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# Engaging Adolescent Boys in Classroom Learning: What Teachers Need to Know About Adolescents and the First Years of Teaching an Elective in a Secondary School

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# ENGAGING ADOLESCENT BOYS IN CLASSROOM LEARNING: WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ADOLESCENTS AND THE FIRST YEARS OF TEACHING AN ELECTIVE IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

What are the predominant factors that contribute to adolescent boys' lack of classroom engagement, and what can teachers do to engage them in the classroom content? This literature review examines motivating and engaging boys in a secondary content area classroom. Itc focus is on several ways in which teachers can make adjustments to increase engagement based on changes that take place in adolescent boys and how these changes affect their classroom engagement. These are broken into six categories: Classroom Management, Students Disposition Toward School, Academic Performance and Expectations, Engagement, Professional Studies, and Motivation.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

For new and experienced teachers, engaging students in classroom learning can be one of the most challenging responsibilities. “Delivering instruction in a public-school classroom is a demanding job. Teachers are increasingly asked to accommodate students whose off-task and disruptive behaviors inhibit their own learning and the learning of other students in the class” (Scott, Hirn, & Alter, 2014, p. 193). For those who teach secondary education, it’s important to be knowledgeable about adolescents brains, for their brains affect their bodies, their emotions, and major structural changes are still taking place. According to Santrock (2011), as adolescents develop, connections between neurons in the brain become pruned and by the end of adolescence, they have fewer, more effective connections as they did when they were younger, “and this pruning indicates the activities adolescents choose to engage in and not to engage in influence which neural connections will be strengthened and which will disappear” (p. 36).

Additionally, a lot happens in the bodies of adolescents. “Adolescents have to manage major biological, educational, and social role transitions concurrently. Learning how to deal with pubertal changes, emotionally invested partnerships, and sexuality becomes a matter of considerable importance” (Bandura, 1997, p. 178). Also, self-esteem changes as children develop, according to Santrock (2011), both boys and girls had high self-esteem in childhood but their self-esteem dropped considerably in early adolescence. Santrock (2011) noted, “Male student’s self-esteem often varies across different domains, such as academic, athletic, physical appearance, and social skills” (p. 94). For instance, many adolescent males may have lower self-esteem in a writing class, which negatively affects classroom engagement, while they may have higher self-esteem in a math class, which positively affects classroom engagement. According to Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2008), positive self-esteem is attributed to emotional intelligence

which has been linked to high academic grades in adolescents. “Emotional intelligence, a sense of personal responsibility and positive self-esteem, has been associated with positive academic, personal, and social outcomes among adolescents” (p. 15). Noor and Hanafi (2017) also positively linked emotional intelligence to academic competence. They discussed emotional intelligence as an emerging adulthood characteristic that is similar to students exploring their own identity and looking inward at themselves. This enhances students’ academic performance, because they display positive emotions about themselves and their peers. “Emerging adults with good emotional skills, usually feel good about themselves and have a positive relationship with others and develop support networks” (p. 161). Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found that high school boys who were confident in their academic competency strongly impacted school performance and their willingness to complete activities in which they felt confident, rather than putting themselves at risk for failure. Qualter, Garner, Pope, Hutchinson, and Whiteley (2011), claimed a positive correlation between emotional skills, cognitive development, and emotional knowledge as these predict academic competence in adolescents. “Poor emotional competence amongst adolescents results in school difficulties and is associated with subsequent academic underachievement, such as school drop-out and persistent antisocial behavior” (p. 83). Smith and Wilhelm (2002) discussed boys admission to giving up quickly on tasks and assignments and completely avoiding the activities in which they felt they lacked competence, the challenge of the task or activity didn’t concern them, or the lack of confidence in their ability to succeed at it.

According to Kessels and Steinmayr (2013), boys reported spending less time on homework than girls, coming to school unprepared, acting up in class, and failing to complete assignments. “Boys are less motivated than girls and spend less time doing homework along with having lower expectations of themselves and being less enthusiastic about continuing their

studies" (Lam, Jimerson, Kikas, Cefai, Veiga, Nelson,... & Zollneritsch, 2012, p. 80). Along with positive attitudes toward learning and coming to school prepared, girls have an overall better attitude when asking for help from the teacher than boys; "boys reported a significantly higher expedient help-seeking goals, meaning that boys tended to ask for help in order to avoid working hard and to get answers quickly without much effort" (Kessels & Steinmayr, 2013, p. 234).

Sarroub and Pernicek (2016) stated, "because the assessment and accountability climate has driven curricula further away from the needs of boys, their attitudes, self-concepts, and perceptions are negatively influencing their motivation, leading some into reading failure and a lack of academic progress" (p. 28). According to Rowe (2000), one main reason for the observed gender differences in performance, attitudes, and behaviors, is "since the early 1990s there has been a notable increase in the demand for higher levels of operational literacy, especially verbal reasoning and written communication skills in school education, areas in which girls, on average, have distinct maturational and socialization advantages" (p. 6). Rowe (2000) also relayed evidence-based research which indicated "boys are significantly more disengaged with schooling and more likely to be at risk of academic underachievement, especially in literacy" (p. 3).

Merriam-Webster (2018) defined literacy as "the ability to read and write" as well as "knowledge that relates to a specified subject." According to data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as of 2013 adolescent girls outscored adolescent boys in literacy achievement by ten points (NAEP, 2013). Weaver-Hightower (2003) stated that historically, boys' education has been prioritized over girls', and boys have received many more opportunities and encouragement to succeed academically. This doesn't align with Hartley and Sutton's (2013) examination of the role of gendered academic stereotypes in boys. "Stereotype threat occurs when individuals' task performance suffers as a result of their awareness that the

social group they belong to is not expected to do well" (p. 1716). The results highlighted how boys' performance can be impaired via negative comparison to girls' performance.

In schools across the country, improving literacy scores has been a top priority since the late 1980s. In 1988, the U.S. Congress called on the Department of Education to support a national literacy survey of America's adults. Findings from that survey suggested that 40% of America's population lacked adequate literacy skills. According to the United States Department of Education (2002), changing economic times lead to an increase in literacy requirements in the workplace. "Congress passed the National Literacy Act of 1991, the purpose of which is "to enhance the literacy and basic skills of adults, to ensure that all adults in the United States acquire the basic skills necessary to function effectively and achieve the greatest possible opportunity in their work and in their lives, and to strengthen and coordinate adult literacy programs" (p. xiii).

Additional arguments that schools in the U.S. were no longer applicable to boys indicated that recess and playtime decreased as a result of the focus on improving literacy rates. Sommers (2013) described the emergence of additional boy averse trends as "the decline of recess, punitive zero-tolerance policies, myths about juvenile 'superpredators,' and misguided campaigns against single-sex schooling. As our schools become more feelings centered, risk-averse, competition-free, and sedentary, they move further and further from the characteristic sensibilities of boys" (p. 2).

One of the characteristic sensibilities of boys is their masculinity and how their peers observe their behavior. According to Martino (2000), there is pressure among boys to display a cool attitude and to not look like a 'geek'. This is in opposition to the boys who listen to the teacher, do the work during class, and have a high GPA, as well as the boys who think it's cool

to be disengaged during class and hide their potential from peers. “The footballers establish themselves at the top of the pecking order of masculinities in school. They differentiate themselves from boys who choose to work hard in class, do not play football, go to the library over lunch to complete an assignment, or otherwise do not meet the criteria for acting cool” (Martino, 2000, p.106). “Adolescent males endorse masculinity with norms related to physical toughness, autonomy, emotional stoicism, and heterosexual prowess. In line with the importance of maintaining their reputations, boys also tend to hide their feelings and mask their emotions” (Amin, Kagesten, Adebayo, & Chandra-Mouli, 2018, p. 3). According to Sommers (2013), in order to become one of the boys, they must hide those parts of themselves that are most like their mothers. While many boys hide their feelings, become quiet, and disengage, in order to make an effort not to display their emotions in front of their peers, preserving their reputation, others become upset, possibly displaying violence toward other peers or items in the classroom. “To be a real boy or man in such a culture means to be able to hurt without feeling hurt, to separate without feeling sadness or loss, and then to inflict hurt and separation on others” (p. 118).

When adolescent boys are disengaged in school, they also display low self-confidence, lack motivation to complete their school work, and develop a decrease in perceived self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capability, whereas self-esteem is concerned with judgments of self-worth. It refers to beliefs in one’s own capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. When adolescent boys believe they don’t have the ability to successfully complete a task or activity, they don’t put forth as much effort as they would if they believed they had the ability. Research by Covington and Omelich (1985) on effort and ability attributions found the greater degree of shame experienced by failure-avoiding subjects under high-effort conditions

reflected their greater concern for ability as a source of worth. In a related study by Miller and Atkinson (2001), a boy with academic difficulties compensated for his low expectations by expending greater effort, only to become further discouraged when he continued to receive low grades. “His confidence in his ability to improve his academic performances via his own efforts was tenuous, at best” (p. 330). These researchers described the boy’s lack of confidence in his ability as that which led to a mindset that something was wrong with him. As a result, he began to make excuses for his failed efforts, said they were outside of his control, and made self-handicapping strategies to cope. These included procrastination, over-involvement in extra and co-curricular activities, and making mental health excuses for failures. “Although those self-handicapping strategies allow students to externalize responsibility for failures, they are counterproductive because they ultimately limit the likelihood of future success by disengaging students from the learning process” (Miller & Atkinson, 2001, p. 324).

Deci (1995) maintained that in order to feel motivated, a person must feel competent and effective. Motivation increases when students see progress. “An individual’s own performance offers the most reliable guide for assessing efficacy. Successes raise efficacy and failure lowers it, but once a strong sense of efficacy is developed, a failure may not have as much of an impact” (Schunk, 1991, p. 208). According to Zimmerman (2000), self-efficacy is highly correlated with students intrinsic interests and students success in course work. According to Patrick, Gentry, Moss, and McIntosh (2015), gifted students can become easily disengaged in coursework when they feel they aren’t being challenged, the content is uninteresting, it’s not relevant to their future goals, or they label the assignment as ‘busy’ work. Students who are engaged during the learning process achieve better grades, which is the opposite for students who are disengaged, as they face risks of disrupting class and or dropping out of school (Guvenc, 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to identify the factors that contribute to a lack of classroom engagement for adolescent boys and what teachers can do to reengage them in the learning process. The Brown Center Report on American Education (2015) defined student engagement as "the intensity with which students apply themselves to learning in school" (p. 27).

Student engagement has three primary domains: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2016). The first domain, cognitive engagement, is focused on students' internal investment in the learning process (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2016). Aside from a lack of ability, boys disengage with classroom activities because they fail to see the relevance between the curriculum and their future lives. "People only put forth effort to participate in activities in which they see the relevance of it to the real-world or their lives; therefore, teachers must implement activities that allow students to see this connection" (Barnes & Bramley, 2008, p. 21). Additionally, boys report negative experiences from schooling (whether they enjoy going to school and participating or not), if they have a positive or negative perception of how the curriculum relates to their lives, and how they're received by the teacher. Boys want to know whether the effort their putting into their coursework will affect their future lives by asking teachers if the content serves a purpose and will apply to real-life situations in the future. "Students want to experience work that is *meaningful,* not easy: they want to work with ideas that matter, solve real problems, learn from each other, people in their communities, and experts in the subjects they are studying, engage in dialogue in their classes, and know that their learning contributes to making a difference in the world" (Dunleavy, Milton, & Crawford, 2010, p. 1). Gurian and Stevens (2005) noted these students are also hypersensitive when the relevance of the courses is unclear or there is no opportunity to apply what is learned in the real-world. Similarly, boys routinely feel what they are learning is worthless to them as it doesn't apply to

their future career, which ultimately decreases motivation. According to Harrington (2002), "the boys that had left secondary school in pursuit of a job, claim they were able to learn practical, real skills, on the job, that could be applied directly to their current employment requirements, thereby linking the relevance of their learning to its application" (p. 19). It also creates an opportunity to leave school early to enter the workforce and earn the same amount a skilled worker, giving them a short-term wage advantage (Shi, Zhang, Ma, Yi, Liu, Johnson, . . & Rozelle, 2015).

The second domain, emotional engagement, is determined by feelings of belongingness to the classroom, school, or by the teacher (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2016). "Belonging is defined as students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by teachers and peers in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25). "Belongingness, or the feeling of being supported and accepted by others, is also critical of adolescents' success in school. In the literature, support from friends, peers, and teachers have all been found to promote higher levels of motivation, engagement, and academic achievement" (Van Ryzin, Gravely, & Roseth, 2009, p. 2). When adolescent boys feel left out, or that they don't fit in with their peers or their teacher, they become disengaged with classroom activities and their grades suffer. "Results of a variety of studies converge on the consistent finding that perceiving a sense of belonging or connectedness with one's school is related to positive academic, psychological, and behavioral outcomes during adolescence" (Anderman, 2002, p. 796). Of note, adolescents begin to take notice of the changes and compare themselves to others. Boys, in particular, compare their masculinity with boys around them at school. Noticing all of these changes can lead to negative

self-perception and translate to poor attitudes, behaviors, grades, and low self-confidence. All of these combine to increase disengagement in classrooms and schools.

Harrington (2002) studied the alarming rate at which boys in Australia drop out of secondary schools. “There appears to be a disparity between boys’ ideal schooling constructions and their experienced schooling reality; analysis of their narratives illustrates how antithetical their relationship is to each other” (p. 19). Harrington also stated, “most indicated feelings of bitterness about the (mis)use of power and authority vested in teachers and that teachers subscribed to a put-up with what I’m saying, or shut-up attitude when working with students; most students claimed that teachers showed little care and were inattentive towards student individual learning needs” (p. 7). Students value teachers who take the time to get to know them and respect their individual contributions and abilities, ultimately allowing them to feel comfortable when offering their ideas and opinions during class, motivating them to pursue success (Heron, 2003). In fact, “Teacher patience and extra help were two of the most significant conditions for rewarding classroom experiences” (Heron, 2003, p. 577). The impact a teacher can make helping students feel a sense of belonging in the classroom or school is identifiable by the students’ motivation in class. Peers also play a large part in predicting a positive school experience, “During adolescence, a period in which youngsters need to be accepted by their peer group, the support of this group has been found to predict greater satisfaction with school experience” (Muscara, Pace, Passanisi, D’Urso, & Zapulla, 2018, p. 2691).

The third domain, behavioral engagement, relates to students’ behaviors and participation in classroom activities, academics, co-curricular activities, sports, and any other school-related activities (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2016). More specifically, “students who identify with their school are more likely to conform to classroom rules and regulations, and students who

believe in their ability to control the outcome of their educational experience are much more likely to work hard, complete homework, be attentive in mathematics and English classes, and score higher on achievement tests" (Fall & Roberts, 2011, p. 17). McNeal (1998) noted, "Participation in extracurricular activities is associated with higher educational aspirations and expectations, higher levels of academic achievement, higher levels of educational attainment, higher levels of self-esteem, and a lower likelihood of dropping out of high school" (p. 2).

In an effort to accommodate all students by ensuring each of them realizes a positive experience in all three engagement domains (i.e. cognitive, emotional, and behavioral), many teachers become emotionally and physically exhausted, which leads to an overt display of low self-efficacy in the classroom. "Teachers' self-efficacy influences their teaching behaviors and their students' motivation and achievement. Teachers with low self-efficacy experience greater difficulties in teaching, higher levels of job-related stress, and lower levels of job satisfaction" (Klassen & Chiu, 2010, p. 741). Stress and loss of job satisfaction reduce teachers sense of accomplishment, the direct results of which include poor classroom management skills, poor classroom pacing, and poor evaluations of their teaching. All of these combine to decrease instructional time and increase student redirection due to negative behavior.

Many times stress leads to teacher burnout. "As teacher burnout increases, both the thoroughness of classroom preparation and the involvement in the classroom activities decline while student criticism increases. In response, students are likely to change their perception of the teacher, their feelings towards the teacher, and their behavior in the classroom" (Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Garn, Kulik, & Fahlman, 2015, p. 4). Consequently, students' sense of self-efficacy in school often declines. Teacher burnout also reduces students' intrinsic motivation, "the enactment of the activity for its own sake (i.e. for excitement, enjoyment, and

interest in that is inherent to the learning itself)" (Guvenc, 2015, p. 648) which decreases classroom learning and engagement (Shen et al., 2015). Guvenc (2015) added that students' negative perceptions of the teacher's competence and motivational support impact their controlled motivation, which is related to anxiety, failure, and underachievement. Unfortunately for students and their scholastic successes, these positively correlate with disaffection. Disaffection takes place when there is no mental participation in class. Disaffection includes negative elements such as boredom, anxiety, and frustration in the classroom (Guvenc, 2015; Skinner, Marchland, Furrer, & Kindermann, 2008). Disaffection has both a behavioral component (e.g. passivity and withdrawal from participation in learning activities) and an emotional component (Skinner et al., 2008).

**Guiding Questions and Rationale**

Prior to earning my license as a business teacher in Fall 2017, it never occurred to me that students would become disengaged in classroom discussions, activities, and projects. I thought the mere act of taking an elective, (e.g. accounting), would automatically increase student excitement and participation. Then, I began teaching full-time in Fall 2018, and I couldn't believe my eyes, the disengaged students were predominantly boys.

For students in the school at which I teach, students can select Business, Pottery, or Foods One. I discovered students signed up for business classes because they wanted to, their parents made them, the dean thought it would be a good idea, or they simply didn't want to take another elective. Of the students who elected to take business classes, I wondered why such a disproportionate number of male students did not engage in curricular activities, especially as I offer a mix of lecture, discussion, hands-on activities, and project work. Their number one comment was that they were bored (Personal communication, 9/30/2018). I then asked them

what they found boring about the work or activity. The majority were quick to express reasons such as fatigue, laziness and/or lack of motivation, all of which lead to disengagement in class. Of note, those who were unmotivated either spent a multitude of time on their phones and remained quiet and withdrawn, or they sought attention through disruptive means.

For the purpose of this literature review, I examined research that pertained to motivating and engaging boys in a secondary content area classroom. As it relates to my business classroom, I wanted to ascertain how I might actively engage boys in-class lectures, discussions, and classroom activities. More specifically, I aimed to answer the question, "What are the predominant factors that contribute to a lack of classroom engagement for adolescent boys, and what can teachers do to engage them in the classroom content?"

Here in Chapter I, I've described the imperative need to understand the changes taking place in adolescent brains and bodies and how these influence their self-esteem. In Chapter II, I review literature that describes changes that take place in adolescent boys and how these affect classroom engagement. I also review literature that describes ways in which teachers can make adjustments to increase engagement.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

The focus of Chapter II is to review the literature that has examined factors that contribute to a lack of classroom engagement for adolescent boys and what can teachers do to meaningfully engage them. I utilized Academic Search Premier, Educators Reference Complete, Eric, EBSCO MegaFILE, and ProQuest Education for peer-reviewed Journals from 1980 to 2019 via The Bethel University Library. This list was narrowed by reviewing only empirical studies articles from peer-reviewed journals that focused on high schools, secondary education, engagement, motivation, adolescent boys, adolescents, classroom, classroom management, and literacy in reading and math found in journals that addressed the guiding questions. The key words that were used in these searches were "engagement," "adolescent boys," "motivation," "self-efficacy," "activities," "classroom," "disposition," and "classroom management." The search phrases I used were: "engaging boys classroom activities," "self-efficacy adolescent males," "motivating adolescent boys classroom," "adolescents disposition toward school," and "effects classroom management adolescent engagement."

To explain how to get students excited about the content they were learning in class used the search terms "engagement" and "motivation." According to Merriam-Webster (2019) motivation is a reason to act and engagement is a state of being, or an act. From there, I realized that motivation leads to engagement. I also used "self-efficacy" as a search term to learn that which influences a student's behavior either to engage or not engage in the classroom. Self-efficacy is the belief that one can master a situation and produce positive outcomes, along with having a powerful influence over behavior (Bandura, 1997). From this accumulated research, I found that many students come to school with a preconceived notion of school and what their going to get out of it or that their peers often influence how they think about school, which led

me to the search term “disposition.” Disposition is described as “a temperamental make-up or the tendency to act in a certain manner under given circumstances” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). To search for high school aged boys, I used the term “adolescent” as the definition of it is “a young person who is turning into an adult” (Merriam-Webster, 2018). When I selected “engaging adolescent boys,” my search returned journal articles about engaging adolescent boys in regards to the concept of school, which included co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, sports, and their overall involvement around school. To narrow down the information, I used the search term “classroom.” I added the search term “activities” to describe assignments, team projects, or hands-on activities students work on in the classroom, and “classroom management” as I learned that effective student engagement in classroom activities involves structure and routines in which students adhere to a set of rules.

These search terms and phrases I used returned 132 peer reviewed journal articles. As I read through each one, I printed out and articles that pertained to my keywords, documented research that included detailed experiences of observations made during the research process, and concluded with implications for the future/insights for teacher use. Six categories emerged during the review process: Classroom Management, Students Disposition Toward School, Academic Performance and Expectations, Engagement, Professional Studies, and Motivation. As I read through the articles on engagement and motivation, I read more and more about students academic performance and their/their parent’s expectations. While reading about students academic performance, students disposition regarding schooling emerged as a possible issue related to students’ academic performance as well as effective classroom management strategies. As a result of the lack of student engagement in the classroom, many new teachers talked about not feeling sufficiently equipped with classroom management strategies. I ordered the literature

review according to categories by volume of articles from high to low.

**Classroom Management**

Classroom management entails various methods that identify ways teachers can structure the learning environment that includes active engagement. When a classroom has structure, students know what to expect from the teacher, and they know what the teacher expects of them. Davis, Summers, and Miller (2012) stated, "the foundation of all classroom management programs, both traditional and relational, is anticipation and prevention. Thus, teachers are encouraged to structure the learning environment around the goals of optimal student engagement first and nurture the child second" (p. 35).

Froiland and Worrell (2016) provided a summary of how intrinsic motivation, learning goals, engagement, and achievement relate to each other within students' lives in a diverse high school. Previous studies have failed to look at intrinsic motivation, learning goals, engagement, and achievement in concert, which is the purpose of this study. Intrinsic motivation is needed to fulfill deeper engagement, is viewed as an emotional attachment to the content. According to Skinner et al., (2008), "Intrinsic motivation has also been labeled by some researchers as emotional engagement, and researchers have found that emotional engagement predicts the development of behavioral engagement" (p. 321). Intrinsic motivation is internal, it's what drives students' engagement. "In essence, intrinsic motivation to learn leads to students engaging deeply in reading, math, science, and history" (Brophy, 2013; Froiland, 2014; Froiland & Oros, 2014; Froiland & Worrell et al. 2016; Guthrie et al, 2007).

Learning goals are important for student engagement because those who follow and apply them are more likely to focus on their work. According to Froiland and Worrell (2016), learning goals are associated with intrinsic motivation and increased student academic performance in

high school. Students who followed learning goals also had a higher GPA than those who didn't. Froiland and Worrell (2016) wanted to find out if and how intrinsic motivation, learning goals, engagement, and achievement, all working together, can contribute to achievement in high school. Their study included surveys that were conducted with 1,575 students from a diverse high school in San Francisco, CA. Girls and Boys who were of European American descent, African American descent, Latin descent, and mixed races completed the survey. "Current findings indicate that intrinsic motivation has an indirect positive association with GPA via engagement" (Froiland and Worrell, 2016, p. 331). The main results showed that intrinsic motivation was strongly and positively connected to engagement, learning goals and intrinsic motivation were moderately and positively associated with one another, and learning goals and engagement were positively connected to GPA.

Teaching and instruction styles can positively or negatively affect classroom engagement. Jang, Reeve, and Deci (2010) discussed teaching styles and how they affect students' level of engagement. The researchers aimed to determine whether it was more or less helpful when teachers provided students autonomy with or without structure and support. In this article, autonomy refers to teachers who give students the freedom to choose their own topics and/or choose ideas for the assignments that match their interests. Graduate students observed the teachers and classrooms of 133 schools and rated them on a Likert scale (1-7). The rating sheets were divided into three clusters that measured teachers level of autonomy support, structure, and student engagement. According to Jang, Reeve, and Deci (2010), "Correlational and hierarchical linear modeling analyses showed three results: (a) Autonomy support and structure were positively correlated, (b) autonomy support and structure both predicted students' behavioral engagement, and (c) only autonomy support was a unique predictor of students' self-reported

engagement" (p. 588). Results from their study suggested an autonomy supported and structured environment where students are able to choose their topic and are given explicit directions with guidance improves on-task behavior.

Heron (2003) designed a study to understand how low-achieving students and their teachers perceived choice and decision-making roles as they participated in preparing for inquiry-based language arts activities. Ten at-risk teens attended an inquiry-based five-week summer program that was divided among the following subjects: Math, Technology, and Language Arts. Focus group interviews and classroom observations were the primary data sources. The results indicated that students liked to have a choice as to what to study, but they also like it when the teacher makes the decision for them. "While they all agreed that they would love to have their teachers give them more choice in what to study, they admitted that they also like the teachers to give them specific directions and assignments" (p. 571).

Two of the students indicated they liked how a certain teacher conducted the learning environment. Specifically, "They repeatedly mentioned three characteristics that contributed to their love for her and her class: She took the time to get to know them well, she respected their opinions, and she encouraged them to discuss 'real-life' issues" (p. 572). The teacher allowed students to discuss issues among themselves such as violence, family, and race. The students expressed a desire to be involved in hands-on activities where everyone is asked to join in, like acting out scenes of a play. Students claimed to be most bored when teachers lectured. The biggest difference in student participation was shown when teachers took the time to build relationships with the students. "All four of the focus students told me that during the lessons, they tended to feel like valuable contributors in classes where the teacher was patient and offered frequent extra help" (Heron, 2003, p. 576).

An increasingly popular trend in classroom instruction is when teachers are using what's called 'a flipped model of instruction.' Clark (2015) conducted a study on the effects of student engagement while using the flipped model of teacher-led instruction. Forty-two students in an Algebra One class from a rural high school in Texas took part. The purpose of the study was to compare the flipped model of instruction to the traditional model, which is when students listen to teacher-led instruction during class and do their homework at home. According to Clark (2015), when using the flipped model of instruction, students come to class prepared, as they've watched the lecture or instruction at home as homework and came to school prepared to work on the activity centered around the learning. The study also aimed to determine if student engagement increases when using the flipped model versus the traditional method of instruction.

"The students were more actively involved in the flipped classroom than the traditional environment. The researcher's journal documented a student-centered environment within the flipped classroom, where the students worked collaboratively" (Clark, 2015, p.109). Students noted how passive their interactions were during class lectures, prior to using the flipped model, along with how they had limited communication between the teacher and their peers. During the flipped classroom, students witnessed an increase in their classroom participation and communication, which promotes a student-centered classroom environment conducive to learning and success. "Several of the student participants commented how the flipped model of instruction encouraged active engagement and increased their participation in the Algebra One classroom" (p. 103). Another key concept in this study was class time and structure, "Compared to the traditional environment, the student participants argued there was better use of class time with the flipped model of instruction" (p. 104).

The greatest advantage of the flipped classroom was how it required students to study the lesson prior to coming to class, so class time was like a review session. If there was an aspect of the lesson they didn't understand, they could talk about it at the beginning of class. "Students thought the flipped model of instruction was more effective and applicable because of the variety of teaching practices incorporated within this approach. Most of the learning was hands-on, there was group work, project-based learning, and real-world applications" (Clark, 2015, p. 108).

Cassidy, Franco, and Meo (2018) conducted a study to explore, “In what ways can we implement realistic life skill lessons, while adhering to district standards?” (p. 34). This study was undertaken as a result of high school educators realization that students were being taught to regurgitate information upon request, rather than to think, plan, and act independently. Students weren't exposed to life skill concepts like communication skills, goal setting, how to prepare a meal, budgeting, and time management. The study involved eight students from two large charter high schools and took place over a span of two months. Seven of the students in the study were sophomores, two of the boys were on the autism spectrum, two girls and two-additional boys academic levels varied greatly from 3.7 GPA to 2.7. The study also included two recent graduates. Data was collected through interest surveys, smart goals with reflection, and small group discussions on social skills. Smart goals are an acronym for “S- the specific goal, M- measure the time frame of the goal, A- if/why the goal was attainable, R- why the goal was realistic/relevant, and T- specifically how they would manage their time in order to achieve the goal” (p. 38). Smart goals also support time management skills and longitudinal planning , which students stated they knew nothing about.

The interest survey served to provide baseline data for determining the life skills deemed most important by our students, and educators in the study. Life skills that students thought were

most important were interest rates, credit scores, budgeting, creating plans toward completing goals, initiating conversations, dealing with confrontation appropriately, and showing respect during disagreements. Group discussions introduced the topic of social skills. Discussions were followed by role-playing with conversational techniques. Recurring patterns emerged from the surveys, smart goals, and small group discussions, that created themes for the study. Themes highlighted were frustration, the need for follow-through, and challenges related to a lack of social skills.

From the highlighted themes, the following core concepts emerged: planning life skills, realistic implementation, social skills, and practice discussing these topics outside of school. The first core concept, planning life skills, can ease student and teacher frustration. “The subject of life skills was interesting to our students and fellow educators. After taking the survey on life skills, two students were overheard discussing their answer choices for the survey, showing that they had a great interest in the topic” (p. 39). Their interactions revealed they were willing to take educational time to learn more about life skills. The second core concept, realistic implementation, is crucial to acquire life skills. "In all academic and social contexts, the actual utilization of a skill must be put into practice in order for an individual to truly grasp the concept. “Our students expressed many times throughout the duration of this study that they had heard of, or were generally aware of, the various concepts we were introducing. However, their knowledge of the concepts ended when asked how these skills could be personally implemented in their lives" (p. 40). The students learned that skills used to follow through with tasks and goals were just as important as it was to set the goals. The third core concept, social skills, are a necessary component of life skills instruction. The more social skills students have, the more confident they are when talking about their opinions. Students need to understand how to communicate properly

with peers, teachers, and adults. Based on the observations of Jerry and David and their interactions, “we realized their great need for social skills, including initiating conversations, dealing with confrontation appropriately, and showing respect during disagreements” (Cassidy, Franco, & Meo, 2018, p. 41). The fourth core concept, practicing discussion outside of school, pertained to students’ excitement to discuss life skills topics with each other and adults outside of the classroom and school.

New Visions Public Schools (2009) in Brooklyn, New York, adopted the Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) program, which asks students and teachers to draw on the resources found within the community to meet challenges, solve problems, and arrive at learning goals that seem unattainable. Using learnings from teachers and administrators in the district, each example was a metaphorical learning adventure designed to improve student achievement; each one uses an integrative, or interdisciplinary curriculum to enhance student learning. The research, lesson information, and teaching practices were written to determine whether or not curriculum be implemented to enhance student learning by assisting students to see connections among curriculum areas and prepare them for learning outside the classroom. The researchers hypothesized that if the curriculum was implemented to teach students to see connections across curricular areas, students would be better prepared for learning outside the classroom since life outside the classroom is not isolated or compartmentalized. The curricular areas included Physical Education, Spanish, Humanities, Math, Science, and Art. Core subject teachers in literature, math, science, and social studies teachers implemented the project.

The subjects of the study were seventh graders who each chose a question for researchers to address in their study to include in the curriculum. Many of the students selected a question with the topic of reading materials, stating that reading material should be more in-line with their

interests. Students in the study also completed questionnaires and participated in brainstorming processes during class. The data came from teachers who compiled student engagement evidence in a written log, from the list of selected activities, to get a sense of which activities worked well and what about the activities interested the students the most. The instructional concepts that emerged as a result of the students' question selection for the study along with questionnaires prepared and brainstorming sessions were real-life problems, issues pertinent to adolescents and adults, and applying skills from various disciplines. Based on these concepts, New Visions Public Schools put together an interdisciplinary curriculum packet as a teacher e-source to engage students in the classroom.

Glenn (2017) conducted a study with 107 senior high school students from a school in a southern state of the United States. It focused on whether or not effects from the use of 'real-time' data in a digital learning experience called the Marketwatch Game, enhanced student achievement through increased engagement. According to Glenn (2017), "A gap exists when incorporating real-time data into a game-based approach to education. Little, if any, information is available on research designed to determine if student achievement can be raised when incorporating real-time data" (p. 13). As a result, Glenn sought to determine whether there was a significant difference in student comprehension and engagement when playing the Marketwatch game using iPads, which accesses real-time data to view stock information, as opposed to students using newspapers to view stock information.

Glenn hypothesized there would be no significant difference in student engagement based on course enrichment materials of real-time data and print text in newspapers. This was a quasi-experimental research study that included pre- and post-tests as well as a high school survey of student engagement. The control group used newspapers, and the experimental group used iPads.

Students who used iPads played the Marketwatch game online and had access to real-time data, which gave them the ability to access data sources on the internet such as stock trends, charts, graphs, and articles, hour by hour, as opposed to students using newspapers. Students who used the newspaper to look up stock information were limited to the previous day's close data. In both settings, research-based methods of teaching were used to ensure that each student received compatible and appropriate instruction in the classroom. The High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE) was developed to measure three areas of student engagement: Cognitive/Intellectual/Academic engagement, Social/Behavioral/Participatory engagement, and Emotional engagement" (Glenn, 2017, p. 79).

Two dependent variables measured in this study were student engagement and student achievement. In terms of engagement, the data suggested a significant difference between the paper group and the iPad group scores according to the High School Survey of Student Engagement. "The paper group's mean score on the HSSSE was 55.51 while the iPad group's mean score was 52.07" (p. 53). "There was no significant difference in student engagement based on course enrichment materials of real-time data and print text in newspapers" (Glenn, 2017, p. 79). Additionally, the use of sing hour-by-hour data accessed from the internet to track stock data for the Marketwatch game had no effect on increasing engagement as opposed to playing the game using the newspaper with day-to-day data.

In 2000, secondary students in Finland were included in a study to determine whether or not instructional views were including issues being addressed by social, emotional, and motivational ways of learning (Jarvela, Lehtinen, & Salonen, 2000). Popular instructional design strategies aimed at engaging students involve group work with problem-solving activities. The researchers wanted to know if students were completing the work just to complete an

assignment, or if students were creating problem-solving strategies within the group in an effort to learn. In addition, researchers observed student involvement within the groups, ensuring each member had a responsibility. “There is still a great deal of ignorance as to how a student adapts to the learning environment and what kind of situational processes contribute to individual student involvement” (Jarvela, Lehtinen, & Salonen, 2000, p. 294).

This study utilized two empirical experiments, where students’ social, emotional, and motivational interpretations were analyzed in a cognitive apprenticeship-based technologically-rich learning environment. Were students task-oriented, ego-defensive, or socially dependent on the others in the group finding the answers? Task-oriented student adaption is dominated by students’ intrinsic motivation to master the work, ego-defensive oriented student adaptation is dominated by task difficulty cues and whether or not the student becomes self-defensive upon asking for clarification, and social-dependent student adaption is when a student continually asks the instructor or peer if the work is completed correctly. Each student interprets new learning environments differently based on his or her expectations.

“Experiment one focused on describing how learning interactions based on cognitive apprenticeship in a complex technology-based learning environment affects the student’s situational, motivational, and emotional interpretations” (p. 298). There was no lecture on this project; rather, eight students were told instructions and allowed to work in pairs. Their social and motivational interpretations of the lessons were collected through videotaped sessions and interviews. The learning project consisted of three lessons each lasting three hours. "The results of experiment one demonstrate that only some students interpret the tasks and the teacher's activities in ways that are implicitly assumed in the cognitive apprenticeship model" (p. 298). The cognitive apprenticeship-based model applied to each student in each group as they

displayed their own way of trying to understand and work through the content of the lesson whether they determined it to be challenging, took ownership to ensure the work was completed correctly, or actively working with others to solve the problems.

Experiment two focused on six students: two were task-oriented, two were ego-defensive, and two were socially dependent. These students worked on five lessons independently; they experienced traditional instruction which consisted of lectures and in-class work. These students were also videotaped and interviewed. The students and teacher worked together on problem-solving and students self-directed themselves during the in-class work. When confronting obstacles, students felt insecure, which led them to have negative feelings and low engagement. The results of experiment two were met with a little surprise as non-task oriented students became task-oriented students during the work and task-oriented students increased their level of production. These students used the teacher to help problem solved as well, but benefited more from the instruction. Self-directed learning environments work for some students but can make others feel intimidated, while traditional instruction with lectures can leave students with more information to help process the activities.

In a seminal work on self-directed learning environments, Murray (2017) experienced students in his courses complain when he would discuss the group project that was due at the end of the semester. The students would verbalize how much they dislike group work because they thought their personal grade will be affected by another member of the group's poor contribution and they thought about how their hectic schedules would interfere and no one would be able to find time to meet and ultimately they all would fail the assignment. Murray's solution to this was to implement a grade for the individual student and a grade for the group, and a way to ensure each student has a specific duty in the group, holding each student accountable for some aspect

of the project. More specifically, half of each student's grade was for their individual work, which they submitted to Murray in the form of a draft before the complete project was submitted. The other half of each student's grade were for their group's final project, including a presentation and co-authored report. "The most positive results, to my estimation, have come from the incorporation of "Captainships" and a "Non-Compliance Policy" into major group assignments" (Murray, 2017, p. 4).

Captainships, titles given to each member of the group that described each member's specific responsibilities and Non-Compliance Policies, were protocols to which each member of the group would adhere. These stated that any member of the group could be fired for not doing his or her fair share of work at anytime throughout the project (Murray, 2017). Instead of sharing his successful solution to group work with his colleagues, Murray decided to create a framework model that helped articulate how it worked, instead of it sounding like a best practice strategy. Murray created a Tripartite model explaining the students' answerability to themselves, responsibility to their classmates, and level of accountability they needed to prove to their instructor in order to attain their individual and group grade on the project. Murray (2017) concluded that though his first solution of using Captainships and a Non-Compliance Policy was successful, by adding in a level of personal accountability, student's where now concerned with harming their group members individual grade, which in turn motivated each group member to ensure their responsibilities were met.

According to Marks (1995), many students lack the motivation needed to engage in school and much of the problem lies in teachers' instruction and their requirement of only modest demands of students. The purpose of this report was to discover what conditions created engagement in students. Was the driving force for engagement primarily a teacher and the

student's relationships, teacher's instruction (whether traditional or contemporary), or parental engagement? Students and teachers from 24 public schools (eight elementary, middle, and high schools) that were in the midst of restructuring schools were surveyed. Data was collected from Math and Social Studies classes over the course of three academic years (1991-1994). Dependent variables were student effort, attentiveness, boredom, and assignment completion. Independent variables were academic success and alienation. These centered around questions on authentic work, types of student support structures, and students' self-concept.

"If anomie is characteristic of U.S. education for the vast majority of students, under what conditions are they likely to become engaged?" (Marks, 1995, p. 1). This approach is most commonly referred to as the transmission model, whereas the teacher imparts information largely through a lecture while students take notes, recite, and complete worksheets. Leading to an emphasis on low-level intellectual skills, the transmission model creates boredom and intellectual isolation (Coleman, 1961; Marks, 1995; Newman, 1989). According to Marks (1995), "Engagement in academic work, unadjusted for any other influences, declines as grade level increases" (p. 21). The largest influences on engagement in order of positive contribution were a) authentic academic work, b) alienation of schooling, c) parental involvement, and finally d) self-concept in the form of competence. Interestingly, instruction, whether traditional or contemporary, made no substantial positive influence on engagement.

In an original study exploring authentic academic work, Bowen and Peterson (2019) describe its relevance to classroom engagement. "Research shows that using authentic lessons in the classroom is an important component of student engagement: When students are given the opportunity to participate in authentic experiences, they feel a sense of purpose and ownership over their learning" (Bowen & Peterson, 2019, p. 2; Bowen, 2014; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012).

Authenticity is when real-world concepts are incorporated in the context of the assignments given to students. “Ultimately, authenticity is about how the student perceives the purpose for which the mathematical concept is being used” (Bowen & Peterson, 2019, p. 2). Their research focused on using authenticity as a way to increase student’s engagement in math content. Authenticity in this study was used by describing the content from the eyes of an engineer, who’s job related duty would be to use the concept of slope and y-intercept in their day-to-day role in their profession. Bowen and Peterson (2019) formed two questions their study was looking to answer;

1. Does using an engineering-focused authentic activity result in higher student achievement, as measured on a post-test of concepts, in learning the concept of slope and y-intercept compared to a non-authentic activity in a seventh-grade mathematics classroom?
2. Does using an engineering-focused authentic activity result in an increased perception of the importance of the concept of slope compared to a non-authentic activity in a seventh-grade mathematics classroom?

Their study aimed to discover if there was a difference in achievement and perceived importance of the math concepts when presented with the authentic approach. The results indicated that there was no difference in achievement levels, but authenticity made a significant difference in the students' perception of the math concepts, ultimately increasing their classroom engagement.

In a related study undertaken by Korpershoek, Harms, de Boer, van Kuijk, and Doolaard, (2016), a teacher’s classroom management strategy affects students’ academic motivation, behavior, and social-emotional outcomes. The main objective was to conduct a ‘meta-analysis’ of the effects of various classroom management strategies (CMS) and classroom management

programs (CMP) aimed at improving students' behavior and enhancing their academic performance in primary education. The meta-analysis included 54 random and non-random controlled intervention studies published as peer-reviewed journal articles within the past decade. They used four categories of strategies: teacher-focused, student behavior, students' social-emotional development, and teacher-student relationships. Teachers' behavior-focused interventions focused on changing teachers' behavior with improved classroom management. Teacher-student relationship-focused interventions focused on building a relationship between students' and teachers. Students' behavior-focused interventions focused on improving student behavior and students' social-emotional development-focused interventions focused on enhancing students feelings or empathy for their peers. Of the four interventions tested, the percentage breakdown of their overall intent is as follows: 85% of the studies focused on changing students' behaviors, 74% partially focused on improving students' social-emotional development, 54% focused on teachers behavior, and 4% explicitly focused on improving teacher-student relationships. "The results indicated that interventions focused on the social-emotional development of the students' were somewhat more effective than interventions without this component" (p. 668).

Yanes (2004), conducted a study on distance learning in education in the form of a hybrid model. One half took place via face-to-face instruction and the other half took place through an online instructional setting. This was established as one way for students to participate in discussion without fear of the class rejecting their comment(s) or question(s), for "the goal of this study was to increase student interactions and reflective thinking" (p. 266). According to Yanes (2004), additional research suggests that asynchronous communication (email and Web-based discussion forums) can encourage the participation of students who seem reluctant to participate

in traditional face-to-face classroom settings. A traditional face-to-face course was used and additional materials were added to the online tool WebCT (a distance learning tool). Materials added to the tool for this course were an announcement section, discussion forums, chat rooms, a project presentation area, a calendar, and an assignment section. Findings suggest there was an increase in participation and engagement with discussions and an increase in assessment scores. "Frequency of student participation in Web-based discussion forums affirmed that the hybrid model combining face-to-face classroom instruction with distance learning methods expanded student interactions and opportunities for feedback" (Yanes, 2004, p. 273).

Covington and Omelich (1984) investigated both qualitative (motivational) and quantitative (performance) variables simultaneously in the context of actual classroom achievement. "Do different learning structures lead to different motivational orientations and performance levels and to what extent is any performance superiority mediated by these motivational orientations?" (p. 1039) were the two foci. To answer these questions, they compared competitive and task-oriented goal structures. Mastery learning was the chosen structure for task-oriented goals by means of retesting (up to three times) on midterms one and two. The competitive structure only allowed students one attempt on both midterms one and two. "We expect that a mastery orientation will promote higher performance levels and that this superiority will likely occur primarily because of retest procedures that guarantee high minimal levels of mastery. In contrast, under a competitive mode, students typically are allowed to proceed to new material whether or not they have mastered earlier assignments" (Covington & Omelich, 1984, p. 1,039). Four hundred thirty-five undergraduate students participated in the study. Dependent measures of the study were overall performance, motivation, and evaluation. Students who were allowed to retest outperformed students who were only allowed one attempt

at both midterm tests. “The presence of a retesting opportunity influenced student confidence, grade aspirations, and judgments of grading fairness” (Covington & Omelich, 1984, p. 1044). The researchers explained that student confidence - in the likelihood of attaining their grading goals - also depended both on the presence of multiple testing and on absolute standards. They claimed retests offer students an opportunity to improve their grades, gain mastery, and increase their confidence which all relate to increased motivation to learn.

**Disposition Toward School**

Adolescent boys negative orientations toward school, or their dispositions toward school, had an effect on classroom engagement, their masculinities and self-esteem, and experiences in school. For students, building an intimate relationship in high school with peers, teachers, and administration is needed in order to gain a sense of belonging in school. High School students are at the age when their academic studies become increasingly difficult, and whether students maintain a sense of belonging at school, predicts their potential to leave high school early (Gillen-O’Neel & Fuligni, 2013). In 2013, Gillen-O’Neel and Fuligni measured high school students feeling of belonging throughout all four years of high school and how it affected their academic achievement and motivation. They wanted to determine whether or not gender differences were involved in a sense of belonging in high school and whether or not grade point average (GPA) was a factor. Five hundred seventy-two high school students from three public schools in Los Angeles, CA., were included in the study.

Girls in the study reported a higher sense of belonging to the school and their social groups in ninth grade than when they were in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade, as the decline began in tenth grade. Boys in the study reported that their sense of belonging stayed the same throughout high school. “Female students’ average school belonging declined 6.92% from 9th

grade to 12th grade; male students' average school belonging stayed similar across high school" Gillen-O'Neel & Fuligni, 2013, p. 685). The second goal of the study, which examined whether students sense of belonging positively or negatively affected their grades. School belonging was found to not be related to students' GPA, but it did have an effect on students' level of engagement in the curriculum. The more students felt a sense of belonging to the class, the more they were engaged; whereas, the less students felt a sense of belonging to the class, the less they were engaged.

In a similar study, Nicholls, Pataschink, and Nolen (1985) researched students' views on the purpose of education, their personal goals for high school, and their perceptions of what leads to success in high school. Five-hundred thirty high school students in grades 9-12 (250 from an urban district, 280 from a rural district) from two high schools in Indiana completed questionnaires regarding their views on the purpose of education. In the urban district, the majority of the workers were academic and professionals; whereas, the rural district was comprised of townspeople and farmers. The researchers main question was, "Does any consistency exist between students views about the purposes of education, beliefs about the causes of academic success, and personal goals in the classroom?" (p. 683). Knowing students views vary when discussing the purpose of education, Nicholls, Pataschink, and Nolen (1985) hypothesized that some students would feel that obtaining an education and learning a particular subject in order to pursue a future career of their choice, will be their only chance of becoming rich and successful, because displays of wealth are how students' in the study measured success. "Specifically, learning is more clearly construed as an end in itself when the purpose of education is to develop responsible and knowledgeable members of society than when the purpose is to enhance one's chances of gaining wealth and status" (p. 683). Results indicated

students believed schools should emphasize and teach that status and wealth are associated with the desire to surpass others. In this view, success is a competition, and by comparing their success as adults to others' success shows a commitment to their own status in life. The argument is that said competition will compel students to keep going.

In 2014, Liddell and Kurpius studied variables linked to positive and negative outcomes across twenty-two adolescent boys from an alternative high school in Arizona. They examined self-esteem, educational self-efficacy, and relational aggression and whether or not these could be impacted by a group intervention for adolescent males that focused on masculine identity. The researchers discovered that the boys viewed masculinity as an important part of how they saw themselves in relation to others. "For the 22 boys that participated in the study, their perceptions of what it means to be male were related to their self-esteem and relational aggression" (Liddell & Kurplus, 2014, p. 18). The boys in the study learned that positive social relationships and experiences contribute to positive self-esteem. The curriculum in this group intervention used a gender-relevant strengths-based approach to promote a safe, strong, and healthy learning experience. This experience encouraged the boys to seek positive mentors and led to stimulating discussions where they were provided with positive feedback. By creating groups consisting of a gender-relevant and positive curriculum for girls or boys in schools, counselors and teachers can work together to help adolescents believe that they can do their work at school and can have a better future as long as they are persistent.

In 2003, Weaver-Hightower published a literature review that focused on why boys had become such a concern, for numerous books and published articles discussing the distress of boys in high school by examining their origins and motivations. The goal of this literature review was to ensure that schools in the U.S. remain focused on improving both girls' and boys' in-

school experiences by reviewing literature on boys and reporting their findings to schools, so both genders would benefit equally. Weaver-Hightower (2003) created four categories of works to review: (a) popular-rhetorical literature, (b) theoretically oriented literature, (c) practice-oriented literature, and (d) feminist and pro-feminist responses.

Examples of popular rhetorical literature discussed boys from a pop psychology media-driven panic. Theoretically, oriented literature examined how schools and society define and produce masculinity for boys. Practice-oriented literature was concerned with school-based academic and social interventions, and feminist and pro-feminist responses provided a discussion on backlashes on the topic of boys and why it's their turn as opposed to girls. As far as boys' dispositions toward school and their masculinities are concerned, boys would like to choose books in which they have an interest, instead of reading a book that was chosen for them. According to Weaver-Hightower (2003) masculinity is created by the institutions, in terms of the curriculum, division of labor, tracking disciplinary schemes, and other school structures.

Yeung and McInerney (2000) conducted a study to identify whether or not external forces in school environments affect student motivation and behavior. One thousand seventy-eight students completed a questionnaire during intact classes (during their regular class-time without breaking up the time for the questionnaires alone). There were seven factors in the questionnaire to determine the external forces; these included perceived value of schooling (Value), affect toward schooling (Affect), less support from peers to study (Peer Negative), peer positive academic climate (Peer Positive), encouragement from parents (Parent Positive), encouragement from teacher (Teacher), and less support from parents (Parent Negative). Parents, peers, and teachers offer emotional and social support to students.

According to Yeung and McInerney (2000), the highest correlation was between Peer Negative and Parent Negative (Peer Negative = .82 and Parent Negative = .84), which indicated from primary school to secondary school, students receive increasingly less support for their studies from peers and parents. “The Value, Affect, Peer Positive, Parent Positive, and Teacher constructs were positively correlated” (p. 6). “Support from parents was most clearly related to students' goal orientations, support from teachers was most clearly related to classroom functioning such as interest in class and adhering to class rules, and support from peers most related to prosocial behavior" (p. 5). It's important for students to feel the value of what they're learning in school. The positive factors: Value, Affect, Peer Positive, Parent Positive, and Teacher were positively correlated with one another and standardized achievement scores. The two negative factors, Peer Negative and Parent Negative, were positively correlated with one another and negatively correlated with achievement scores.

According to Davidson (1992), children and adolescents’ achievement motivation is mediated by their implicit beliefs and theories about schooling. Davidson’s research aimed to understand how these beliefs and theories are constructed, by relating this process to more general trends in the development of social reasoning. Seventy students (half boys, half girls) were interviewed about the following four concepts: “A. The definition and purposes of education, B. The process of learning, C. The nature of intelligence, and D. What should be taught in school. The interview questions were as follows: 1. What is the main reason for having schools? 2. What if the people in (insert student’s town) decided to close down the schools? Would that be OK? Why or why not? 3. What if you were very rich and knew you would never need to work? 4. Would you still need to go to school? Why or why not?” (p. 5).

Davidson noted the consistent increase in both intrinsic and meta-educational values between grades nine and twelve. He suggested achievement motivation is developed when students are in middle school, as they are beginning to identify the relationship between society and education. The findings are consistent with the hypothesis that children form overall orientations of schooling that are restructured over the years. For example, on the first day of Kindergarten, students are enthusiastic about school and optimistic about what they will learn; however, as the years go on they lose momentum. "They take for granted the intrinsic value of learning and are accordingly optimistic that what can be learned in class goes beyond subject matter and includes benefits such as independent thinking, learning how to learn, and work habits" (p. 14).

Rowe (2000) performed a meta-analysis of eight empirical research studies (undertaken between 1991 and 2000) to address concerns about underachieving boys and their poor attitudes, behaviors, and experiences in school. Rowe's (2000) literature review held that boys are significantly disengaged with schooling, experience problems related to ADHD, have poor literacy skills, have auditory processing problems, report negative experiences in school, are more likely to drop out, and exhibit more behavior problems in school than girls. Rowe (2000) suggested that a shift in school curriculum took place in the early 1990s in terms of increasing literacy, which favors girls as they have an advantage in literacy. "A key reason for the observed gender differences in performance, attitudes and behaviors, we argue, is that since the early 1990s, there has been a notable increase in the demand for higher levels of operational literacy and especially, verbal reasoning and written communication skills in school education - areas in which girls have distinct maturational and socialization advantages" (p. 5).

To relieve the pressure placed upon boys, Rowe (2000) suggested that teachers focus on support for literacy, begin looking for 'at-risk' reading levels earlier, and plan lessons that are more activity-focused. Based on findings from the interviews with boys in the study, Rowe (2000) explained that there are variations in teaching quality which are due to large class sizes, especially in Mathematics classes. Thirteen thousand seven hundred students from 90 primary and secondary schools participated in the study. "The variation of proportional class/teacher-level ranged from 54.7% for primary students to 52.7% for secondary students" (p. 12). With increasing class sizes and students entering secondary school, Rowe (2000) called for "substantial change in teaching and learning strategies, but unless there is total commitment for all staff to integrate new ways of working, reform efforts will falter" (p. 15).

Harrington (2002) conducted a study in an effort to provide some insight as to why adolescent boys dropout of school and whether their decisions are linked to their decision-making processes, masculinities, or a combination of the two. During the 1998-2001 school years, Harrington (2002) conducted interviews with 22 boys from provincial, metropolitan, and rural areas in Queensland, Australia. The participants shared their in-school experiences with teachers and peers and their experiences on the job. Questions were aimed at helping the boys verbalize their feelings about life as they were working and no longer in school. "Specific points of interest for the questions included the influence that peers, teachers, and parents had on their academic performance, participation in sports and activities, subject choice, post-school pathways, and any other factors that may have influenced their decision to leave school" (p. 4).

The participants indicated they wanted to feel more in control during class. They thought by entering the workplace early, they would have that opportunity. The boys indicated a preference to learn life skills and skills they can use on the job, both of which they weren't

getting in school. Harrington (2002) claimed, “There seems to be a disparity between boys’ ideal schooling constructions and their experienced schooling reality; analysis of their narratives illustrates how antithetical their relationship is to each other” (p. 19). The risk directly centers on the long-term ramifications for those boys who leave school early, and who may not have the resources to cope in the workplace.

**Academic Performance and Expectations**

Students academic expectations influence their motivation and level of engagement in their work. According to Schunk (1991) students who feel capable of learning and performing well in school expect and receive good grades, and attribute their academic successes and failures in their level of ability. Students with academic difficulties create a negative profile with themselves that there must be something wrong with their brains. In a study conducted by Miller and Atkinson (2001), an adolescent boy with academic difficulties (Taylor) thought his intellectual abilities were limited due to a learning disorder, which led to his low academic expectations. Would positivity and hope play a role for students who have low academic expectations?

To extend the research on adolescents' hope, academic expectations, and average grades, Levi, Einav, Ziv, Raskind, and Margalit (2013) conducted a study centered around the use of hopeful thinking, and when boys access it, there is a positive effect on their academic achievement. “Based on earlier research, the goal of this study was to propose a model that explains expected and actual grades as mediated by hope, while integrating self-efficacy (SE) beliefs, and sense of coherence (SOC) as predictors of effort and hope” (p. 367). The participants included 289 tenth grade Israeli students, who lived in low to medium socioeconomic status. The study was conducted via structural equation modeling (SEM), which, according to Statistics

Solutions (2018) “is a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, and is used to analyze the structural relationship between measured variables and latent constructs”

Instruments used in the study consisted of scales to test participants levels of hope, SOC, self-efficacy, and effort, along with how these factors were interrelated (or not) and whether they played a role in their academic achievements. The hope scale assessed belief in one’s ability to pursue desired goals and the SOC scale was a self-report of 16 items that reflected student views as meaningful to one’s life. The self-efficacy scale consisted of three sets of six statements that described students’ beliefs about how well they could cope with academic tasks, language, and effort related to academic, social, and emotional self-efficacy. The effort scale was used to assess students’ self-rating of their willingness to invest effort in their studies. Higher scores on each scale reflected a higher level of willingness by the student to invest in that scale. Females scored higher than males on two variables (effort and social SE); whereas, males scored significantly higher on SOC and Emotional SE. The results supported the hypothesis as expected “academic grades predicted average grades, hope was predicted by effort, emotional, and SOC, hope contributed to academic achievement, academic SE contributed to effort and SOC, academic SE, social SE and emotional SE were interrelated” (p. 378).

Leung (1993) studied 708 American and Chinese students in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades. The study focused on the following gender differences: students perceptions of success or failure in school, gender and achieving goals, and cross-cultural differences in academic motivation. Leung hypothesized that gender differences in students’ academic motivational orientations would be different between American students and Chinese students. According to Leung, prior research shows that girls, unrelated to their country of origin, are more likely to choose effort attributions whereas boys are more likely to choose ability and luck attributions.

Students anonymously completed questionnaires that gathered demographic information and assessed several factors related to their motivational orientation (dimensions associated with success and failure). The dimensions were aspects of academic motivational orientations: causal dimensions of success and failure, causal attributions of success and failure, and achievement goal orientations. Each was measured by the Causal Dimension Scale (CDS).

Gender was found to be a strong predictor in students' perceptions of success (internal and controllable) as well as perceptions of failure (internal). Overall, American girls felt their failure in school was based on ability, lack of effort, and the difficulty of the work. "Specifically, American girls were found to perceive the primary cause for their success in schoolwork to be more internal and controllable relative to boys" (p. 11). American girls also reported a stronger task goal and social solidarity goal than boys. "Girls academic motivational orientation is one that puts greater emphasis on personal responsibility and social solidarity and is more adaptive compared to that of boys" (p. 16). Chinese girls perceived the cause of their success in school and academic motivation to be more internal and controllable than Chinese boys. Chinese girls who had high academic achievement were found to be more socially oriented in their achievement goal. These findings suggest that like American girls, Chinese girls have a strong sense of personal responsibility for their school achievement. "It is important to help foster and reinforce the development of a sense of personal responsibility for achievement outcomes among boys in both cultures to enhance their academic performance" (Leung, 1993, p. 19).

Bouffard, Boileau, and Vezeau (2001) studied the impact of the transition from elementary to secondary school on particular aspects of students' motivational profile and the links existing between these variables and academic performance. They sought to understand what happens to students' academic motivation as they move through their adolescent years, for

at this age students are full of self-doubt and they have more social and environmental distractions. The researchers examined how "self-efficacy beliefs in French, self-efficacy beliefs in the use of subject-related learning strategies, and learning goals of students change after their transition from elementary to secondary school" (p. 593). Three hundred thirty-six students were recruited from nine different public schools in Montreal, Canada. Students completed a questionnaire and their parents agreed to allow their school to provide researchers with their child's final grades in French class. Questions were posed in regards to self-efficacy beliefs and goals along with students' final scores in French class which were mainly used to measure their academic their performance.

No matter the student's gender or academic level of achievement, each reported a decrease in self-efficacy beliefs after the transition to secondary school. When researchers asked students about their expectancy of learning goals, results revealed significant lower effects for gender, time of measurement, and level of academic achievement. "Whatever students' gender or group of academic achievement, they all lowered their mastery goals and concurrently increased their avoidance goals following their transition from elementary to secondary school" (p. 594). Findings also revealed the interaction between the level of academic achievement and types of goals was due to higher academic achieving students setting harder goals for themselves than students in the low achievement group.

In 2001, Miller and Atkinson conducted a study on an eleventh-grade boy, Taylor, that faced many academic difficulties. Their aim was to identify conditions that either positively or negatively affected Taylor's classroom learning and motivation. Taylor attended a suburban college-preparatory school in an affluent neighborhood, was seen as a popular student who did well in class but scored low on tests, which lead him to compare himself to his peers and become

frustrated. “Lacking confidence in his study skills, he avoided class discussions and approached examinations and tests with the expectation that he would not do very well” (Miller & Atkinson, 2001, p. 324). The study was comprised of school documentation, formal evaluation reports, study guides, exam scores, class notes, interviews with Taylor, and interviews with his parents, school teachers, administration, and counselors.

There were three possible explanations for Taylor’s academic difficulties that arose from his formal evaluation reports. The first was his study strategies, the second was the level of classroom instruction he received, and the third was the grading practices his teachers used. None of the results from Taylor’s three formal evaluation reports were consistent; the study focused heavily on possible learning disabilities he might have, rather than Taylor’s study practices. “Throughout the process, no one questioned whether the cause for Taylor’s frustrations might be related to his study strategies, his classroom instruction, or his teachers’ grading practices” (p. 332). Miller and Atkinson (2001) recommended schools shouldn’t always focus so heavily on students’ neurological factors without investigating factors that promote their academic behavior and motivation.

Covington and Omelich (1984) conducted a study including both qualitative (motivational) and quantitative (performance) variables simultaneously in the context of actual classroom achievement. Their foci were twofold: “Do different learning structures lead to different motivational orientations and performance levels and to what extent is any performance superiority mediated by these motivational orientations?” (p. 1039). To answer these questions, they compared competitive and task-oriented goal structures. Mastery learning was the chosen structure for task-oriented goals by means of retesting (up to three times) on midterms one and two. The competitive structure only allowed students one attempt on both midterms one and two.

The expectation of a mastery orientation is that it will promote higher performance levels, and the superiority will likely occur first and foremost as a result of retesting procedures that guarantee high minimal levels of mastery. “In contrast, under a competitive mode, students typically are allowed to proceed forward to new material whether or not they have mastered earlier assignments” (p. 1039).

Four hundred thirty-five undergraduate students in an introductory psychology course at the University of California, Berkeley participated in the study. Dependent measures of the study were performance, motivation, and evaluation. Notably, students who were allowed to retest outperformed students who were only allowed one attempt at both midterm tests. “The presence of a retesting opportunity influenced student confidence, grade aspirations, and judgments of grading fairness” (p. 1044). According to Covington and Omelich (1984) student confidence - in the likelihood of attaining their grading goals - also depended both on the presence of multiple testing and on absolute standards. They claimed that retesting offers students an opportunity to improve their grade, gain mastery, and increase their confidence, all of which are related to an increased motivation to learn.

**Engagement**

Most students show the potential to engage in classroom learning until they realize they aren’t seeing relevance between the curriculum and their lives, then they begin to disengage (Barnes & Bramley, 2008). According to a report by the Australian Government (2006), when teachers connected curriculum to adolescent boys’ knowledge outside of school and incorporated learning that boys found meaningful, their engagement increased and they experienced positive academic outcomes. Sarroub and Pernicek (2016) examined the literacy gap through documented experiences of three high school boys and their teacher. They looked into boys’ views of

themselves as students, their dispositions toward school and education, and their engagements with literacy. Through interviews with each boy, classroom observations, and an analysis of school artifacts, Sarroub and Pernicek (2016) hoped to understand how each boy felt in a high school reading class. Schoolwork samples, grade point averages, and biological information for each boy were gathered as artifacts. All three boys described reading as boring. Two of the boys revealed previous low achievements led to negative perceptions about their abilities in reading, resulting in increased detachment from reading. The third boy viewed himself as a bad learner as he was easily overwhelmed by school and peers.

Two of the boys had moments of engaging in texts, but when they were unwilling to engage, it was difficult for the teachers to change their perceptions of themselves as poor readers. "There is no single factor that led to their reluctance to read, but instead demonstrated how cycles of negative experiences with teachers, frustration with academic and social structures in schools, and difficult relationships at home all work together to perpetuate struggles with reading" (p. 52). Sarroub and Pernicek (2016) suggested that "teachers much consider boys attitudes, perceptions, and the reading process itself when teaching all boys across the spectrum who are struggling, reluctant, and disengaged" (p. 51).

In a study conducted in two high schools in Chicago, Barnes and Bramley (2008) researched which aspects of real-world projects (if any) would decrease off-task behavior during class-time. "The purpose of this action research project was to increase student engagement in classroom activities by implementing real-world projects that allow for student choice, goals portfolios, and one-on-one conferencing with teachers about goals" (p. 22). They hypothesized that student engagement during class would increase if students were required to set goals, collect artifacts (handouts and completed assignments), keep a portfolio, and conference with a

teacher. “Teacher researchers found student disengagement during classroom activities to have a negative effect on their classroom environments and students’ achievement. Students chose not to do classwork, found ways to get out of doing classwork, and exhibited a range of off-task behaviors” (p. 1).

Twenty-six students participated in the study (50% boys, 50% girls). Teacher researchers participated in data collection by completing one behavior checklist per week for two weeks. Seventy-one faculty members responded to a faculty questionnaire about students' behaviors in the classroom and their respective effects on classroom instruction. Student surveys were used to gather information about the problem of student engagement and how students felt about their engagement in classroom activities. “Students are more likely to engage in classroom activities when they believe the activities related to their lives, the real world, and when the activities offered them a choice” (p. 23). Sixty-five percent of the students agreed that setting goals would help them feel more engaged in the classroom and 58% of the students thought one-on-one conferences with the teacher would engage them more.

The entire process (i.e. goals, artifacts, portfolios, conferences) proved to be too extensive for many of the students. Twenty-four of the 26 students had organizational problems, so it was difficult for them to keep track of their artifacts and other portfolio items. Overall, all of the boys seemed overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in keeping a goals portfolio and made the process of setting and reflecting on goals a negative experience for them. When students felt overwhelmed, they shut down and engagement decreased.

**Professional Studies**

What area of new teacher professional studies will help increase novice teachers’ knowledge and awareness of classroom realities to improve student engagement? According to

Fry (2007), novice teachers develop a survival mentality and are faced with multiple classroom management issues they are unprepared to address. They were also unaware of the volume of time it takes to prepare curriculum and record grades. By observing new teachers, Lewka, Reddy, and Shernoff (2019) claimed that for teachers' practices and professional studies to be useful and increase academic achievement, they need to include behavior management strategies and effective instructional strategies that also increase student engagement.

A report conducted by the University of Western Sydney, published in 2009, is the outcome of a research project conducted in fifteen schools which were selected based on adolescent boys' improved achievements. The objective was to inform teachers' professional learning, knowledge, practice, and school curriculum development in relation to the education of boys in the early and middle years of schooling (New Visions, 2009). The two-year project focused on the relationship between teachers' educational practices and boys' motivation, engagement, socio-academic outcomes, and socio-economic status.

Factors reviewed for the report were attendance, internal and external academic results, behavior self-management, cultural knowledge, cross-cultural relations, student self-confidence, and transitions to vocational training, further education or employment. According to the report, evidence points to the sensitivities, perceptions, and evaluations that such boys invest, mentally and physically, in their everyday schooling. For teachers to motivate and engage boys in the curriculum, they needed to understand boys' aspirations and interests, and allow boys to choose their own topics for projects (New Visions, 2009).

Charnock and Kiley (1995) posed the question, "What is causing new teachers to leave the profession after five years?" (p. 3). Their hypothesis about the 40% of new teachers who leave the profession within the first five years was that classroom discipline, unmotivated

students, dealing with individual students, assessing students work, school culture, and dealing with parents were all influential factors. Two additional reported issues were the time needed to prepare for class and physical and emotional stress. They also suggested that new teachers had an idea of what teaching was supposed to be, yet the actualities of the job were not similar to their preconceived notions.

A questionnaire was mailed to 244 new teachers in Baltimore Public Schools in October 1993. One hundred of the 244 questionnaires mailed were returned completed. Of the 100 returned surveys, teachers stated that time spent preparing for class and lesson planning was the number one issue, as it ranked 2.940 on a scale of 1-4 (4 = highest concern). Classroom control was the second issue with a ranking of 2.910, teaching students with special learning needs was the third issue that ranked at 2.740, time spent lesson planning ranked at 2.670, and having enough classroom supplies and curriculum ranked 2.550 and 2.540 (Charnock & Kiley, 1995). According to the authors, new teachers faulted colleges they attended for their teaching degrees because they felt they didn't get enough education on classroom management strategies and clarification on how much time they'd be spending preparing for class. More recently, another study regarding teacher attrition, by Carusi (2017) states that teachers from Georgia were surveyed in 2015 and their top two reasons for leaving the profession were the number of mandated tests they were forced to give students and process by which they were evaluated.

**Motivation**

According to Merriam-Webster (2018), the definition of motivation is "a motivating force, stimulus, or influence" and the definition of engagement is "the act of engaging or being engaged." According to Dweck (2012), students believed their intelligence had important implications for their level of engagement and their view of intelligence, whether it was fixed or

had the potential to grow. There are many ways to change students' motivation, one involves students earning points on assignments in the classroom. The idea is the more points students can earn, the better their overall grade will be. This is a mind-set that students adopted in a study conducted by Koth (2016) which described a teacher who had a hard time enforcing classroom management strategies, so she devised a point system to track their behaviors. "Motivating students is important, without it, teachers have no point of entry. But it is engagement that is critical because the level of engagement over time is the vehicle through which classroom instruction influences student outcomes" (Afflerbach & Harrison, 2017, p. 218). Motivation is a prerequisite for engagement. Koth (2016), the teacher in the study, devised a point system for daily participation grades and documented each student's daily point status with tally marks. "I used an unsophisticated system to track their performance: making tally marks in a matrix consisting of names listed vertically and specific behaviors listed horizontally" (p. 60).

The study was conducted for one school year using the school's electronic grade book system to track the daily points. This way, parents could log into the same grade book, review their child's grades in relation to the point system, and support the teacher's efforts. Parents could discuss any differences in tally marks they viewed, which had the potential to lead to positive or negative conversations about school. "The intention was to create an autonomy supportive environment in which students would decide for themselves how to behave, rather than promote a "pressured engagement in self-control activities" that might ultimately demotivate them" (Koth, 2016, p. 45). Students could earn points by appearing engaged and motivated throughout the lesson plan, staying on task during group work, displaying positive behavior, and correctly answering questions that were asked by the teacher. Helping students find self-motivation comes with creating an environment that supports autonomy. "Such an

environment offers students autonomy, connectedness, and a sense of competence" (p. 64). As a result of this study, the classroom became more peaceful and productive than it had been in years and the students enjoyed earning points. The constant and immediate nature of the strategy of the point system served to maintain students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. Key factors in making this point system successful were parental involvement, feedback, motivation, autonomy, connectedness, and competence.

Here in Chapter II, I've discussed the key terms and corresponding articles I chose for my literature review. I also described the process I used in selecting which articles were grouped with each category. In Chapter III, I will analyze and evaluate the literature review and the two assertions that emerged from the literature review.

## Chapter III: Discussion and Conclusion

In Chapter Three, I analyze and evaluate the literature review and the two assertions that emerged from my review of the literature. First, I discuss each assertion along with its corresponding categories. Next, I discuss the research in a professional application; this is followed by limitations I encountered. Last, I discuss implications for future research and provide my conclusion.

### Literature Review: Assertions & Categories

Increasing classroom engagement is imperative when planning curriculum. According to Brenneman (2016) in Fall 2018, Gallup completed a survey of public schools in the U.S. which asked students in fifth through twelfth grade about their overall level of engagement in school. "Only half of adolescents' report feeling engaged in school, and one fifth are actively disengaged" (Brenneman, 2016, p. 6). As students' progress through school, feelings of becoming an adult concern them and their value in their work declines. "Engagement levels also show a consistent decrease as students get older, bottoming out in 11th grade" (Brenneman, 2016, p. 6). The Minnesota Department of Education (2016) surveyed students in grades 5, 7, 9, and 11, and asked questions about their health, safety, engagement in school, and whether or not they felt supported. Seventy-eight percent of all students surveyed reported feeling engaged at school, and 71% of Eleventh graders felt the things they learn in school would be useful in the future. According to common core data from 2015-2016, 82% of first time 9th-grade students graduated in four years in Minnesota. As of 2018, the graduation rates of students age seventeen, who attended public and private schools in Minnesota, increased by .20% from 2012-2018.

Conversely, the National Center for Education Statistics (2016) found that of the students who started Ninth grade in 2009, 43.3% of those who dropped out before 2012 reported low

engagement in school. Encouragingly, as of 2018, the graduation rate of students age seventeen who attended public and private schools in the U.S. increased by 6.61% since 2012. From 2012-2018 the number of students enrolled in high school, public and private, rose 6% which could account for some of the increase in graduation rates. From 2012-2017, the dropout rate in the U.S decreased by .83%. Forty-nine percent of the students in the nation who dropped out, do so between eleventh and twelfth grade and 21% dropped out between ninth and tenth grade. According to data from high school dropouts from 2012 (who were in the ninth grade in 2009), the top three reasons for dropping out of school were 1) They got behind in their school work or received poor grades; 2) They thought it would be easier to get a GED; 3) They did not like school and thought it was boring. As the data indicates, twelfth and ninth-grade students are most at-risk to drop out. Engaging students in class, keeping them on task, and ensuring they keep up with the work will increase the number of those who continue through high school and beyond.

I started my article search by trying to find the articles that matched my exact search terms, “engagement,” “adolescent boys,” “motivation,” “self-efficacy,” “activities,” “classroom,” “disposition,” and “classroom management.” As I searched the data-base Eric, I was able to locate studies based on those specific search terms. The first ten articles I selected to use discussed studies on engagement, classroom management, and classroom activities and introduced me to additional articles using synonyms to my search terms. Additional terms added to the beginning of my original search terms gave the term deeper meaning, such as “self-efficacy” and “adolescent boys.” Next, I chose 30 articles for my literature review, as that was the requirement for this portion of the Thesis. These led me to a deeper understanding of how all the terms worked together, and soon I began identifying common themes within the terms. I then created an excel spreadsheet that I used to identify analyze the fit of each article into the

emergent themes. From the excel spreadsheet, I analyzed each group for common themes (concepts). Within these common themes, I evaluated the years in which the studies were completed in an effort to reveal relevance and trends. In all, six categories emerged during my review of the literature on adolescent males and how to actively engage them in the curriculum. These include: classroom management, students disposition toward school, academic performance and expectations, student engagement, teachers professional studies, and motivation. Classroom Management, Disposition, and Academic Performance and Expectations included 25 of the 30 articles; whereas, Engagement, Professional Studies, and Motivation included five of the 30 articles.

I organized these six categories under two assertions. Assertion one: *Teacher preparedness for classroom instruction impacts engagement* includes two categories: classroom management and teacher professional studies. Assertion two: *Four forces play a major part in the classroom engagement of the adolescent male* includes four categories: student disposition toward school, academic performance and expectations, student engagement, and motivation.

## Assertion One

*Teacher preparedness for classroom instruction impacts engagement.*

### Teacher Professional Studies

The first category that emerged under assertion one relates to first-year teachers' feelings of unpreparedness as they enter the field. According to Scios (2000) 56% of first-year teachers feel overwhelmed with the teaching profession as they discover they were not properly prepared for the realities of teaching. A study in 2017 by The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) comprised of a random sample of 830 AFT members, new and experienced teachers, who revealed significant feelings in five key areas of teaching. First, they reported stressful and heavy

workloads. Second, they reported the need to always be "on," if someone from school needed them. Third they reported a lack of available resources for students and staff. Fourth they reported an increase in staff shortages. Fifth, they reported insufficient time to prepare for and provide instruction (American Federation of Teachers, 2017). Each of these factors threaten the health of teachers and potentially the productivity of their classroom environments.

Adolescent males struggle in high school with active participation during classroom activities, which leads to behavior and emotional components, including disaffection. Skinner et al., (2008) stated, "Disaffection has both a behavioral component, including passivity and withdrawal from participation in learning activities, and an emotional component, including boredom, anxiety, and frustration in the classroom" (p. 767). Therefore, it's equally as important to prepare and deliver content that applies to real-world concepts, as adolescent boys want to feel the content is valuable information for their future. When boys fail to see the value in the content, they have a hard time seeing the value in going to school at all, as they believe they can learn what they need on the job. According to Harrington (2002), "the boys that had left secondary school in pursuit of a job, claim they were able to learn practical, real skills that could be applied directly to their current employment requirements, thereby linking the relevance of their learning to its application" (p. 19). In a study on high school dropouts Lewis (2016) found boys from an alternative high school were frequently truant, absent, or dropped out, as they weren't learning anything useful for the future. "One student said taking a skills-based subject would be better than just reading about a job because they could actually learn hands-on" (p. 96).

**Classroom Management**

The second category relates to classroom environments that were not conducive to learning. "Disruptive student behavior fosters a classroom environment that is not conducive to

learning, limits time for instruction, and contributes to negative peer interactions in the classroom" (Pas, Cash, O'Brennan, Debnam, & Bradshaw, 2014, p. 137). According to Sugai and Horner (2002), classroom management is the foundation for effective teaching, as instructional time is increased which leads to an increase in student engagement and achievement. Classroom engagement is also positively associated with student autonomy and choice when guidance and structure were provided along the way. "Autonomy-supportive teachers facilitate students' personal autonomy by taking the students' perspective; identifying and nurturing the students' needs, interests, and preferences; providing optimal challenges; highlighting meaningful learning goals; and presenting interesting, relevant and enriched activities" (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010, p. 589).

Delivering instruction to adolescents while they battle teachers for classroom control is also time-consuming and unproductive. In 2015, Clark conducted a study to increase active classroom engagement in secondary mathematics classes and decrease students' passive engagement. The flipped model of instruction (an alternate style) was used to deliver instruction on new concepts to students as homework; the students would come prepared the following day to join in the discussion and work on the assignments in class. "Compared to the traditional environment, with class time being used for instruction and students completing the corresponding homework at home the night prior, the student participants argued there was better use of class time with the flipped model of instruction" (p. 104).

According to Korpersoek et al. (2016), teachers should instruct the class in ways that optimize learning, encourage engagement, promote social skills, and use interventions for students with behavioral issues. Classroom management that targets social-emotional development, including positive relationships with students by means of interventions, is

promising as social skills are important for success later in life. Teacher-provided autonomy support and structure also contribute to classroom engagement; teachers who include moderate structure and display classroom control, provide students with competency skills to use in the future (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). When teachers create a supportive environment for students and build strong relationships with them, a high quality of classroom management is attained (Korpershoek et al., 2016).

**Assertion Two**

*Four forces play a major part in the classroom engagement of the adolescent male.*

**Students Disposition Toward School:**

The first category that corresponds with assertion two relates to students' conceptions of school. Specifically, students' inherent predispositions toward school include conceptions of learning (as well as external forces) that can erode their attitudes toward school as the year progresses. Conceptions of learning may include previous negative experiences the student has had with a teacher, administration, or a failed class. Boys may arrive with dislike for a teacher due to previous negative experience with that teacher, frustrations with social structures, and/or difficult relationships with parents and family members. These factors lead to poor attitudes and make it increasingly difficult for students to engage in classroom activities. Examples of external forces that affect student dispositions toward school include peers and social behaviors, theories of the education system learned about at home, and classroom environments. "Research has shown a significant relationship between students' perception of support and caring from parents, teachers, and peers with aspects of motivation and academic achievement" (Yeung & McInerney, 2000, p. 2). According to Wentzel, Russell, and Baker (2015) "perceived academic expectations and emotional support from teachers and parents have a stronger impact on

academic outcomes than do peers" (p. 250). Over the four years of high school, boys sense of belonging to school and social groups decline which decreases motivation in academic performances. This, in turn, fosters boys with low self-esteem and negative health outcomes. Anderman (2002) found "when individuals are deprived of belongingness, they often experience a variety of negative outcomes, including emotional distress, various forms of psychopathology, increased stress, and increased health problems" (p. 796).

**Motivation:**

The second category in assertion two relates to the driving force behind engagement: motivation. Specifically, motivation is described as a prerequisite for engagement. "Motivating students is important, without it, teachers have no point of entry, but it is engagement that is critical, because the level of engagement over time is the vehicle through which classroom instruction influences outcomes" (Afflerbach & Harrison, 2017, p. 218). Helping students develop self-motivation requires creating an environment that supports autonomy. One example, the flipped model of instruction, creates a structured - yet autonomist - environment. "The flipped model of instruction is when lecture is moved outside the classroom via technology and moving homework and exercises with concepts inside the classroom via learning activities" (Clark, 2015, p. 91). Another way to structure class toward motivation and positive behavior is by using a point system. As one teacher explained, "I used an unsophisticated system to track their performance: making tally marks in a matrix consisting of names listed vertically and specific behaviors listed horizontally" (Koth, 2016, p. 60). The teacher in the study included parents in hopes it would open the door for conversations between them and their children. "The intention was to create an autonomy supportive environment in which the students would decide for themselves how to behave, rather than promote a "pressured engagement in self-control

activities" that might ultimately demotivate them" (Vansteenkitste, Simons, & Lens, 2012, p. 432). Allowing adolescent males voice and choice as to how to behave during class gives them a sense of competence, along with becoming self-regulated. "A Self-regulated student is a goal setter who is able to seek help, manage time, self-evaluate, modify their behavior within an environment, and strategize in order to achieve goals" (Wheeler & Wischusen, 2014, p. 2).

**Student Engagement:**

The third category in assertion two relates to self-efficacy. Specifically, when adolescent boys have had negative experiences with teachers and/or school administration, male adolescents become increasingly reluctant to try. "There is no single factor that leads to reluctance, but instead demonstrates how cycles of negative experiences with teachers, frustration with academic and social structures in schools, and difficult relationships at home all work together to perpetuate struggles with reading" (Sarroub & Pernicek, 2016, p. 52). Boys also demonstrate negative feelings about school through academic struggles. "Student disengagement during classroom activities has a negative effect on classroom environments and students' achievements. Students who chose not to do classwork, found ways to get out of doing the work, and exhibited a range of off-task behaviors" (Barnes & Bramley, 2008, p. 1).

**Academic Performance and Expectations:**

The fourth and final category that corresponds to assertion two relates to adolescent boys' academic performance. "Student motivational resources have been examined in reference to a number of constructs, such as self-concept, self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, activity assessment, attributions of success and failure, self-efficacy, expectancies for success, learning goals, etc." (Bouffard, Boileau, & Vezeau, 2001, p. 590). Boys begin to lack motivation with academics as they get older. Miller and Atkinson (2001) studied a boy's journey through high school and

noted, “Lacking confidence in his study skills, he avoided class discussions and approached examinations and tests with the expectation that he would not do very well” (p. 324). In high school, assessments can be intimidating and result in poor grades and low self-confidence. Boys tend to blame the school, their teachers, and their learned study strategies.

**Professional Application**

It’s important for secondary teachers to prepare and deliver content that applies to real-world concepts, as adolescent boys want to feel what they’re learning is valuable information for the future. Link the relevance of what they’re learning to its application, and give students choice and autonomy. Structure classroom management that targets social-emotional development; teach and promote social skills students will use later in life. Conduct one on one interventions for students with behavioral issues. Change the class dynamics by using the flipped model classroom instruction, where students read the lesson directed readings before coming to class, then during class time, focus on discussions and activities that support the lesson. Altemueller and Lindquist (2017) discussed how the flipped model of instruction benefits students by increasing their engagement in classroom activities and discussions, while providing them with structured autonomy. The flipped model of instruction helps students feel more included in the lesson, which supports teachers’ efforts by building relationships with them and getting to know them as people, not just as students.

**Limitations of the Research**

There is a large pool of research available on how adolescents develop and grow throughout high school. Research explains that their brains have not fully matured. “The prefrontal cortex doesn’t finish maturing until the emerging adult years, approximately 18 to 25 years of age” (Sandtrock, 2011, p. 36), which is one reason adolescents’ ability to handle their

emotions vacillates as it does. “Adolescents have to manage major biological, educational, and social role transitions concurrently. Learning how to deal with pubertal changes, emotionally invested partnerships, and sexuality becomes a matter of considerable importance” (Bandura, 1997, p. 178).

Since the Business classes I teach are primarily comprised of adolescent males, I chose that population in hopes of identifying research-based ways in which I could structure class to increase engagement. While studies on adolescence and development are numerous, little research specifically targets adolescent males and engagement in high school classrooms in the United States. Ninety-five percent of the available research on classroom engagement focused on required courses, such as Math, Science, or Literature, while only five percent focused on engagement in elective course classrooms, specifically as it pertains to Business. Assignments in Business classes are largely project-based. As a result, I had hoped to include research that focused on adolescent males and how to incorporate project management skills, specifically, working efficiently and effectively within a group. However, there is a limited amount of research that describes the loss of engagement in boys in the classroom during project work time, and most of the research discussed girls and boys together. Jarvela, Lehtinen, and Salonen (2000) stated,

> Following Piaget’s and Valsiner’s ideas, it can be concluded that students’ individual experiences in learning and development for a base for his/her interpretations in novel learning situations. Thus, it is not possible to create a general learning environment with specific features adaptable to a general student, for every student constructs his/her own learning environment (p. 295). One necessity is to continue to ask whether or not this is still true today.

## Implications for Future Research

Further research that includes examples of classroom engagement and disengagement in adolescent males and females separately is needed to better understand the fluctuations in their respective work performances. Much of the research I found on classroom engagement and disengagement involved students in general, as opposed to adolescent boys or girls. Additional research is needed on specific tasks and hands-on activities that may be incorporated in secondary project-based learning environments, including those that are specific to business and engagement. I'd like to further my research on adolescent engagement in classroom activities by discovering evidence of successful classroom management strategies and structures in secondary project-based elective classes. Evidence of success would support classroom autonomy, limit disruptive behaviors, and encourage active engagement, in terms of content, discussion, and activities from most students in the classroom. Research is also needed on student rejection of autonomous learning behaviors in favor of compliance to get the work done correctly. These students look to the teacher for step-by-step instructions and ideas they can use in their project in an effort to ensure a good grade by complying with the teacher.

## Conclusion

What predominant factors are contributing to a lack of classroom engagement for adolescent boys and what can teachers do to re-engage them? Reducing the number of adolescent boys that are disengaged in classrooms around the United States and in Minnesota requires more than just behavioral modifications during class, increasing task-oriented projects, and creating content and instruction in which their interests lie. It also involves clear expectations, structure, follow-through, communication, and positive experiences that create enjoyment in the classroom. It also demands teacher attentiveness that encourages, inspires, and increases a sense

of belonging in all students.

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