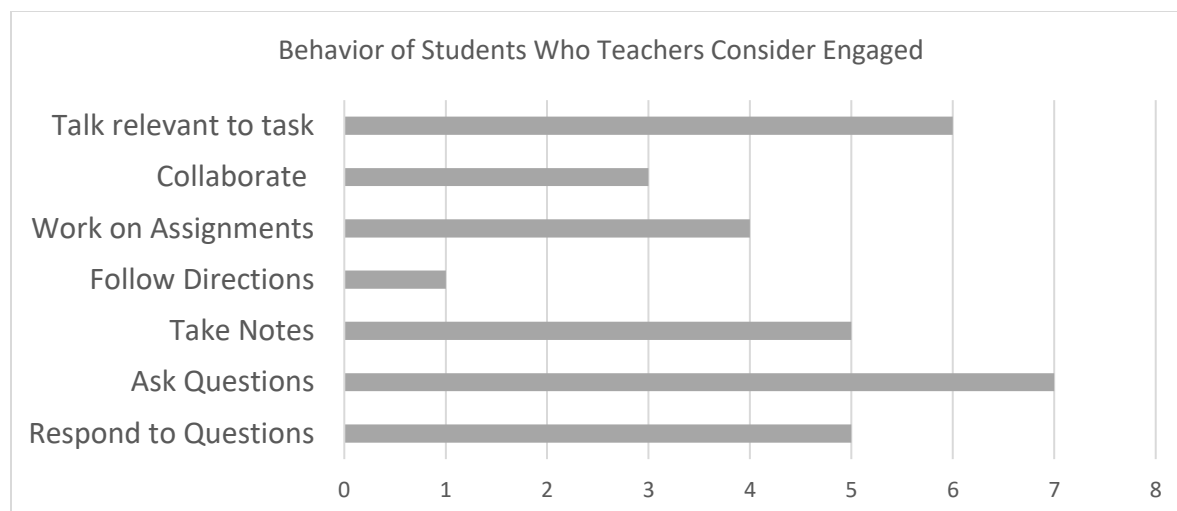
Table 28

*Respondents' Number of Years as a Teacher*

Years in Teaching	Count
< 1 year	
= >1 < 4 years	4
= >4 < 10 years	5
= > 10 years	7

The data indicate that 12 of 16 (75%) of the respondents have greater than 4 years of teaching experience.

**Question 3.** Describe the behavior of students who you would consider engaged in your classroom. Table 28 (Appendix F) provides respondent perceptions of engaged student behaviors. Figure 1 identifies the most prevalent student behaviors of students who teachers consider engaged.

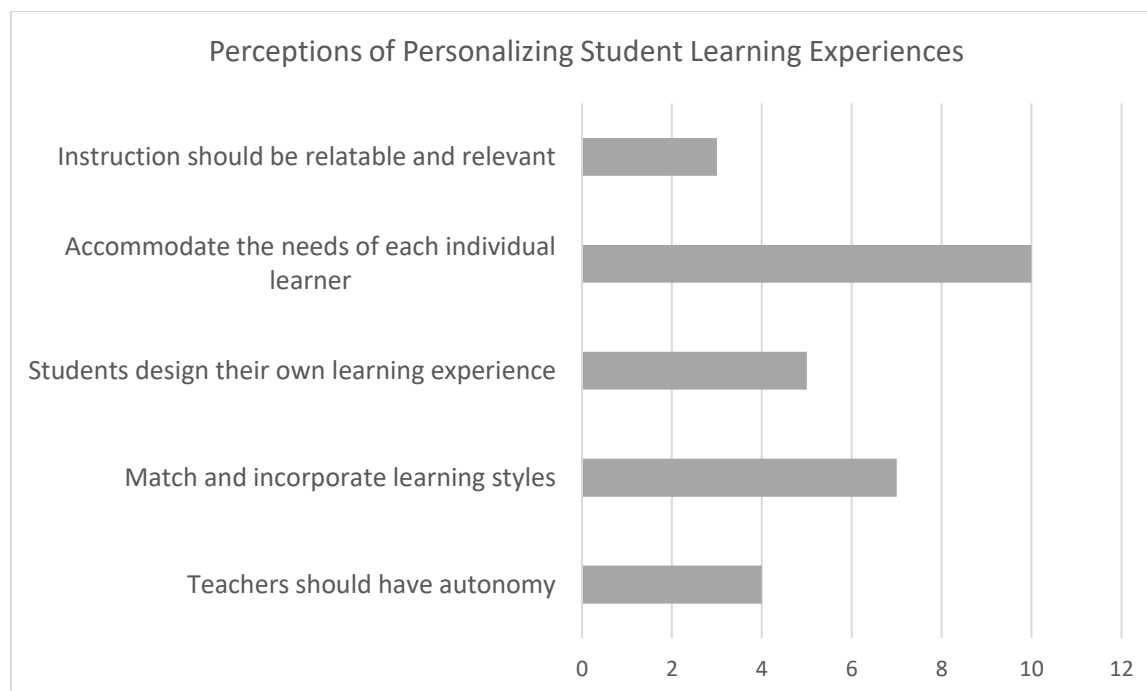


*Figure 1.* The most prevalent student behaviors of students who teachers consider engaged.

Respondent 110718N described engaged student behavior as “focused on the task, follow directions, able to respond, able to make connections between the content and the real world, able to work and collaborate in groups, able to produce quality work.”

Respondent 110718M described engaged student behavior as “participating in discussion, responding to questions throughout the lesson, actively doing work without being redirected. Students that are engaged willingly participate in the lesson without me having to force them to engage and participate.” The data indicate that seven of 16 (43.7%) of the respondents listed students asking questions and six of 16 (37.5%) listed talk relevant to the task as an engaged behavior. Only one of 16 (6.3%) listed following directions.

**Question 4.** Tell me about your perceptions of personalizing student-learning experiences. Table 29 (Appendix G) provides respondent responses to Question 4. Figure 2 identifies the most prevalent teacher perceptions of personalizing student-learning experiences.



*Figure 2.* The most prevalent perceptions of personalizing student-learning experiences.

Respondent 110718M stated,

Personalizing student learning experiences is that not every student learns the same. That is why you should use differentiation in the classroom. This helps to give you more than one method to get the information to the student. Each student can see it in a way that they feel is comfortable to them.

Respondent 110618J stated,

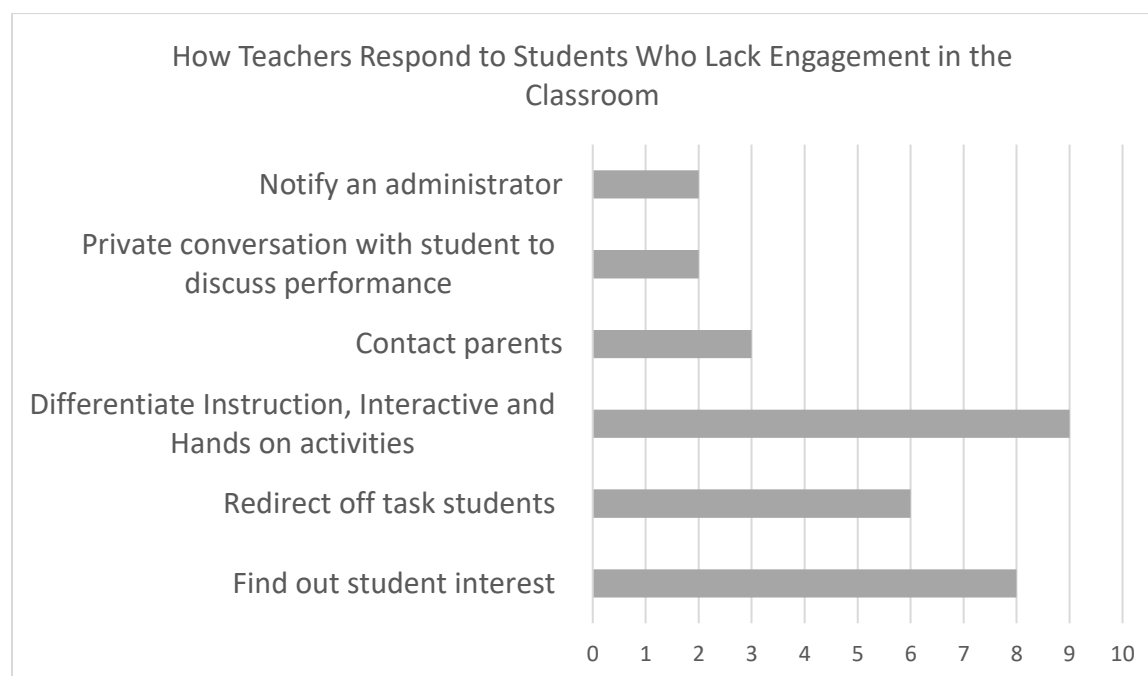
Personalized student learning experiences as classrooms are changing from teacher-centered to student-centered. Students are becoming owners of their learning. They are the ones that set the pace of their learning, have tools, and goals from their own interest. My perceptions of the personalized student learning experiences are that they promote student choice, their ability to learn anywhere and anytime, and this gives the teacher time to give students feedback that is meaningful. This also allows teachers to provide

individualized learning tools for student success.

Respondent 1029180 stated, “I like to run my class like a melting pot. Each student has unique perspectives and experiences that they can bring to the table. I have to find the way to unlock those things in each student.”

These data indicate that 10 of 16 (62.5%) of the respondents perceive personalizing student-learning experiences as accommodating the needs of each individual learner. Seven of 16 (43.7%) of the respondents also perceive matching and incorporating learning styles as personalizing student learning experiences.

**Question 5.** How do you respond to students who you consider lacking engagement in your classroom? Table 30 (Appendix H) provides respondent responses to question 5. Figure 3 identifies the most prevalent respondent responses to how teachers respond to students who you considered lacking engagement in the classroom.



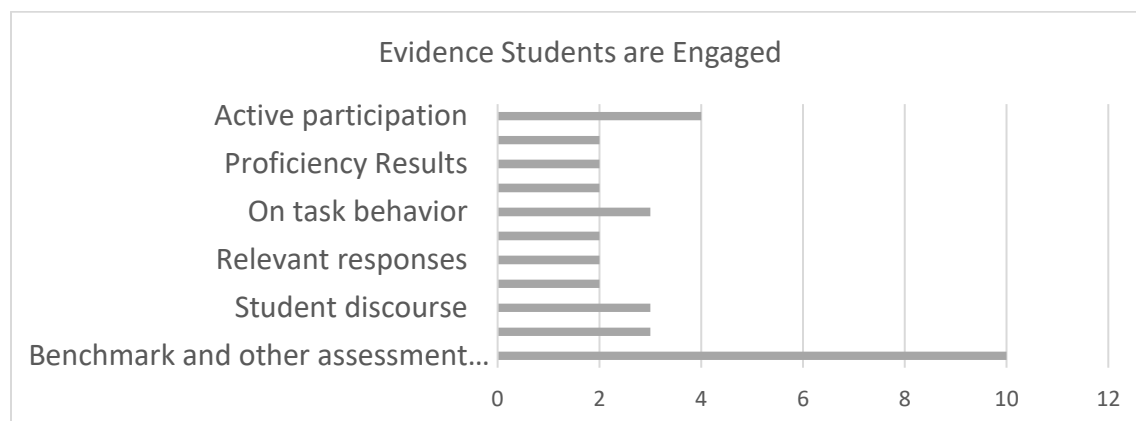
*Figure 3.* The most prevalent respondents’ responses to students who lack engagement in the classroom.

Respondent 110618J stated,

For my students whom I consider are lacking the engagement required for my classroom, I respond to them by differentiating assignments to make them more meaningful and relatable to the student. I implement real-life applications that students can relate to and that align with the standards to be mastered.

Respondent 101718B said, “I try to find what is lacking the students interest. I interview them to find what’s interesting to them and encourage them to participate.” The results indicate that nine of 16 (56.2%) of the respondents respond to students who lack engagement by differentiating instruction and interactive and hands-on activities. One half of 16 (50%) of the respondents respond to students who lack engagement by finding student interest.

**Question 6.** What evidence do you have that your students are engaged? Table 31 (Appendix I) provides respondent responses to question 6. Figure 4 identifies the most prevalent responses to evidence students are engaged.



*Figure 4.* The most prevalent respondents’ response to evidence students are engaged.

Respondent 101718C identified completed assignments, conversations, and a genuine interest in activities as evidence students are engaged. Respondent 110618J stated,

Evidence that shows my students are engaged could be both formative and informative assessments, effective questioning tools in class discussion, and partner engagement conversations. These all allow myself to hear the responses and justification of solutions from the students to understand if they were engaged. Listening to the lesson. This would indicate the level of my student's proficiency in their understanding.

The data indicate that 10 of 16 (62.5) use benchmarks and other assessment results as evidence that students are engaged.

**Question 7.** What are your best instructional strategies for engaging students? Table 32 (Appendix J) provides respondent responses to question 7. Figure 5 identifies the most prevalent respondent responses to the best instructional strategies for engaging students.



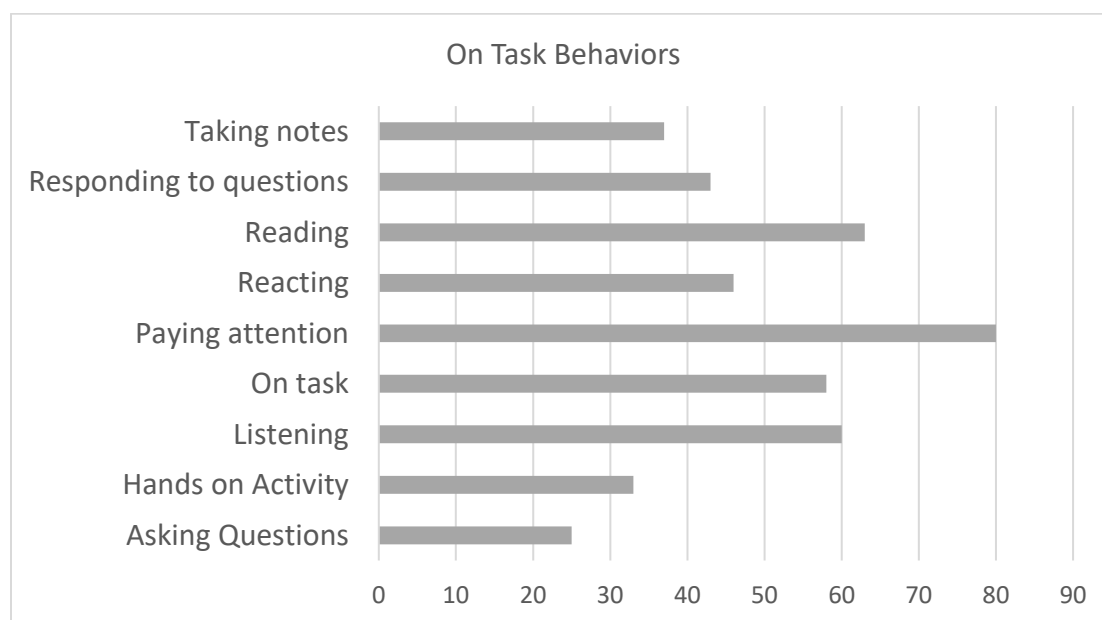
*Figure 5.* The most prevalent respondents' best instructional strategies for engaging students.

The results indicate that eight of 16 (50%) of the respondents use differentiated instruction to accommodate different learning styles as a best practice to engage students.



### The Student Engagement Observation Tool Results

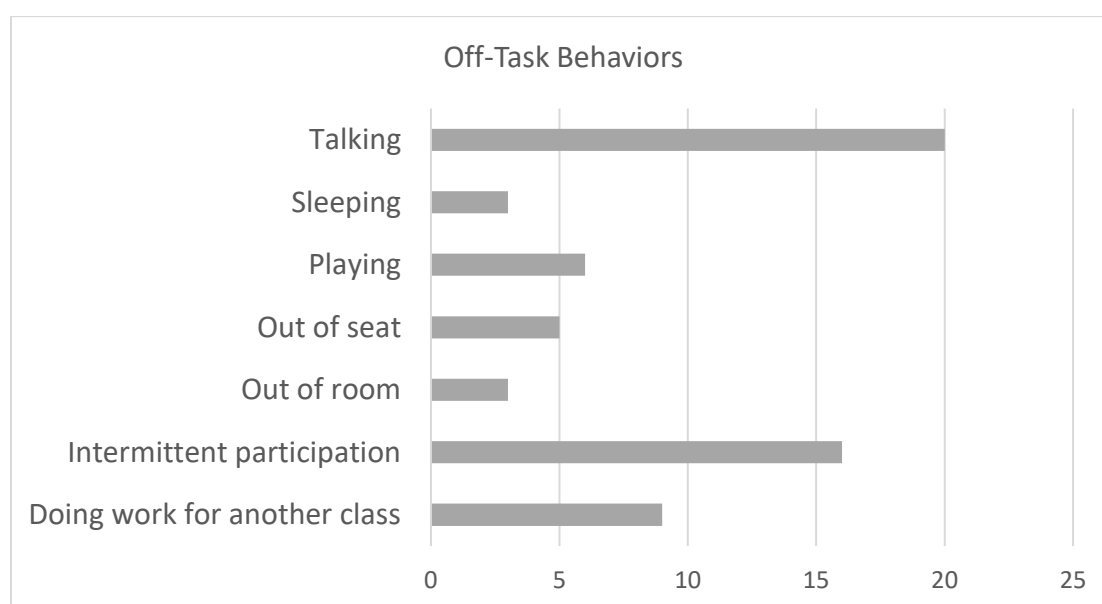
The researcher began engagement observations on October 23, 2018. During the observations, the researcher used the observation tool to observe and record on-task and off-task student behaviors during instruction. The researcher performed the observations in the classrooms of eight of 16 of the respondents to the questionnaire on three separate occasions for a total of 24 observations. The researcher did observe teachers responding to students who were not engaged by encouraging them to open and use their Chromebook in an activity, talking with the students about their goals, and allowing them to work in pairs and in groups. In each observation, the teacher was observed using differentiated strategies to engage students. There were no inconsistencies in what was reported on the questionnaire and what was observed in the classroom. The student behaviors were noted using the observation tool and counted to determine the frequency of occurrences of each behavior. Figure 6 identifies the frequency of on-task student behaviors from the observations.



*Figure 6.* Frequency of observed on task student behaviors.

The data indicate that the most frequently observed on-task behaviors were 80 occurrences of students paying attention, 63 occurrences of students reading, 60 occurrences of students listening, and 58 occurrences of students being on task. The least frequent on-task behavior observed was students asking questions.

Figure 7 identifies the frequency of the most prevalent off-task student behaviors from the observations.



*Figure 7.* Frequency of observed off task student behaviors.

The data indicate that the most frequently observed off-task behaviors were 20 occurrences of students talking and nine occurrences of students doing work from another class. The least frequent off-task behavior observed was students being out of the class.

### Summary

The results from the research instruments indicate teacher perceptions about student engagement. Those perceptions might constitute a barrier for students because of fixed mindsets

that ignore the teacher's role in student engagement. The survey examined teacher expectations and perceptions regarding student engagement. The variables along with identified male and female responses provided an opportunity to examine if there were any gender-biased perceptions of student engagement and the role of the teacher to engage students. These results also provided an opportunity to examine whether or not there was a difference between agreeing and disagreeing of expert and novice teachers about their responsibility to engage and motivate students.

The questionnaire addressed the relationships among the variables of teacher expectations, teacher perceptions, and student engagement measured by teacher expectations, perceptions, and instructional practices.

The Classroom Student Engagement Observation Tool examined student on-task and off-task behaviors during instruction.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings related to each instrument and the research questions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Overview

The purpose of this research was to analyze and provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. Teachers must understand their role in student engagement and the practices that improve teaching and successful student outcomes. Engagement is vital to the learning process and promotes meaningful educational experiences. Understanding what is required to facilitate learning can assist educators in increasing student engagement (Gallup, 2015). Teachers must know how to translate the knowledge about their students, e.g., student beliefs, values, feelings, and habits, into effective instruction (Jones, 2008). Bernhardt (2004) concluded, “to change student behaviors and perceptions, teacher perceptions must change, which requires teacher behavior to change” (p. 56).

Research indicates that the teacher has a direct role in levels of student engagement (Van Amburgh et al., 2007). Engagement strategies used in the classroom can improve instruction and enable learning for students who have become disengaged from the learning process. This study analyzed the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students by answering the following questions:

1. How do teacher perceptions of student engagement impact instruction?
2. What instructional practices lead to student engagement?

This chapter discusses the answers to these questions utilizing data from three instruments, the Teacher Perceptions Survey, Teacher Perceptions Questionnaire, and the Student Engagement Observation tool.

The researcher was able to determine from the survey the teacher perceptions of

engagement. From this instrument, the researcher was able to discern that the majority of the respondents were teachers with more than 4 years in their current position and taught students in multiple grade levels. Data from the analysis of the survey revealed that some teachers did not perceive that it is their responsibility to engage students. This information leads the researcher to believe that these teachers have marginalized the scope of their job responsibilities. It cannot be denied that it is the teacher's responsibility to engage students. Jones (2008) determined that educators should examine the characteristics of engaging instruction to identify the elements that contribute to students being highly engaged. There were mixed perceptions about having adequate resources to engage students. Some of the teachers perceived that they are unable to address unengaged students because they were not equipped with the necessary resources and strategies to do so. The teachers who revealed this perception were teachers with more than 4 years in their current position. Teachers with more than 4 years in their current position also perceived low percentages of students as highly engaged and motivated. Overall, the teachers perceived that they had high expectations for all students and they care that all students learn. Many of the teachers perceived the students' skill level to be below their expectations and that the students needed more support outside of the classroom. The teachers taking part in the survey also perceived that their classroom culture supported learning for all students. The perception of these teachers who technology helps to engage students is marginal. These mixed perceptions led the researcher to believe that the teachers do need support and that a continuous effort to support not only teachers with less than 4 years in their position but also those with greater than 4 years is needed to make sure they have the right resources and technical know-how to engage students. Jensen (2009) believed that when teachers can stimulate, motivate, and activate engagement, students participate emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally.

The questionnaire provided a view of how the teachers recognize engagement. The teachers recognize engagement as a behavioral construct that includes conversations and collaboration that relate to the task, working on assignments, following directions, asking questions, and taking notes. Behavioral engagement involves positive behaviors such as participation, effort, persistence, concentration, and attention (Fredricks et al., 2004). Research has identified behavioral engagement as a reliable predictor of student educational outcomes (Hoff et al., 2015). The questionnaire responses indicate that these teachers also recognized that not every student learns the same and that differentiation and personalizing learning is an engagement strategy that matches the needs of individual learners to instruction that is relatable and relevant to them. The teachers indicated that they responded to students who lacked engagement by notifying an administrator, private conversations, contacting parents, differentiating instruction, hands-on activities, and consideration of student interests. Having to notify an administrator and contacting parents may signal that the lack of engagement is a discipline problem. Schlechty (2001) described discipline as a manner of approaching a problem to ensure control and coherence. Without knowledge and the use of the correct strategies and interventions that help teachers to monitor and manage problem behaviors, engagement and success in school can be difficult for students (Menzies, Lane, & Lee, 2009).

The teachers provided assessment scores, active participation, on-task behaviors, appropriate responses, and student discourse as evidence of engagement. The most frequent strategies given by the teachers for engaging students included differentiated instruction, personalized learning, working in pairs or groups, and incorporating technology. In his theory and research, Jensen (2009) supported these strategies as what high school students enjoy most: engaging in discussions, debates, the arts, group projects, and drama. Jensen (2009) also listed

indicators of student engagement as students volunteering for class assignments, completing assignments, answering questions, not having to be asked repeatedly to do things, working in cooperative groups, active listening, asking questions, making contributions, and using technology for discovery. According to Canton (2007), the use of technology constitutes a critical component of what it means to be literate today.

From the observations, the researcher was able to identify on-task and off-task student behaviors. There were more on-task behaviors than off-task behaviors noted in the observations. The students were paying attention, reading, listening, asking questions, and responding to questions. The off-task behaviors included talking, intermittent participation, doing work for another class, students playing, being out of their seats, and sleeping. Some of the off-task behaviors may not have been off-task behaviors because students who talk, intermittently participate, and get out of their seats may have all been doing so relative to the task. It is not conclusive to assume that those students who exhibited on-task behaviors were engaged or that all of off-task behaviors were indicators of students not engaged. Just because the students appeared to be engaged does not mean that they were emotionally and cognitively engaged in the instruction. Cognitive engagement implies an investment in learning aimed at comprehending complex concepts and a deeper processing of information (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Gardner and Strayer (2017) asserted that emotional engagement involves interest, boredom, happiness, anxiety, and other states that affect a learner's involvement with learning. Fredricks et al. (2004) stressed that it is problematic to discern on-task and off-task behaviors. These behaviors are centered on persistence and participation. The problem is that students who follow the rules but do not meet academic requirements are different from students who are disruptive but persist and complete their work (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In comparing the results of each instrument, the researcher found that the survey indicated that the teachers perceived they need additional resources and strategies to help engage unengaged students. The questionnaire also revealed that support was needed. The survey reveals that the teachers care that all students learn and they have high expectations for all students. In the questionnaire, the teachers provide statements that they recognize students as individual learners and the need to personalize and differentiate instruction. The survey indicated that perceptions related to the use of technology are marginal, yet incorporating technology was identified by the teachers as a best practice in the questionnaire. The observations did reveal that the teachers were using some of the strategies identified in the questionnaire: differentiated instruction, interactive activities, groups, and students assessing each other's work. The researcher also noted that although some of the students appeared engaged and others did not, it was difficult to identify with certainty based solely on behaviors in which students were truly engaged.

Teachers should be cognizant that their behaviors do influence students emotionally, and every child needs strong, positive adult relationships in order to learn appropriate emotional responses to everyday situations. When these positive relationships are absent, they can negatively affect student engagement behaviors. When teachers fail to connect personally, students are less likely to trust them and often experience a demotivating disconnection between the school world and their home life. As a result, they give up (Jensen, 2013). The observations did indicate on-task engagement behaviors that provided some indicators that the observed teachers were engaging students.

Regardless of the number of years in their current positions, many of the teachers, male and female, did perceive that it is the teacher's responsibility to engage and motivate students.



This perception is supported by Jones (2008) in his claim that it is the teacher's responsibility to engage students, as opposed to the students coming to class automatically engaged. Those teachers who believe that it is their responsibility to engage and motivate students realize that they are facilitators of learning and will adjust and improve instruction to facilitate student learning. Shulman (2016) also believed that it is the teacher's responsibility to plan and facilitate the educational process by creating opportunities for learning.

Overall, the teachers perceived that it is their responsibility to engage students; however, not as many perceived their students to be engaged and motivated. There is evidence of behavioral engagement which is easier to recognize compared to cognitive and emotional engagement. Prior research has identified three types of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement (Cooper, 2014; Fredricks et al., 2004). Including all three dimensions of engagement (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement) presents a more complete picture of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004).

In addition to perceptions of responsibility, the teachers perceived that they had high expectations for all their students. Even though these teachers perceived they have high expectations, they also indicated that the skill level of their students is below their expectations. The researcher did not note any treatment of students that was different; however, the documented beliefs about expectations gives reason to believe this may be a problem. Milner and Williams (2008) emphasized that teacher expectations and perceptions about students can create educational obstacles. It is necessary for teachers to adjust their expectations and instructional practices so all children can learn. More often than not, teachers will overestimate the achievement of high achievers and underestimate the achievement of low achievers (Rubie-Davies et al., 2014). The better the teachers know their students, the more accurate their

expectations for student academic success. Differing expectations of teachers is often displayed in teacher classroom behaviors (Rubie-Davies, 2006). Teachers should be cognizant that their behaviors do influence students and begin to examine their expectations for students, so they do not underestimate a student's ability to learn at a higher level. Letting students see that you care about them helps to create a positive, supportive environment where students can learn and thrive.

Fishbein developed a theory formulated around beliefs and attitudes (Ajzen, 2012). The concept of his expectancy-value theory denotes the idea that most individuals will choose not to continue to engage in a task when they expect to fail. Conferring with the expectancy-value theory, teacher beliefs about an individual student may influence the student's own competence beliefs and interests (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

The teachers perceived themselves to be good at engaging students and that their classroom culture supported learning for all students, but the number of highly engaged and motivated students specified is minimal. Teachers who demonstrate enjoyment, confidence in teaching, and pedagogical efficacy have a positive impact on student engagement (Martin, 2007). Bandura (1997) believed that confidence is related to self-efficacy. Martin (2007) asserted that those teachers who demonstrate self-efficacy possess the enhanced ability to deal with a problem situation by influencing cognitive and emotional processes. The idea behind this assumption is that teacher self-efficacy as a personal characteristic mainly affects student and teacher outcomes through patterns of teacher behavior and practices that define the quality of the classroom environment (Guo et al., 2012). Other research indicated that teacher self-efficacy decisions may act on raising the classroom quality by applying shared influences over teacher feelings of well-being and accomplishment (Bandura, 1997).

Not every teacher perceived having adequate resources and strategies to engage students. Every teacher should have the tools, strategies, and time to do their job well. Reback and Ricker (2010) indicated that expert teachers should have the experience and skills to find resources and strategies that enhance student learning. Instructional support commonly reflects the degree to which teachers can advance student meta-cognitive skills, apply their thinking to real-world situations, and provide additional support for struggling students in order that they can expand their understanding (Hamre & Pianta, 2010).

Many of the participants teach classes that consist of Grades 9-12. Being able to accommodate a classroom of diverse learners is a distinct instructional strategy that can make engagement and teaching more effective (Mancuso, 2001). Teaching is a complex process that involves catering to different learning styles, behaviors, cognitive levels, and emotions. No two learners are alike. Intentional planning is necessary to create opportunities for all students to learn and to assess their performance in a variety of ways.

The teachers perceived that their students needed more support than they can give them during class time. Academic support should not stop when students leave the classroom. There is a need to examine external provisions designed to support student academic needs. Great Schools Partnership (2016) believed that any form of support students receive can improve the educational outcomes of those students (Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Academic support includes an extensive array of strategies that include tutoring, summer learning opportunities, after-school programs, mentors, and counseling, which can be specific to targeted populations (Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Are the teachers dealing with attendance issues, large numbers of inclusive students, or do the teachers know and use strategies that help to differentiate instruction? The answer could not be determined based on this research, but these

are variables that impact a student's lack of engagement. Students need access to anytime, anywhere learning opportunities. Jensen (2009) supported the need for out-of-school programs. He stated that "because school time is often booked up with requirements, it may be necessary to create skill-building programs outside of school to get the job done" (Jensen, 2009, p. 129).

It was interesting to discover teacher perceptions regarding technology. In spite of students being digital natives, the wealth of accessible information, and the multitude of resources available because of technology, there were teachers who believed that technology did not help to engage students. Technology is a resource that can be used to expand the classroom and empower teachers and students to improve educational outcomes. Research tells us that in today's rapidly changing world of technology, shifts are taking place in educational requirements and occupational requirements that expect a knowledge and use of technology (Canton, 2007).

The teachers in this study reported using an array of strategies for engaging students. These strategies included differentiated instruction, attention to learning styles, allowing students to work in pairs or in groups, interactive activities, student discourse and collaboration, allowing students to personalize assignments, allowing students to assess each other's work, allowing students to lead, incorporating technology, focus/essential questions, classroom management, relating lessons to real-world situations, providing rubrics, and incorporating video clips.

Experts provide best practices for engaging students. Taylor et al. (2016) suggested that dimensions of engagement include relevance, autonomy, collaboration, and authenticity. Brophy (1986b) asserted that relevance fuels the student's motivation to learn. Skinner and Belmont (1993) suggested that autonomy provides students with latitude and decision-making opportunities. Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, and Turner (2004) declared that students make cognitive choices about their work when they are able to self-initiate an action for which they are

responsible. Building students' capacity to collaborate with others through discourse and social interaction increases student engagement (Taylor et al., 2016). Creating authentic tasks and activities that relate to real-world problems engages students in cognition, behavior, and emotion.

Sorensen (2015) suggested these best practices to engage students: finding things students are interested in, moving students to the heart of the class, asking students to help you with something, pulling students aside to offer them a second chance, and sending positive notes home. Marzano et al. (2010) advocated using effective pacing, demonstrating intensity and enthusiasm, using humor, and building positive teacher-student and peer relationships as strategies to engage students. Effective pacing and demonstrating intensity examples include telling personal stories, verbal and nonverbal signals, and displaying a zest for teaching. Examples of humor in the classroom could be using funny headlines or quotes, movie clips, and media. Examples of building positive teacher-student and peer relationships include ensuring fair and equitable treatment, showing an interest in students, and identifying and using positive information about students (Marzano et al., 2010).

## **Conclusions**

Although small in scope, this study provided an understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The researcher found that overall, the teachers perceived that it is their responsibility to engage and motivate students; however, not as many perceived their students to be engaged and motivated. The teachers recognize engagement as a behavior construct which is easier to recognize compared to cognitive and emotional engagement. Prior research has identified three types of engagement: behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement (Cooper, 2014; Fredricks et al.,

2004). Including all three dimensions of engagement – behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement – presents a more complete picture of student engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). In addition to the students not being highly engaged, the teachers perceived that they were ill-equipped to engage students and they had mixed perceptions about technology. Being knowledgeable about the curriculum but also more self-aware and empathetic of the students helps to guide instructional practices. There is a need to examine external provisions designed to support student academic needs because the teachers indicated that the students need more support than they can provide during class. This question requires deeper analysis to examine why the respondents perceive that the students need more support than they can give them. Are the teachers dealing with attendance issues, large numbers of inclusive students, or do the teachers know and use strategies that help to differentiate instruction? Students need access to anytime, anywhere learning opportunities. The reasoning behind these responses is unknown and is cause for further analysis. Having adequate resources and strategies impacts instruction. It is necessary for teachers to adjust instructional practices and expectations so all students can learn. Academic support must extend beyond the classroom. The challenge for teachers is not to dismiss or keep up with students' latest technological expertise but to create meaningful learning experiences in which students learn how to apply their knowledge to solve real-world problems. Students are digital natives, and teachers must stay up to date and in touch with technology. There are numerous devices that give access to portals of a different realm for learning (Canton, 2007). Today's students are no strangers to technology; they have woven it into the fabric of their lives. Its incorporation into instruction can improve engagement and instruction. It is a huge responsibility to be a teacher. Teachers should prepare and inspire dreams and do so without preconceived judgments that hinder their students.

### **How Do Teacher Perceptions of Student Engagement Impact Instruction?**

This research established that teachers who perceive that it is not their responsibility to engage students have marginalized the scope of their responsibility to teach. Teachers who perceive that they are responsible will adjust and improve instruction to facilitate student learning. Teachers who perceive that they do not have the resources and strategies to engage students are not designing instruction that includes those strategies. Teachers who perceive they have high expectations for all students will incorporate instructional strategies to engage them. When teachers perceive that students need more instruction than they can provide during class, external resources should be introduced to provide the added instruction. Teachers who perceive that they are good at engaging students and that their classroom culture supports learning for all students are confident in their self-efficacy to provide the instruction and environment where students thrive. Technology is ever changing, and teachers who perceived that technology can be used to engage students will engage learners of all learning styles.

### **What Instructional Practices Lead to Student Engagement?**

Instructional practices that engage students include and are not limited to personalizing student learning experiences, differentiating instruction, allowing students to become owners of their learning, promoting student choice, and creating opportunities to learn anywhere and anytime.

It is essential for teachers to create the right classroom culture for learning by establishing routines, getting to know your students, having high expectations for all your students, and challenging your students to take risks (Goss, Sonnemann, & Griffiths, 2017). These variables impact how students engage. Teachers who perceive that it is their responsibility to engage students will find ways to engage and motivate students. Teacher involvement and support

entails the display of affection and concern and is assumed to foster student sense of connection (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Students form behaviors from their interpretations of relationships.

This study supports standing research that teacher perceptions of student engagement does in fact impact instruction. Although no participant went into detail concerning the impact of negative perceptions of students and engagement, previous research makes the connection. The researcher was able to conclude that there is evidence that the respondents are aware of the instructional practices that lead to student engagement and that teachers need professional development to explore the impact of their perceptions on student engagement and the influence it has on instruction. The ability to engage and motivate students comprises more than knowledge of the subject matter; teachers should possess affective characteristics that improve their ability to design instruction that engages students.

The researcher has surmised that teachers are not always aware of the impact their perceptions have on students. Teachers should be cognizant of everything they do in the classroom, from the expression on their face to the arrangement of students, and their choice of instructional strategies and practices (Sadker & Zittleman, 2016). Instructional practices should be as varied as the diverse population of students that exists within the classroom. If teachers really care and are committed to their responsibility, instructional strategies will be intentional, which means you have to know something about the children you serve. Teachers have different perceptions about what engagement is, and most of their perceptions are more in line with behavioral engagement not cognitive or emotional engagement.

### **Recommendations**

A classroom where students are highly engaged does not just happen. These teachers



perceived that they were not equipped with the resources and strategies to engage unengaged students. The data suggest that there are multiple dimensions of engagement and various strategies to support and engage learners. Many variables have been found to impact student engagement: motivation, self-efficacy, cognition, emotion, and behavior. Studies have revealed the connections between these noncognitive factors (e.g., motivation, interest, curiosity, responsibility, attitude) and cognitive results (e.g., improved academic performance, skill acquisition; Great Schools Partnership, 2016). Improving meaningful learning experiences depends on the ability of educators to engage the imaginations of students and to involve them in new realms of knowledge. Increasing student engagement improves academic achievement, attendance, attention, and completion of schoolwork (National Research Council, 2004). To begin this process of improving student engagement and performance, teachers must reflect on the elements that contribute to student engagement: student beliefs and values, student motivation and feelings, and student habits and skills (Jones, 2008).

A better understanding of instructional design would help to guide the teacher in recognizing individual learner capabilities, differences, present ability levels, personal development, readiness levels, and learner characteristics (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2019). Instructional design considers the instruction approach from the perspective of the learner. It is important because students have the opportunity to learn in a way that is appropriate for their capabilities. It bridges the gap between content and learning. With a stronger understanding of how various teaching practices link to engagement, the teachers will be able to modify class instruction for increased engagement.

The researcher recommends teachers receive training to provide a richer understanding of how to motivate and engage students. Providing teachers with professional development that

promotes instructional design, a comprehensive view of engagement, engagement strategies, and intentional planning would be beneficial in their efforts towards increased student engagement (Schlechty, 2011). Teachers should think carefully about intentional engagement strategies to use with every lesson (Marzano et al., 2010). This suggestion is supported by Marsh (2000) who believes that teachers who have a thorough understanding of different types of student motivation in any given setting are better equipped to provide an environment that promotes learning and decreased opportunity for disruptive behaviors.

The researcher believes the teachers would benefit from training that focuses on learning theories. Understanding learning theories gives the teacher the knowledge and information needed to provide the appropriate instruction for learning with students who may not be engaged (Gravells & Simpson, 2014). There are multiple theories about how students learn; the researcher specifically recommends behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, experiential learning, and pragmatism because these theories incorporate the elements of active engagement (i.e., attendance, completing assignments, effort, curiosity, responsibility, motivation, desire, attitude, and interest). Morrison (2014) asserted that we need to study learning theory so we can be more effective as educators.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this research was to analyze and provide a better understanding of the role of the teacher in student engagement and the instructional practices that engage students. The researcher was unable to report data as they pertained to teachers who taught different curriculums. A comparison based upon curriculum, strategies, and resources could have enhanced this research. Future research could consider engagement by curriculum and what external provisions are designed to support student academic needs. In addition to observing and

recording students on task and off task behaviors, observing and recording teacher behaviors during instruction would provide a more productive analysis of instructional practices that engage students and how students respond to them. In order to truly understand the teachers' perception of engagement, future studies would benefit from allowing the teachers an opportunity to provide their definition of engagement. Engagement can be defined differently and include many different variables. There has been much confusion regarding its definition and measurement (Briggs, 2015). Skinner, Kindermann, Connell, and Wellborn (2009) stated, "There is, of course, no single correct definition of engagement" (p. 224). Final recommendations for future research would be to examine student perceptions of their teachers and the instructional practices used to engage them. Giving students the opportunity to provide their definition of engagement and what it takes to engage them would also add value to the analysis of instructional practices that engage students. An opportunity to view engagement behaviors from student perspectives might provide more insight into why a larger number of students are not engaged and what it takes to engage them from the student's perspective.

### **Limitations**

This research had a number of limitations. The participant response rate varied with each instrument. A total of 121 participants were asked to participate in this research. From those asked to participate, 54 of 121 (45%) responded to the survey, 16 of 54 (30%) responded to the questionnaire, and eight of 16 (50%) agreed to be observed. The engagement that was identified by these respondents is tangible evidence of behavioral engagement; however, there was not enough evidence collected from the research instruments to extricate cognitive and emotional engagement.

It is also necessary to note that during the data collection period, the community in which the school is located experienced two natural disasters. Hurricane Florence in September and Hurricane Michael in October. Both storms devastated the area, and the school district was closed for several weeks. These catastrophic events placed a tremendous stress on everyone in the community. The teachers at the time were overwhelmed with the instructional time that had been lost and the personal devastation they suffered. The researcher believes that these unfortunate events placed an undeniable hardship on the data collection process and teacher response rates to each of the collection instruments.

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Appendix A  
2016/2017 School Performance

## 2016/2017 School Performance

### School Performance

Performance of Students on the NC End-of-Course Tests: Percentage of Students at Level 1 ( Limited Command of knowledge and skills)

LEVEL 1	English II	Math I	Biology
Our School	30.9%	21.4%	30.2%
District	29.0%	15.1%	28.6%
State	19.3%	22.4%	23.4%
N/A = < 5% of students; 95% $\geq$ 95%			

Performance of Students on the NC End-of-Course Tests: Percentage of Students at Level 2 ( Partial Command of knowledge and skills)

LEVEL 2	English II	Math I	Biology
Our School	22.2%	11.6%	25.8%
District	20.6%	9.7%	22.8%
State	20.0%	13.3%	20.5%
N/A = < 5% of students; 95% $\geq$ 95%			

Performance of Students on the NC End-of-Course Tests: Percentage of Students at Level 3 ( Sufficient Command of knowledge and skills)

*Students performing at Level 3 are performing at grade level.*

LEVEL 3	English II	Math I	Biology
Our School	10.3%	14.2%	9.2%
District	10.3%	17.1%	10.3%
State	10.6%	10.2%	8.7%
N/A = < 5% of students; 95% $\geq$ 95%			

Performance of Students on the NC End-of-Course Tests: Percentage of Students at Level 4 ( Solid Command of knowledge and skills)

*Students scoring at Level 4 meet NC Standard for College-and Career-Readiness and are performing at or above grade level.*

LEVEL 4	English II	Math I	Biology
Our School	34.5%	48.4%	25.8%
District	37.8%	48.8%	28.7%
State	44.8%	38.1%	30.7%
N/A = < 5% of students; 95% $\geq$ 95%			

Performance of Students on the NC End-of-Course Tests: Percentage of Students at Level 5 ( Superior Command of knowledge and skills)

*Students scoring at Level 5 meet NC Standard for College-and Career-Readiness and are performing at or above grade level.*

LEVEL 5	English II	Math I	Biology
Our School	N/A	N/A	9.0%
District	N/A	9.3%	9.6%
State	5.3%	16.0%	16.8%
N/A = < 5% of students; 95% $\geq$ 95%			

## Appendix B

### Student Engagement Observation Tool



## Appendix C

### Survey Questions

## Survey Questions

I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. My dissertation topic is The Teacher's Role in Student Engagement. I am asking you to take a 10-minute Likert Item Survey about your perceptions regarding student engagement. The purpose of the study is to look closely at teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement. You do not have to provide your name or address, only your gender, years of service, and the grade levels that you teach. Please read every question carefully.

The researcher will collect all data using teacher codes without your name. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity. Mark only one answer.

Thank you for agreeing to take the survey.

1. About how many years have you been in your current position?  

Less than 1 year	At least 1 year but less than 4	At least 4 years but less than 10	10 years or more
------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------
2. What is your gender?  

Male	Female
------	--------
3. What grade levels do you teach?  

Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Grades 9-10	Grades 10-11	Grades 11-12	Grades 9-12
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is your responsibility to engage and motivate students?  

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
----------------------	----------	-------	----------------
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have adequate resources and strategies to use when students are not engaged?  

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
----------------------	----------	-------	----------------
6. In your opinion what percentage of students in your classes are highly engaged and motivated?  

≤25%	26 – 50%	51-75%	>75%
------	----------	--------	------
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have high expectations for all of your students?  

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
----------------------	----------	-------	----------------
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you care that all your students learn.  

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
----------------------	----------	-------	----------------

Continued

Continued

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the skill level of students in your class is below your expectations?
- |                   |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your students need more support than you can give them during class?
- |                   |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that technology helps to engage students in your class?
- |                   |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
12. To what extent do you agree or disagree that your classroom culture supports learning for all students?
- |                   |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you are good at engaging students?
- |                   |          |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|



Appendix D  
Questionnaire

### Questionnaire

I am a doctoral student at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. My dissertation topic is The Teacher's Role in Student Engagement. I am asking you to complete this questionnaire about your perceptions regarding student engagement. The purpose of the study is to look closely at teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement. Please read every question carefully and respond honestly.

The researcher will collect all data using teacher codes without your name. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way, and only the researcher will know your identity.

Thank you for agreeing to complete the questionnaire.

1. Gender M ☐ F ☐

2. What is the number of years you have been teaching?

3. Describe the behavior of students who you would consider engaged in your classroom?

4. Tell me about your perceptions of personalizing student learning experiences.

Continued

5. How do you respond to students who you consider lacking engagement in your classroom?

6. What evidence do you have that your students are engaged?

Continued

7. What are your best instructional strategies for engaging students?

## Appendix E

### Teacher Consent Form

## Teacher Consent Form

Title: The Teacher's Role in Student Engagement: A Mixed Method Study

You are being invited to take part in a research study. The following information is being provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in this study. It is your choice whether or not to participate, additionally you may withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with this school, district, or the researcher. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all research notes and documents
- Keeping notes, questionnaires, and any other identifying participant information in a locked file cabinet in the personal possession of the researcher.

The purpose of the study is to look closely at teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement.

Data collection will take place in three stages: Stage one - You will be asked to complete a questionnaire regarding your expectations and perceptions of student engagement in your classroom. Stage two – You will be asked to take a 10-minute Likert Item Survey about your perceptions regarding student engagement. Stage three - The researcher will observe in your classroom for at least 3, 15-minute snapshots of student engagement. The researcher will collect all data using teacher codes without your name. All digital data will be password protected.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions about the study before or during participation in the study. Upon completion of the study, data will be available to the school as a means to share the research findings. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way and only the researcher will know your identity.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation are the information teacher expectations and perceptions of student engagement and student achievement.

The researcher, Anita Grove, will make final results available by May 30, 2019. You may contact the researcher at [agrove@hcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:agrove@hcs.k12.nc.us) to receive a copy of the final results. No individual results will be available. Your participation will remain confidential.

Please sign this consent form. You are signing it with the full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix F

Table 28 Behaviors of Students Who You Would Consider Engaged

**Table 28**

Behaviors of Students Who You Would Consider Engaged

<b>Describe the behavior of students who you would consider engaged in your classroom?</b>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>My engaged students</b>
101618A	Respond to questions, ask questions, take notes, and follow directions.
101718B	Are attentive, focused, and actively involved in discussion/lessons.
101718C	Working on assignments, take notes, ask questions, and help peers.
102318D	Eyes are on task, computer, teacher, paper. They read, write, nod, and speak relevant to the task.
113018E	Collaborate more than others, show self-determination, are not disruptive.
110118F	Actively ask and respond to questions, take notes, and complete assignments
112618G	Are excited and highly energetic
102918H	Range from silent to cannot stop talking. Their behavior is as diverse as they are themselves. Some of my students follow Kolb's learning style where they transverse from reflective observation to active experimentation. They have to think/watch before they move to think/do. There are times when engagement is quiet and times when it is loud and verbal.
101618I	Take notes, participate, look, listen, ask questions, contribute, sit up.
110618J	Participate with their hands up ready to answer questions, give explanations of concepts they've learned and mastered. Students that are quiet can be engaged as they sit to the front of the class, make eye contact with me often during the lesson, and take precise notes.
110618K	Take notes, listen, and collaborate with other students to complete assignments.
110218L	Have plans for after high school, Community, Technical, 4-year college, Armed forces, or the world of work. Work to move to the next level. Their behavior is on target, and they are focused.
110718M	Participate in discussion, responding to questions throughout the lesson, actively work without being redirected. Students that are engaged willingly participate in the lesson without me having to force them to engage and participate.
110718N	Focus on the task, follow directions, ask questions when needed, respond, make connections between content and the real world, are able to work and collaborate in groups, and produce quality work.
102918O	Ask questions, discuss with group mates, practice, brainstorm.
110718P	Actively listen and participate in class discussions, activities, and are prepared for class. Give 100%



## Appendix G

Table 29 Perceptions of Personalizing Student Learning Experiences

**Table 29**

## Perceptions of Personalizing Student Learning Experiences

<b>Tell me about your perceptions of personalizing student-learning experiences.</b>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Perceptions of Personalizing Student Learning Experiences</b>
101618A	Teachers should have the majority, if not full, reign and autonomy in designing effective personalized student learning experiences. Learning objectives, instructional approaches are optimized for the needs of each learner. When a teacher has come to know the dynamics of individual students and the class as a whole, then he or she should be able to design student-learning experiences while also fulfilling state-mandated requirements. More classrooms contain various learners, as well as learning styles, it has become even more important for teachers to have autonomy and be able to personalize student-learning experiences.
101718B	Each student learns differently. I try to incorporate learning through auditory, kinesthetic and visually. Ex. Review curriculum materials where students listen/read, I reinforce it by reviewing it and finally we do some sort of lab/clinical assignment.
101718C	Every lesson needs to reach every student, therefore, with different learning styles comes personalized learning experiences. This is why I put more emphasis on PBC (practice based coaching) than on the testing of concepts.
102318D	Seeing a student for how she/he is/was made. Seeing what a student lacks/needs and responding in depth. Constructing lessons that match student learning preferences. Knowing student backgrounds, stories, and how they affect the student.
113018E	It is very important to personalize a student's learning experience because not every student learns the same. The pace of instruction is important as part of student learning. Most students are able to design their own learning experience so that it will align with the things that interest them the most.
110118F	My perception of personalizing learning experiences is when instruction is altered to accommodate the needs of the student. For the OCS student, the assignments are tailored to meet their needs, ex: not as many questions on test, and graphic organizers. for the advanced student, more rigorous assignments that require resarch and writing assignments.
112618G	Tasking but yet rewarding.
102918H	The pedagogy in personalizing student learning allows for a teaching environment where all educational needs are met. I can tailor the

(continued)

Respondent	Perceptions of Personalizing Student Learning Experiences
	learning to adjust for reading levels, specific interest, through differentiated instruction. Thus supports the student, all enhances learning.
101618I	I think personalizing learning experiences is a good thing for younger learners; however, when you are in our secondary years it should be changed to help prepare youth for post secondary. Also, differentiation needs to be used for those beginning learners who may not have a style of learning yet.
110618J	Personalized student learning experiences as classrooms are changing from teacher-centered to student-centered. Students are becoming owners of their learning. They are the ones that set the pace of their learning, have tools, and goals from their own interest. My perceptions of the personalized student learning experiences are that they promote student choice, their ability to learn anywhere and anytime, and this gives the teacher time to give students feedback that is meaningful. This also allows teachers to provide individualized learning tools for student success.
110618K	I identify the student's best practice of learning early in instruction though engaging students in different learning environments. With my students, I've witnessed the best practices to be hand on.
110218L	On the job training is a key factor. However, first things first. The basics has to be taught and understood before going on the job training site. Experience is a good teacher. They are in an environment that they want to work in, it opens their eyes.
110718M	My perception about personalizing students learning experiences are that not every student learns the same. That is why you should use differentiation in the classroom. This helps to give you more than one method to get the information to the student. Each student can see it in a way that they feel is comfortable to them.
110718N	Personalizing instruction makes it relatable and relevant to their life. Acknowledgement of various learning styles will have you to use various learning strategies in the class being honest about the strategies selected or the differentiation in the class.
102918O	I like to run my class like a melting pot. Each student has unique perspectives and experiences that they can bring to the table. I have to find the way to unlock those things in each student.
110718P	I think that personalizing students learning experiences means to cater to your students learning style and environment preference. Visual, hands-on, or auditory.

## Appendix H

Table 30 How Teachers Respond to Student Lacking Engagement in the Classroom

**Table 30**

How Teachers Respond to Student Lacking Engagement in the Classroom

<b>How do you respond to students who you consider lacking engagement in your classroom?</b>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>How I respond</b>
101618A	I ask the student if they are okay. I ask them to repeat what has been discussed. I ask for their suggestions as to how they might become engaged. I place students in pairs or in small groups. I use technology, and ask them to research specific information relating to the class learning targets to stir up discussion.
101718B	Try to find what is lacking the students interest. I interview them to find what's interesting to them and encourage them to participate.
101718C	Try to figure out what is missing to motivate the student to perform. After several tries, I move onto others. Occasionally is not a problem, but every day is.
102318D	Call student name stealthily mid-sentence/lesson, tap student, keep work engaging by design, say student name and ask them to get on task, construct grading to support engagement.
113018E	I try to see what works for each student on a personal level, and to engage them in the class as much as possible. My class is more of a hands on class, but some students learn a little more by reading and working independently.
110118F	I have a discussion about his/her performance. If no improvement, I contact the parents and ask for assistance with the issue. I make myself available for tutoring during lunch time and afterschool. I contact the guidance counselor and school social worker for help. I notify my administrator for assistance if the student still refuses to engage.
112618G	I try to avoid "dead time", during the 90-minute class I have at least three different goals to accomplish. I start with a bell ringer which leads to a quick write. During instruction, 15 – 20 minutes, all eyes on me. After the lesson student questions (oral or written). Brief discussion for clarification. Student implementation (changing teaching styles) when education is moving students tend to stay on task.
102918H	
101618I	I usually focus on those students who lack engagement in my classroom first to gain their attention. I then refer back to them from time to time to maintain engagement.

(continued)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>How I respond</b>
110618J	For my students whom I consider are lacking the engagement required for my classroom, I respond to them by differentiating assignments to make them more meaningful and relatable to the student. For instance, in my class, I implement real-life applications that students can relate to and that align with the standards to be mastered.
110618K	I provide opportunities to review and reassess retained knowledge, i.e., extra credit, test, retake. After school tutoring. Most of all encourage and support to engage the student on a personal level.
110218L	I try to encourage them by talking about their goals, future plans in life. I also let them know that in life you reap what you sow. You get out what you put in. In contact parents, guardians, and administration.
110718M	Students that lack engagement in my classroom, I try to redirect them or use interactive activities that will get them to participate in what is going on in the classroom. I try to ask them the questions without trying to single them out, or get them to participate without making them the key point of the discussion.
110718N	Sometimes we have a private conversation, sometimes a call to the parent, move the seat, create a new strategy for that child, or force him/her to complete the work as designed.
102918O	I try to figure out where the disconnect is and connect it. Students are disengaged for a myriad of reasons ranging from abidance issues to lack of understanding to lack of relevance. Fix one or all of those things and they will engage.
110718P	Behavior issues due to lack of engagement are handled through the disciplinary system. Redirect students who are off task. Provide opportunities to interact. Ask for student input to help with focus, change routine so things aren't stale and boring, use white boards.

## Appendix I

Table 31 Evidence Students are Engaged

**Table 31**

Evidence Students are Engaged

<b>What evidence do you have that your students are engaged?</b>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Evidence Students are Engaged</b>
101618A	Student Response, when students are doing what they are supposed to do. When they feel comfortable enough to share their journal prompt entries with others, and when the overall average of the class is 80% or higher.
101718B	Performance on classwork, homework, quizzes, tests. Analyzing their involvement in class assignments
101718C	Completed assignments, conversations, genuine interest in activities.
102318D	When students' eyes are on me, facing me; eyes on each other; listening, responding to each other/me relevantly; writing on task; exit ticket.
113018E	I have benchmark numbers and the hands on work that the students do in class. The benchmark give the number to show those students that are proficient in your course.
110118F	Test, quiz results writing assignment responses, on task behavior.
112618G	Assessment results.
102918H	When students can apply lessons to their life, discussions, written work, application of lesson, using what is learned in another class, when they can show a deeper understanding of the work.
101618I	The use of exit tickets, random checks, and other similar methods provide evidence of engagement or lack of engagement and even engagement that is unsatisfactory.
110618J	Evidence that shows my students are engaged could be both formative and informative assessments, effective questioning tools in class discussion, and partner engagement conversations. These all allow myself to hear the responses and justification of solutions from the students to understand if they were engaged. Listening to the lesson. This should yield my students being proficient in their understanding.
110618K	Student/parent feedback. I have students excelling in my class, students engaged daily that show poor engagement in other classes via grades. Also student participation which is a direct result of student grades.
110218L	I mentor my students and look at their data from assessments. I look at peer observations. My students participate. Engaged students are not always successful or proficient.
110718M	Evidence that my students are engaged are grades, participation, discussion, interactions they have towards doing their work without re-direction.

(continued)



<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Evidence Students are Engaged</b>
110718N	Work, finished product, look in their eyes light bulb goes off
102918O	When they are engaged, they produce a product that is better than the last thing they did.
110718P	Active participation, grades, completed assignments, being on task, do what is expected by following rules, thus no discipline issues.

## Appendix J

Table 32 Best Instructional Strategies for Engaging Students

**Table 32**

## Best Instructional Strategies for Engaging Students

<b>What are your best instructional strategies for engaging students?</b>	
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>My best instructional strategies for engaging students.</b>
101618A	Presenting a critical focus/essential question and mandating a minimum of three complete sentences. Beginning the semester with high expectations of respect, as well as classroom behavioral expectations. Incorporating technology in the classroom, and asking “stand-by” questions in which students use their Chromebook in order to discover the correct response(s). Allow students to lead the class. Allow students to assess each other’s work. Allow students to work in pairs or groups. Incorporating mini video clips. Limiting lecture time. Creating competition in the classroom. Allowing students to personalize assignments by adding drawings, poetry, photos, etc. To meet every student where he/she is and cater to their learning needs.
101718B	Cognitive or summarizing strategies that engage students to directly correlate with the curriculum. This includes exit slips, concept mapping, the Frayer model, demonstrations, etc.
101718C	Giving the content to them in different ways. It depends on the subject. Helping students to more than what is required by providing rubrics.
102318D	Having them do things I would do. Be engaging. Watch their eyes and body language to observe content of their writing. Give them ownership. Being Fair. Have them repeat after me. Change classroom setting often. Give them jobs. Being a good role model. Listening to my students. Being caring and consistent. Entering grades regularly. Communicating with parents regularly
113018E	To engage students it is important to allow them to create original work, allow students to collaborate with each other through warm-ups or class discussion. I think it is also important to teach them that they should work together because they can learn from each other. Classroom management is also an important classroom strategy. When students move I feel that helps them to stay focused a little more. Quick writes in my class is another way to grab a student's attention. Give the students time in class to teach each other. Last minute Icebreakers are also good to do to get students to communicate a little more with each other. Allowing the students to learn one way and then review with them another way.

(Continued)

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>My best instructional strategies for engaging students.</b>
110118F	Always cover learning target before starting a new lesson. Question for understanding verbally and quiz, group work - sometimes the student feels more comfortable asking a peer for clarification rather than the teacher. Summarize, and review.
112618G	Hands on activities.
102918H	Make it meaningful - Have them need to know. Provide enough autonomy, supply time for collaboration, create a positive student/teacher relationship, let them know you care, use a variety of teaching styles, allow the students to teach, balance praise with constructive criticism, give or allow as much student autonomy as possible, ie., pick topic, create rubrics, decide on which date to quiz/test.
101618I	Random checks, discussion questions (HOTS), bell ringers, think-pair-share, graphic organizers, agenda, short lecture, student as teacher, choice, individual attention/assistance
110618J	Some of my bet instructional strategies for engaging students are teacher demonstration, think-pair-share, whiteboards-up Activities, scavenger hunts, competitions with technology-based learning games, team learning matching activities.
110618K	Demonstration, hands on, daily, weekly, and monthly assessments, repetitions, technology, including but not limited to youtube videos, presentations, public speaking.
110218L	Cooperative learning-working in groups, peer tutoring, students as teachers
110718M	Strategies for engaging students are interactive activities, hands on, and activities when students can get up and move around.
110718N	Producing talk shows (comprehension), producing trading cards, each one give one, foldables, (comprehension, summarizing), free form maps, raft assignments (role, audience, form and topic,) skits and dramatizations
102918O	Talk to them, let them know why, trick them through "fun", give them responsibilities which actually mean something.
110718P	Relate material to real world situations, class discussions, white boards (easy way to access students at a glance), competition games