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Accounting for Student Engagement Through Pre-Service Teacher Assessment

Kelsey C. Odell
St. Catherine University, kcodell@stkate.edu

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Accounting for Student Engagement

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An Action Research Report

by Kelsey Odell

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine student engagement within a pre-service teacher performance assessment, the Educators Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). Engagement strategies were selected and used based on the language of rubric seven of the edTPA. This study was completed in an urban fourth grade setting. Data was collected during the English Language Arts content block. Data collection methods included lesson plans incorporating the engagement strategy, student self-reports of engagement through exit slips, university supervisor checklists when observed, and teacher candidate engagement log in which notes were made of the engagement strategy selection process and reaction to collected data. Results indicate that certain strategies are more influential than others and much of the success of strategies reflected the strategy being paired with appropriate content. Further research could include comparative data with other fourth grade classrooms and other grade levels.

Keywords: student engagement, engagement strategies, assessment, edTPA

Starting at the initial stages of teacher preparation, pre-service teacher candidates learn the importance of engaging students in learning. Candidates see the importance of assessment, reflection, and observation in determining how students are engaged in learning. Education training culminates in student teaching where candidates are assessed on their readiness to lead the classroom by completing a pre-service teacher assessment, the Educators Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA). The edTPA is used by the state of Minnesota for teacher candidate assessment. Teachers are measured in their abilities during the tasks of teaching, planning, instruction, and assessment. These three tasks completed by the teacher candidate are measured using fifteen edTPA rubrics, including engaging students in lessons measured by rubric seven of the edTPA.

After studying the engagement rubrics of the edTPA, a conversation with an education professor solidified the importance of engagement in the classroom. We started to wonder how using engagement strategies during instruction would affect student engagement as measured by the edTPA. This sparked the idea to complete a study in which engagement strategies would be identified and used to engage students in an attempt to develop a list of influential strategies that would engage students while the teacher candidate completed the edTPA. Teacher candidates could use the most effective strategies identified in this study to meet the criteria of rubric seven of the edTPA.

To influence engagement through assessments, teacher candidates are better able to understand how to become "accountable, autonomous, and reflective" (Chung & Kim, 2010, p. 372). To meet the aforementioned criteria, a

proficient score must be met. A score of three on edTPA rubrics is considered the

level at which teacher candidates are meeting the preparedness requirements to

proficiently instruct in their own classroom.

The use of the edTPA, and rubric seven, was supported by criteria of

effective teacher assessments. Assessments must be credible, economically

appropriate, defensible, and acceptable (Torgerson, Macy, Beare, & Tanner,

2009). The central question asked in rubric seven is: "how does the teacher

candidate actively engage students in integrating strategies and skills to

comprehend or compose text?" (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and

Equity (SCALE), 2014, p. 22). Engagement, defined by the edTPA, is "using

strategies that promote students' active involvement in learning tasks that increase

their knowledge, skills, and abilities related to specific learning objectives"

(SCALE, 2014, p. 44).

Before selecting strategies to engage students, a teacher needs to further

their understanding of what student engagement is and why it is so important.

Engagement means the student is involved throughout the lesson in circumstances

developed and supported by the teacher (Vibert & Shields, 2003). Engagement

can be associated with a process that includes engaging the interest of students,

assessing their efforts, and ensuring they have time to produce coursework to

show their learning (Klem & Connell, 2004). The rational/technical theory can

evaluate and interpret student engagement in elementary school (Vibert and

Shields, 2003). The rational/technical theory describes engaged students in this

environment as providing positive responses and participating willingly in

classroom activities with direction from the classroom teacher (Vibert & Shields, 2003).

Engagement is more than a product of instruction and student participation. The teacher's attitude has an influence on student engagement (Jonson & Jones, 1998). The California Department of Education and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP), described teachers providing a "positive environment, competency of subjects, being there for students, effectiveness in instruction, and professional attitude" as necessary for students to engage (Jonson & Jones, 1998, p. 503). A teacher must also gather input from their students to properly engage students in learning. Students may not engage if teachers only use their perceptions and do not consider new information and insight provided by students (Smith, Rook, & Smith, 2007). By playing an active and encouraging role in the students' education, teachers have the ability to better determine the students' levels of engagement (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Engaging students in learning early in their education can have long lasting benefits. Engaging students at the elementary school age can set students up for future success in school (Klem & Connell, 2004). As students get into high school, 40-60 percent of students will disengage from their learning, not including those who have completely abandoned their scholarly pursuits (Klem & Connell, 2004). Vibert and Shields (2003) argue that students who are engaged in their learning develop benefits that cannot be measured, such as rational thinking and broader worldviews. Additionally, high levels of student engagement strongly

correlate to higher levels of academic performance and can be an indicator of

behavior and achievement in students' academic lives (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Resources given by education professors and through an independent

search were analyzed to find ten strategies to engage students in learning. All but

one strategy was found on the Edutopia (2015) website. Edutopia (2015) is a

resource website used to share new ideas and strategies for continued classroom

success. These strategies would actively engage students in learning to meet their

learning tasks, support understanding of the content, and provide new information

(SCALE, 2014).

The first strategy, *agreement* (Curwin, 2013), was chosen as it asked

students to agree, in small groups, to an answer for the question posed to the class

before finalizing the answer. *Agreement* (Curwin, 2013) engaged students in

learning through lessons supporting collaboration.

Build upon (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.), was developed after

completing a Google search for new ideas on engagement. Reading articles about

engagement through Pivotal Education (n.d.) generated new ideas and resulted in

the concept of continuously adding information to an original idea. Strategies

from these articles were combined and adapted into one strategy that fit the needs

of this group of students and *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) was

added to the list of strategies. *Build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.)

asked students to contribute to the first answer given until they have reached their

final answer. Students would feel confident as they answered knowing support by

classmates would follow making *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) a strong candidate to engage students lessons with difficult content.

 An article from Edutopia (2015) about *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) was adapted for this group of students into the next strategy. This strategy encouraged students to further their skills using empathy in the classroom. Seeing himself or herself in the text, or establishing an empathetic connection with a character, allowed students to engage in lessons. *Empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) would engage students in lessons with more emotional content or texts.

 Group answers (Curwin, 2013), was similar to *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) but students worked as a whole group to meet the learning goals rather than small group. Choosing this strategy offered students the same group process as *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) but gave students the opportunity to be part of a whole group conversation. *Agreement* (Curwin, 2013) matched lessons that supported conversation and discussion.

 Mind warm-up (de Frondeville, 2009), was selected for its ability to spark student interest and engage students before the start of the lesson. This strategy gave students the chance to try to define the subject of their learning before the lesson, which made them curious. *Mind warm-up* supports lessons that expand previously learned content.

 Movement (de Frondeville, 2009) was chosen to engage students through physical and cognitive movement. Students clapped their hands rhythmically and shared something lesson related. The teacher selected the sharing topic. Including a fun activity before learning, engaged the students, and connected fun to lessons.

Movement (de Frondeville, 2009) and lessons would pair well when students have familiarity with the lesson.

Quick write (de Frondeville, 2009), was selected for its ability to engage students through speculation and prediction. Given a topic or word, students wrote their initial ideas for ninety seconds. Students engaged during the lesson while wondering if they were correct. *Quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009) was selected to increase interest and further engagement in lessons that give students the opportunity to wonder what a term or topic meant.

Safety (de Frondeville, 2009) was adapted to fit the needs of the students from an article discussing intellectual safety in the classroom. Chosen for its ability to encourage students to feel safe and participate, *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) engaged students as they provided answers for the class. *Safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) would be ideal in lessons that are more difficult for students to initially understand.

Think outside the box (Goodman, 2014), discussed students sharing creative ideas in the classroom. Thinking about the ideas in the article led to wondering how students would engage if they were encouraged to think away from normal parameters. After adapting the information to fit the students needs, *think outside the box* (Goodman, 2014) joined the list of strategies, engaging through encouraged creativity. This strategy would pair with lessons that are more open-ended or support creativity.

Managed completely by the teacher, *tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009) was selected as a strategy that would not require additional tasks from the students.

Tight ship (de Frondeville, 2009) allowed the teacher to move the class at a swift

pace, allowing the lesson speed to match the attention span of the students. This

strategy would support lessons that are easier to comprehend as the pace moved

quicker than normal.

For this study, strategies were selected to accomplish a proficient score on

rubric seven of the edTPA, which focuses on student engagement in learning.

Language from rubric seven at a proficiency score of three asks the teacher to

engage students in "learning tasks that address their understanding" of the

learning targets and skill and that the "candidate links prior academic learning to

new" (SCALE, 2014, p. 22). From that language, I asked how does language

inspired by rubric seven of the edTPA influence a teacher candidate to identify

and implement engagement strategies in fourth grade English Language Arts?

Methodology

In preparation for the study, a lesson was planned and taught to students

introducing the idea of engagement. The lesson topic was: what does it mean to

be engaged and tuned in during a lesson? The introductory lesson started with a

brainstorming session answering the questions, had anyone heard the word

engagement and what does engagement mean in the classroom? Students

brainstormed answers to these questions with their classmates sitting next to them

in a whole group setting. After a few minutes, students shared their ideas, which

were recorded on the front board. Students thought being engaged in a classroom

meant: paying attention, raising your hand, giving new ideas, staying on task, and

getting work done. The class discussed the list and agreed with the descriptions. A

version of the edTPA definition of engagement was displayed on the board;

"active involvement in learning that increases knowledge, skills, and abilities

related to learning objectives" (SCALE, 2014, p. 44). All students agreed their

descriptions matched the definition. Students showed thumbs up meaning they

understood the term engagement in our classroom.

In order to assess student engagement in this study four data tools were

used. As discussed in the Literature review, a selection of ten engagement

strategies was compiled and used throughout the study (see Appendix A).

Strategies were paired with lessons and data was collected on days that best

supported student learning.

Notations of the strategy selected were made in lesson plans, which

assisted in planning and guided the teacher during instruction (see Appendix B).

The lessons were taught to the students using the engagement strategy paired with

the content.

Agreement (Curwin, 2013) paired nicely with two lessons. The first lesson

asked students to make text-to-text connections and the second asked students to

determine the difference between fairy tale, folktale, and myth. Both lessons

along with *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) encouraged students to discuss their

answers, ideally engaging students through new and interesting ideas.

Not all students were comfortable giving answers to the class, through

build upon (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) one student's answers became the

class's answer through classmates' continuous contributions. Making text-to-

world connections was the first lesson paired with this strategy and determining

the difference between a fairy tale, folktale, and myth was the second. Potential

for confusion was greater with these concepts, *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal

Education, n.d.) would alleviate stress associated with the confusion and

encourage participation.

　　　Empathy (Hirsch, 2014) was matched with two lessons. The first lesson

revised background knowledge to accommodate new information and the second

lesson used background knowledge to make inferences. The lesson topics were

paired with *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) as they lend themselves nicely to making

emotional and empathetic connections.

　　　Group answers (Curwin, 2013) coupled with two lessons, the first asked

questions to fill gaps in background knowledge and the second identified

elements of a story. These lessons encouraged discussion and shared knowledge,

which matched the criteria of *group answers* (Curwin, 2013). While students may

not have background knowledge on their own to complete the lessons, working as

a group gave students more information to use to meet their goals and engage in

learning.

　　　Adapted to fit the needs of students in the class, a matching activity for

mind warm-up (de Frondeville, 2009) was created. The first lesson paired with

mind warm-up (de Frondeville, 2009) asked students to create text-implicit

questions and the second asked students to differentiate fairy tales, folk tales, and

myths. Selected lessons were part of multi-day units; *mind warm-up* (de

Frondeville, 2009) was ideal with these lessons as they allowed students to match

the type of question or tale with its definition. Thinking of these matches

throughout the lesson allowed students to engage.

Movement (de Frondeville, 2009) matched with the first lesson to use

background knowledge while reading and the second lesson identified/kept track

of plot. Students shared something of which they had a lot of background

knowledge in the first lesson, followed by the plot of their favorite book in the

second lesson. These lessons were ideal for sharing as all students could access

their own background knowledge to contribute. Sharing topics that incorporated

information about each student let them connect with the material and engaged

students throughout the lessons.

Quick write (de Frondeville, 2009) complimented first with reread/read

ahead to clarify and second with understanding how a character develops. *Quick*

write (de Frondeville, 2009) paired well in these cases as lessons were not

completely new topics, which let students write about new ideas in addition to

what they already knew.

Safety (de Frondeville, 2009) was first paired with pausing to clarify while

reading, followed by identifying the theme of a story. Taught over several grade

levels, theme had become confused with other text components. Pausing to clarify

was a simple concept yet certain texts' content could get complicated. The

potential for confusion led to pair these lessons with *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009)

to influence students' engagement in learning with the promise of a safe learning

environment.

The first lesson selected for *think outside the box* (Goodman, 2014) previewed a text and the second lesson asked students to understand a character's purpose. These lessons were more open-ended which supported thinking creatively with this strategy. With *think outside the box* (Goodman, 2014) students thought in ways that were not apparent thus increasing engagement.

Tight ship (de Frondeville, 2009) matched first with a lesson asking students to make text-to-self connections and second with a lesson asking students to explain the relationship between setting and character. Selected lessons were less complicated which allowed a quicker pace to occur without hindering student learning. Ideally, the quick pace would heighten student engagement.

At the end of each lesson, students received an exit slip (see Appendix C). Students were asked not to write their names on the exit slips and were assured that no one would know which exit slip was theirs, encouraging honesty. The exit slip asked students to rate their engagement by selecting one of three options, "almost all of the lesson" represented students tuned in during the lesson, "about half of the lesson" represented students tuned in for part of the lesson, and "a little of the lesson" represented students who tuned out for the majority of the lesson. There was also a writing prompt asking for something interesting or one new thing that students learned.

In the event of an observation from the researcher's university supervisor, an observation checklist was completed for a third party account of the students' engagement (see Appendix D). On the checklist, the university supervisor's

perspective on the students' engagement was collected to further examine the

influence of the engagement strategy on student learning.

A teacher log, the final data source, was completed to document the

engagement strategy matched with lessons (see Appendix E). The process of

selecting an engagement strategy through planning, initial reflections of the lesson

after instruction, reactions to the student exit slips, and reactions to the university

supervisor checklist when applicable were included in the log.

Each of the data collection tools were used to ensure that planning of the

content in connection to the engagement strategy were fulfilling the edTPA

requirement of "students learning tasks that address their understanding" of the

learning targets and skill (SCALE, 2014, p. 22).

Storage of the data in this study was completed promptly to ensure

security. The researcher log was written in a notebook and stored in a locked desk

drawer. Researcher lesson plans and the university supervisor checklists were

saved on the computer and pass code protected. After collection of the exit slips

they were scanned, grouped by the day, and stored on the computer with pass

code protection. The physical exit slips were shredded. This enabled all data to be

secured and easily accessible for reflection, analysis, and further use.

Parents received an opt-out form that students returned if their parents did

not wish their student to participate. For students whose parents returned the opt-

out form a small red dot was placed on the back of their exit slip as a way to know

that the data of that student would not be counted in the study. Toward the end of

the study, certain students had their schedules switched to accommodate academic

interventions. If added to the English Language Arts block for this study, the additional students were not included in this study. The parents of these students did not have the opportunity to opt-out and the students did not participate in the introductory lesson. Students completed the exit slips as a source of formative assessment but were given exit slips with a red dot to indicate they would not be included in the study.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the research, analyzed data illustrated which of the engagement strategies influenced student engagement according to rubric seven of the edTPA. A proficient score on rubric seven required the teacher to engage students in 'learning tasks that address their understanding' of the learning targets and skill and that the "candidate links prior academic learning to new" (Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE), 2014). Each engagement strategy was used twice. The lesson plans and reflection log were analyzed together; they provided justification for the strategies, reflection for the influence of engagement strategies, and whether a proficient score was met.

The *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) strategy encouraged students to come to a consensus for their final answers to a question. The first lesson asked students to make a text-to-text connection with the class read aloud book and one they had read before. Based on the plan and logs, students worked together while using this strategy. Students discussed books they read and connected them to the class book. Based on the reflection log, students were able to return to their seats and complete their independent work after the lesson. This suggested students

understood the lesson; there was an easy transition between whole group and

individual practice. The second lesson was the third in a series of story type

lessons. Students were able to read together and decided which type of story they

read from the three options, fairy tale, folktale, or myth. Based on the teacher log,

students were on task for the whole lesson and conversed using evidence from

their story. Additionally, students shared their claim with supporting evidence in

front of the class. The lesson plans and log suggested that *agreement* (Curwin,

2013) in both lessons helped students to meet the literacy skills and learning

targets of the lesson and kept students on task receiving a proficient score on

rubric seven.

The *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) strategy encouraged

students to answer a question while classmates contributed, resulting in a fully

developed response. The first lesson asked students to make text-to-world

connections. After analyzing the plans and log, this strategy facilitated students

working together. Students were eager to offer ideas to the class and shared their

own experiences to help. One student shared an idea, this student appeared

hesitant but classmates eagerly assisted and contributed insights to complete the

answer. The reflection log documented that the first student who shared smiled

throughout the lesson while others contributed and continued to add to the idea.

Students had a positive attitude throughout the lesson and were able to complete

deskwork on their own. The reflection log of the second lesson documented more

difficulty for the students. This was day two of a three-day story type lesson,

which included fairy tales, folktales, and myths. The characteristics of the three

story types had started to merge in student thinking. When a student contributed

to an answer, there were instances in which the contribution was a trait of another

type of text. Students participated but the influence of this strategy did not suggest

the same success as the text-to-world lesson. After analyzing the data tools, *build

upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) demonstrated higher success when

students were working on a single task. When students were engaging in a lesson

that made comparisons or distinctions, the *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal

Education, n.d.) strategy did not provide structure students needed to be

successful. Without structure a proficient score on rubric seven was not met.

The *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) strategy asked students to put themselves in

the character's place, to try to understand what the character was feeling in the

story. The first lesson used with *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) revised background

knowledge to accommodate new information and the second used background

knowledge to make inferences. Based on the lesson plans and reflection log,

empathy (Hirsch, 2014) did not prove successful in the first lesson. Students

seemed confused by the concept of *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) and could not

accomplish the task of making an empathetic connection with the character. The

plans and log in the second lesson demonstrated students more able to

empathetically connect to characters while using background knowledge to make

inferences. After hearing a portion of the story, students used their background

knowledge, empathized with the character, and made an inference. Analyzing the

plans and log suggested *empathy* should be included as a useful tool in achieving

a proficient score but not with all content. Inferences allowed students to use more

creativity and empathize with the character. The more factual, less emotional, lesson proved difficult to understand for students. As a result, the first lesson did not achieve a proficient score.

Group answers (Curwin, 2013) encouraged students to answer as a whole group. In the first lesson, asking questions to fill gaps in their background knowledge, the teacher plan and reflection suggested success in the whole group setting but once students were working independently observable issues maintaining the same level of progress became apparent. Based on the log, students had difficulty transitioning from whole group learning to working independently while maintaining the same level of confidence in their work. The plan and log for the second lesson, determining text elements of a story, was more successful. Independent work was completed before the whole class discussion. Students read a text silently, followed by a group discussion, which determined elements of the story. After combining observations from both lesson plans and the log, using *group answers* (Curwin, 2013) to achieve a proficient score was influential to help students meet their learning targets.

In *mind warm-up* (de Frondeville, 2009), students were given a matching activity, before the lesson. The first lesson, generating text-implicit questions, had students match a question type to its definition. The plan and log suggested students were attentive, observations documented contributions from students throughout the lesson. Additionally, students were able to transition well to their independent work. The second lesson, differentiating between a fairy tale, folktale, and myth, asked students to match the type of story to its definition. The

plan and log suggested stronger success; students were familiar with the routine of

the mind warm-up and remained curious throughout the lesson. Students

consistently participated and eagerly completed independent work. *Mind warm-up*

(de Frondeville, 2009), in two situations, proved to successfully influence student

engagement. When analyzing the lesson plans and reflection log, this strategy

received a proficient score in both lessons, as students met their learning targets.

The *movement* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategy involved a simple motion

while sharing in a circle to engage students from the start of a lesson. In the first

lesson, using background knowledge while reading, students clapped in rhythm

and shared something of which they had a lot of background knowledge. The

plans and reflection log suggested that students responded well and eagerly

participated. Students appeared consistently engaged throughout the lesson and

readily shared their unique background knowledge to help the rest of the class

understand the text. The plans and log for the second lesson, identifying the plot

while reading, suggested less success. Students were presented with a description

of the term "plot," then clapped rhythmically while sharing the plot of their

favorite book. This concept was more difficult as students had varying

understanding of plot. The log suggested that *movement* (de Frondeville, 2009)

prevented students from accepting alternate definitions of plot, which lead to

confusion. Using *movement* (de Frondeville, 2009) to achieve a proficient score

did not work in all situations.

The *quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategy asked students to write

what they thought a word or concept meant before starting the lesson. The first

lesson asked students to write why reading ahead or rereading would be helpful. The reflection log documented that students were confused by the idea of a *quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009); they were worried about the "right answer." Additionally, students appeared distracted during instruction and independent work. Students contributed to whole group instruction once getting settled but not for the majority of the lesson. The second lesson asked students to write about how they thought a character could change in a story. Based on the reflection log, students were very vocal about the dislike of *quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009) and, as in the first lesson, had a negative reaction to the strategy. The log further described student participation and independent work that continued to struggle. After looking at the plans and log, *quick writes* (de Frondeville, 2009) in both situations did not achieve a proficient score on rubric seven. In order to achieve a proficient score, students needed to meet the learning targets and literacy skills. The log suggests in both lessons students did not fully reach their learning targets.

The *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategy involved the teacher making it clear to the class that we were all here to learn. The first lesson used with *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) asked students to pause while reading to clarify. The reflection log suggested that students did well with *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009), even the quieter students offered responses to the class. Additionally, students respected others when answers were not correct and gave their own answers to help. Independent work was swift and students appeared confident. Based on the reflection log, the second lesson, identifying the theme, did not suggest as much success. Students felt safe sharing their ideas with the class but were not always

related to the lesson. Students gave answers that were silly as they were "safe" to

do so, this continued as students worked independently. The first lesson did

achieve a proficient score; students worked hard and met their learning goals for

the lesson. The second lesson would not achieve the same results. It is not clear if

the strategy or the day caused the lack of engagement during the lesson. Students

were not on task during the second lesson and did not fulfill the literacy skills.

The *think outside the box* (Goodman, 2014) strategy gave students a

chance to be creative in reading. Only one data collection for this strategy

occurred as a school wide interruption prevented the collection of the second

attempt. In the lesson, students were asked to *think outside the box* (Goodman,

2014) while previewing a text. Students were *thinking outside the box* (Goodman,

2014), however this strategy should be used cautiously. The classroom was more

rambunctious in nature, which opened the door to ideas that were not relevant to

the lesson. Based on the reflection log, students who were on task and *thinking*

outside the box (Goodman, 2014) with related content appeared to positively

respond to increased creativity. Others took this strategy as an invitation to be

silly which did not allow those students to achieve the literacy skills needed.

Think outside of the box (Goodman, 2014) in this situation did not achieve a

proficient score on the edTPA.

The *tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategy kept the lesson moving at a

quick pace managed by the teacher. The first lesson used with *tight ship* (de

Frondeville, 2009) made text-to-self connections and the second explained the

relationship between setting and characters. The reflection log suggested students

in the first lesson were on task. Students kept up with the pace and seemed to like

the change in timing. The students responded well to *tight ship* (de Frondeville,

2009) in independent work. Based on the log, the second lesson did not show the

same results as the first but did assist in the management of the lesson. Students

were on task but did not offer insights as they had before. Students appeared

distanced from the lesson and the teacher. Independent work was not as strong

when compared to the observations in the log for the first lesson. After analyzing

the plans and log observations, *tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009) did achieve a

proficient score on rubric seven as students actively participated in the lesson. The

second trial did not read as strong of results but did demonstrate application of the

literacy strategies students needed to learn.
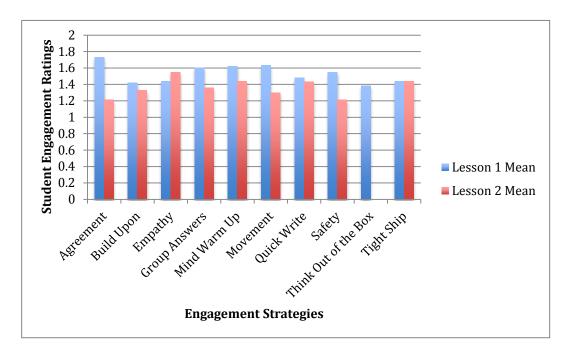

Figure 1. Mean scores of student exit slips. Mean of 1 - "almost all" of the lesson,

mean of 2 - "about half," mean of 3 are students engaged in only "a little." A

score around 1.5 would suggest a score of proficiency.

Upon completion of the lesson, students received an exit slip and reported how engaged they were in the lesson. While using *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.), students reported higher engagement during the first lesson as indicated by the mean score of 1.42 (see Figure 1). This was consistent with the observations noted in the observation log. Other strategies that shared similar results of consistency between exit slips and teacher observations. These strategies include: *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) with mean scores of 1.44 and 1.55 (see Figure 1)*, movement* (de Frondeville, 2009) reporting means of 1.63 and 1.3 (see Figure 1), and *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) with means of 1.55 and 1.21 (see Figure 1). This demonstrated strategies influence on student learning matched observations of the teacher.

While some strategies showed strong consistency with the lesson plan and teacher log data there were some that were close but had variations, these strategies were: *mind warm-up* (de Frondeville, 2009) and *tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009). Mean scores for *mind warm-up* (de Frondeville, 2009) were 1.62 and 1.44 (see Figure 1). *Tight ship's* (de Frondeville, 2009) mean scores were consistent in both lessons at 1.44 (see Figure 1). While there was variation in these strategies, their influence was close to observations from the teacher.

Students reported very different results than the teacher while reporting on four strategies, *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) in the first lesson with a mean of 1.73 (see Figure 1) and *group answers* (Curwin, 2013) in the first lesson with a mean of 1.6 (see Figure 1). Two others had a more noticeable difference; *quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009) reported means of 1.48 and 1.43 (see Figure 1) and *think*

outside the box (Goodman, 2014) reported a mean of 1.38 (see Figure 1). Students

reported high engagement with these strategies through their exit slips but the

teacher log discussed earlier in this paper reported that students struggled with the

task. The question with these two strategies is were students more engaged than

observed by the teacher or were students entertained and engaged by the

disruption rather than the lesson?

The student data, exit slips, demonstrated students were engaged between

"all of the lesson" and "about half of the lesson" on average. No student exit slips

averaged a score of "2." An average rating between two and three would show

students engaging in less than half of the lesson. As all average scores were

between one and two, the students reported an average engagement in over half of

each lesson.

University supervisor checklists were completed twice during the study.

The checklists showed how a third party rated students' engagement. The

checklist separated student engagement into categories: focus, verbal expression,

interest, and positive actions. Additionally, the checklist allowed the supervisor to

rate perceived engagement on a four-point scale including: tuned in, mostly tuned

in, mostly tuned out, and tuned out. The checklists helped in determining if the

students were engaged to achieve a score of proficiency on rubric seven of the

edTPA.

The first checklist was completed during the first use of the *quick write*

strategy while students were reading ahead or rereading to clarify texts. The data

from the teacher log reported that students were not responding to the strategy

during the initial stages. Students had trouble at the start of the lesson but were able to participate during the majority of the lesson. Students had difficulty completing their independent work. According to student exit slips, fourteen reported being engaged in "almost all of the lesson," ten reported being engaged for "about half of the lesson," and one reported being engaged in "a little of the lesson," demonstrated with an average of 1.48 on *Figure 1*. The supervisor checklist stated that students were mostly tuned in to all of the aforementioned categories. Interestingly the supervisor checklist more strongly supported student reports of engagement than the candidate's assessment. With the third party report, much like the analysis of the edTPA, this checklist supported a proficient score on rubric seven.

The second university supervisor checklist observed the *movement* strategy in which students learned to use background knowledge while reading. The teacher candidate reported that students were actively engaged in the lesson. Students were eager to participate, attention was high throughout the lesson, and students were able to recall their background knowledge. The exit slips reported that twelve students were engaged in "almost all of the lesson," thirteen were engaged in "about half of the lesson," and two were engaged in "a little of the lesson," demonstrated by an average score of 1.63 on *Figure 1*. According to the checklist, students were mostly tuned in for the focus, verbal expression, and positive action categories. In the interest category, the supervisor gave students a rating of tuned in, the highest rating. This suggested that the supervisors' rating was more closely tied to the teacher candidate's observations than those of the

students in this lesson, demonstrating a third party data source reporting high

engagement and an anticipated proficient score on rubric seven.

Collected data suggested strategies were more influential when wisely

matched with content. The requirements of the lesson and strategy usage should

be correlated to give students the best possible success. While strategies in

different classrooms might be successful, not all strategies were ideal with this

group of students and could benefit from further testing.

Action Plan

My research supported using engagement strategies to achieve a score of

proficiency on rubric seven of the edTPA. Strategies were tested to increase

student engagement while learning in the classroom. This study suggested there is

variation in student engagement when strategies are used and matched with lesson

objectives wisely. Not all lessons are the same so using one strategy will not help

the students become the best learners they could be; strategies must be paired

wisely with lesson content.

This study found the strategies *agreement* (Curwin, 2013) and *group*

answers (Curwin, 2013) well suited to lessons in which students worked together

either in a whole group or partner setting. These strategies supported students

working together to meet learning goals. For multi-day lessons that cover closely

related content, the strategy *mind warm-up* (de Frondeville, 2009) was influential

in reminding students what they had learned or sparking curiosity of what they

will be learning.

The *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) and *safety* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategies were influential in lessons that were more difficult or completely new for students. These strategies promoted a safe community atmosphere to support student learning with difficult lessons.

Refresher or review lessons used with *movement* (de Frondeville, 2009) were influential in helping students connect to content. Students found the familiar lessons engaging when they were allowed to move to a rhythm to show what they had learned.

Empathy (Hirsch, 2014) and *tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009) engaged students through clear teacher expectations. Using *empathy* (Hirsch, 2014) gave students a focus point in learning: identify the feelings of the character. *Tight ship* (de Frondeville, 2009) offered a similar opportunity; students engaged by increasing focus on the lesson rather than conversations that could lead to distracting topics.

While many engagement strategies used in this study suggested a positive influence on student learning, two did not demonstrate the same influence. Students were verbal in their dislike of the *quick write* (de Frondeville, 2009) strategy. In addition, *think outside the box* (Goodman, 2014) provided an opportunity for students to act silly during lessons. While these may have different results at a different time, these strategies did not assist students to reach their learning goals in this study.

Another finding stems from discrepancies between teacher observations and student reports. While many reports were complimentary in this study, there

were cases in which student and teacher candidate reports varied largely. The

discrepancy demonstrates a need to continuously gather student data on strategies

and procedures used in the classroom to ensure that students are engaging in

learning as much as possible.

   Reflecting on this study has given insight on changes that could have been

made during planning stages of my research. Initially, only the grade level and

location of the study were known. During this study, I was placed in two

classrooms while student teaching; one was not participating in this study. I

wondered how influential the strategies would have been with another group of

students. This study would be interesting to compare with another group of fourth

grade students to see if the same results would be achieved or if there would be

contradictory results.

    It would also be beneficial to assess these engagement strategies in

another content area. While English Language Arts was tested to comply with

rubric seven of the edTPA; math would be interesting to study simultaneously.

This would help to determine if these strategies would be useful in all subjects or

if there would be variation across content areas. Teacher candidates have the

option to select English Language Arts or Math while completing the edTPA;

there are rubrics assessing engagement in both subjects. Using these engagement

strategies in both subjects would provide meaningful comparative data in a future

study.

   An additional step in the research could test these strategies across grade

levels; the edTPA is available to teacher candidates in various licensure areas. A

comparative study to determine which engagement strategies, if any, would be universally helpful in engaging students. One strategy may be helpful in fourth grade but the results for a senior in high school could be an interesting comparison.

These results will have an impact on my practice as a teacher. This study observed students using engagement strategies that appeared to make a difference in their attitude toward learning and their participation during lessons. Gathering data on the impact of various strategies encourages the use of these strategies in my future lesson planning and instruction. My teaching practice will be enriched with the continued use and exploration of the tested engagement strategies, ideally resulting in increased student learning through heightened student engagement.

Engaging students in lessons is vital in helping students to achieve their learning goals. Rubric seven of the edTPA offers teacher candidates guidelines to successfully engage their students in learning. Engaging students with strategies was more influential when strategies were paired with lessons that support the strategy. Engagement strategies can achieve the ultimate goal, engaging students in learning for a meaningful education.

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Appendix A

Strategy	Description of Strategy	Source Link	Connection
Agreement	Similar to "Group Answers" students agree to answers as pairs or small groups to achieve their answers.	http://www.edutopia.org/blog/make-class-discussions-more-exciting-richard-curwin	This strategy should be used with lessons that support small group/paired discussion.
Build Upon	This strategy allows a student to offer an answer but rather than the teacher redirecting, the students help each other find the truth to the question by offering additional answers until they all *build upon* (Day, n.d.; Pivotal Education, n.d.) one another to find the correct answer.	http://www.pivotaleducation.com/assets/Uploads/pdfs/Active-Engagement-Strategies-to-Use-in-Your-Classroom.pdf & http://www.pivotaleducation.com/active-engagement-strategies	This strategy is best used when students are working with a single concept not a lesson dealing with comparisons.
Empathy	Students are encouraged to see things through the eyes of the character in the story and feel what they feel to better connect and understand the text. From an article emphasizing empathy use in the classroom, this strategy was implemented.	http://www.edutopia.org/blog/empathy-lesson-plan-life-skill-joe-hirsch	This strategy should be paired with lessons such as inferences where students can pull meaning.
Group Answers	Students work as a whole class and must agree to the final answer before further discussion. This strategy will keep students interested through collaborative discussion and team building and supports talking about different opinions.	http://www.edutopia.org/blog/make-class-discussions-more-exciting-richard-curwin	This strategy was paired with lessons that facilitated a discussion format.

Mind Warm-Up	Students are given something from a text to spark their interest, they could complete vocabulary matching or other activities to get the minds started and make them curious about the text.	http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-student-participation-tips	This strategy is best paired with multi-day units.
Movement	Students share something related to the lesson to a rhythmic clap along with their classmates.	http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-student-participation-tips	This strategy should be done with a lesson that involves a simple task. Not an entirely new concept.
Quick Write	When given a topic related to a text, students will write about their views on a topic to spark interest in the text they will be reading.	http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-student-participation-tips	This strategy should be used a lesson where students know the topic but are getting new ideas.
Safety	The instructor will emphasize that the classroom is a safe place and that all answers that are given will be valued and respected. This idea was from an article encouraging safety in the classroom and put into practice.	http://www.edutopia.org/project-learning-teaching-strategies	This strategy should be used with lessons that are new to students to help support their comfort in answering questions.
Think Out of the Box / Divergent Thinking	Students will be encouraged to think creatively during concepts that are more open-ended and text. This will allow students to observe even small details of a text and share their ideas. Originally from an article, this strategy takes the articles thinking and puts it into practice.	http://www.edutopia.org/blog/fueling-creativity-through-divergent-thinking-classroom-stacey-goodman	This strategy should be used in lessons that support creativity.

Tight Ship	This engagement strategy is in the management, being maintaining complete control in the classroom and keeping the pace moving students will have lesson content that is delivered in an attention span friendly manner keeping students engaged.	http://www.edutopia.org/classroom-student-participation-tips	This lesson should be used in lessons that are easier to support the faster speed.

Appendix B

Daily Lesson Plan

Subject/Anticipated length of the lesson: **Date**:
MN Academic Content Standards:
Student Objective(s)/Learning Target(s):   I can…

Assessment

How will you know that all students met the objective(s)/learning target(s)?

Pre-assessment: *What knowledge do students already have related to the objective of the lesson? What evidence have you collected to support this? How will you connect prior knowledge to the lesson?*	
Formative Assessment(s): *How do you intend to check for understanding throughout the lesson and what instructional decisions will you make based on the evidence you collect?*	**Summative Assessment(s)** *When you look at your lesson objective(s), how will you will you find out if students learned what you intended at the end of the lesson/unit?*

Student Engagement

What strategies will be used to engage students:	How will students be engaged in this lesson:

Instructional Strategies and Learning Tasks

Time	
Time	**Frontloading, the Anticipatory Set:** What attention grabber/hook will you use to get students into the lesson? *Consider establishing relevance, asking higher order thinking questions and using hands-on experiences that draw in your students and get them excited and ready to learn.*
Time	**The Instructional Sequence** Possible steps:
Time	**Closure:** *How will you involve students in closing the lesson (i.e. revisit and assess progress toward meeting the objective/learning target)?*

Appendix C

I was tuned in for (circle one):

a large part of the lesson   about half the lesson   only a little of the lesson

One new thing I learned today was

_____.

I was tuned in for (circle one):

a large part of the lesson   about half the lesson   only a little of the lesson

The most interesting part of today was

_____.

I was tuned in for (circle one):

a large part of the lesson   about half the lesson   only a little of the lesson

Something I will remember from today was

_____.

Appendix D

Student Engagement Checklist

Tuned In	Mostly Tuned In	Mostly Tuned Out	Tuned Out
1	2	3	4

Focus

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Students are tuned into the lesson and to the teacher candidate.
Observer Notes:

Verbal Explanation

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Students are offering answers that are connected to learning and push for more understanding and insights.
Observer Notes:

Interest

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Students appear to be positively enjoying the lesson and the material.
Observer Notes:

Positive Actions

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Students are physically acting in an engaged way. Examples: stance demonstrates listening/interest, students are taking notes not drawing pictures, and students are not staring at the clock during the lesson.
Observer Notes:

Appendix E

Teacher Candidate Engagement Log Template

Lesson: (Date)

Think Through: (Content Description)

Strategy and Reasoning: (Engagement Selection Explanation)

Reflection and Observation of Student Engagement: (Candidate Notes)

Reaction to Exit Slips: (Tallies and Notations)

Response to Observer Checklist (If Applicable): (Candidate Notes)