EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION AMONG SECONDARY EDUCATORS TOWARD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

KAREN SMITH MITCHELL. Expanding the conversation among secondary educators toward a shared understanding of student engagement (Under the direction of DR. REBECCA SHORE)

To describe how high school administrators and teachers perceive student engagement and how socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement, the researcher conducted a phenomenological study to generate knowledge of the lived experiences of the participants through semi-structured interviews. As an active participant in the data collection, the researcher explored the experiences of administrators and teachers to generate a robust description of the construct to promote a shared understanding of student engagement within two diverse, secondary, learning communities to support increased student learning outcomes.

Research presented in the literature and the findings of this dissertation affirm the role of students as active participants in the educational processes, the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as an organizational structure to guide conversations within secondary schools around “Lively Instruction”, “Connective Teaching” and “Academic Rigor”, and the positive relationship between socioeconomic status and increased student learning. Disparities within the findings suggest incongruence with respect to whose responsibility it is to engage the students, the role of feedback, the development of trust, as well as the importance of the instructional practices to support engagement. The findings of this dissertation suggest the significance of professional development within secondary schools to support increased understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement.

Suggestions for future research are presented including; incorporating students' voices as well as studies conducted in and with teachers of elementary and middle schools to explore the findings. Additional research would contribute to the shared understanding of the operational definition of student engagement and to increased student learning outcomes.

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I am indebted to the administrators and teachers of both schools for their willingness to participate in the conversations regarding their lived experiences in public schools of student engagement. It is my hope that I have both characterized and honored their perspectives and voices within this research.

A special thank you to my peer debriefer, Jessica Mitchell Cline. The feedback she provided not only assisted with guiding next steps within the study but also proved to be a constant source of support and encouragement.

DEDICATION

To my family, for their boundless love, encouragement, and belief in me. With immense gratitude to my husband, Bob, our daughters, Lee and Jessica, and my mother, Jerri, who have taught me the value of commitment and through their actions inspired the courage to pursue my dreams.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Coleman Report of 1966 concluded that the primary influence of student achievement was family background. As a result, public school reform initiatives in the following decades centered on providing access to life chances for the families and students of poverty. To provide resources to compensate for parents' lack of education, students' lack of support financially, socially, emotionally, and other contributing factors affecting student learning, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 utilized Title I legislation and funds to identify potential solutions. In other words, these Federal reforms focused on the needs of these students in order to compensate for the disadvantaged backgrounds to level the playing field within the public schools across the country (Coleman, 1966; Dickinson, 2016; Lezotte, 2009).

Although researchers agreed that family background is critical to students' success, many advocated that schools also make a difference in students' success or lack thereof. The Effective Schools Movement (ESM) of the late 20th and early 21st centuries developed partly to counter the focus recommended within the Coleman Report (Edmonds, 1982; Lezotte, 2009). Ultimately, the ESM centered the reform initiatives on the school as the most important component of school improvements. In other words, the Effective Schools' research conducted in diverse learning communities, both rural and urban, concluded that public schools make a difference despite the socioeconomic status of the students. Furthermore, these researchers identified distinctive characteristics within schools where all students, including those in poverty, were found to be learning.

The Correlates of Effective Schools include instructional leadership, safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, as well as the opportunity to learn, and student time on task (Fullan, & Watson, 2000; Lezotte, 2009). The Correlates of Effective Schools are essential characteristics of effective schools. The correlates contextualize the critical components of reform to promote successful student outcomes for students of differing socioeconomic classes through the lens of the school as the principle agent of change. Over time, the Correlates of Effective Schools have been applied and refined from a first generation to a second generation of correlates (Lezotte, 2009). Specifically, the scope of the correlates has broadened to include the developmental steps effective schools must take to support the implementation of the correlates while affirming the school as the primary agent of change to support student learning outcomes. First and second generation correlates are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Correlates of Effective Schools

The First Generation	The Second Generation
Safe and Orderly Environment: To protect students from harm	Environments conducive for learning for all
Climate of High Expectations: “Equalization of opportunity”/teacher	Collaboration for “Equalization of Opportunity”
Instructional Leadership: Principal as leader	Principals and teachers collaborate
Clear and Focused Mission: Articulated mission communicated	Articulation of students’ learning
Opportunity to Learn/Student Time on Task: Teacher directed lessons; engagement	Time and specific content

Table 1 (continued)

Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress:	
Measured with teacher adjusting behavior	"Authentic" assessments to determine mastery

Source: Lezotte, 2009

The No Child Left Behind Act, a reaffirmation of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965, was signed by President George W. Bush in 2002. This legislation moved to quantify the school as an agent of change and resulted in an emphasis on standardization of the curriculum, high stakes assessment, and increased efforts to close the achievement gap (Fullan & Watson, 2000; Lezotte, 2009). The Federal influence on closing the achievement gap continued, as in 2009, when President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which outlined even more Federal funding for support of educational reform contingent upon expected student outcomes. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), was signed by President Obama in 2015 to replace the No Child Left Behind Act. In 2018, this legislation established in effect continued the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and affirmed the longstanding commitment of the Federal government to provide equal opportunities for all students. According to the ESSA website President Obama stated; "with this bill, we reaffirm that fundamentally American ideal—that every child, regardless of race, income, background, the zip code where they live, deserves the chance to make of their lives what they will" (www.ed.gov).

President Obama's Race to the Top initiative provided over four billion dollars of funding to 19 states that agreed to increase not only standards but expectations of high achievement for students. To achieve such results, these states including North Carolina agreed to the four areas of reform as outlined in the initiative. They are as follows:

“development of rigorous standards and better assessments, adoption of better data systems to provide schools, teachers and parents with information about student progress, support for teachers and school leaders to become more effective, and increased emphasis and resources for the rigorous interventions to turn around the low performing schools” (Race to the Top Executive Summary, 2009). Integral to the Race to the Top legislation are the incentives awarded to the participating states for increased student learning outcomes as measured through innovative strategies, productivity, and effectiveness (Race to the Top Executive Summary, 2009). In order to meet the expectations set forth in the Race to the Top initiative, it is important for teachers and administrators to be effective leaders in engaging students toward success.

The North Carolina Department of Instruction collaborates with the Academic Development Institute to provide support to the schools serving at-risk students and to those schools not making the grade or classified as low performing. In other words, schools with scores of below a “C” on the North Carolina Report Card issued by the Department of Instruction. The Academic Development Institute (ADI) is a nonprofit corporation centered on the mission of “providing research on education and personal competencies and creating programs locally and nationally to ensure quality lifelong learning” (http://www.ai.org/aboutadi/). The research of this organization focused on three areas; change as measured through indicators of improvement, instruction, and transformation; personal competencies to support student learning; and the school as a community of stakeholders to support learning. To achieve these goals, the ADI partners with schools, districts, and states to support continuous improvement of the educational processes for students through high school.

Specifically, the Academic Development Institute applied for a federal grant and was awarded one of five national content centers for the period 2005-2012. The Center for Innovation and Improvement was created and administered by the ADI and funded through the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of assisting State Education Agencies (SEAs) with systems of support, district and school improvements, restructuring and turn-around of low performing schools, as well as family and community engagement. To achieve these goals, the Indistar Network tool focuses the work upon a teaming process, state accessibility to current initiatives, State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies (LEA) coaching support, and indicators of effective practice as identified in research and evidenced through “Wise Ways” and “Indicators in Action.” As one of the research labs for the U.S. Department of Education, the Academic Development Institute is funded through 2021. It appears the accountability model which grew out of the Effective Schools Movement, the increased emphasis initiated with the No Child Left Behind legislation and maintained with the Race to the Top programs will continue to place the school as the primary agent of reform. Thus, school reform initiatives will continue to promote student success for the foreseeable future following the efforts from school funding all the way to the individual.

However, within this era of accountability and standardization there is an ensuing conversation regarding the science of learning and development that supports the idea that effective schools and leaders focus on more than just assessment data and standards driven education. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2019):

> This framework makes it clear how children’s development and learning are shaped by interactions among the environmental factors, relationships, and learning opportunities they experience, both in and out of school, along with physical, psychological, cognitive, social, and emotional processes that

> influence one another—both biologically and functionally—as they enable or undermine learning (p. 98).

In other words, effective schools work with and consider the whole child when addressing the learning and education needs of students.

Opponents to the current era of accountability include the facts that increased standardization to promote greater student learning outcomes has led to a loss of local control as well as a narrowly defined evaluation system of school leaders, both administrators and teachers, which may hinder the overall development of the students (Darling-Hammond et al, (2019); Bourkiza et al., 2018; Graue e al., 2016). These educational researchers advocate reforms to support practices within schools to broaden the scope of evaluation systems which consider and focus on the students' complete education" (Bourkiza et al., 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Inherent in the Effective Schools Movement and the federal education reforms is the phenomenon of student engagement. The Correlates of Effective Schools include a school climate of high expectations, the opportunity to learn, and increased time on task. Within the No Child Left Behind and the Race to the Top legislation, effective teachers and leaders are paramount to the assessment of school performance whereas the Academic Development Institute's Indistar Network focuses on indicators of academic success. Implied within the indicators of academic success is student engagement and its resulting evidence of learning. Engaging students in the educational processes is an important component of student success and as such paramount to the relationships

between teachers and leaders. However, within these important federal and state reforms there is not a precise definition nor a clear understanding of student engagement.

A review of the literature highlighted the importance of researching administrators' and teachers' perceptions of motivation and engagement. Partly as a result of the different nuances of the construct of engagement, conceptions of engagement, and how to facilitate engagement within and across school communities, the researcher believes it is essential to foster a conversation regarding a common understanding of student engagement across school reform efforts. In this era of high stakes accountability, research is needed to investigate how administrators and teachers as members of a community of educators and learners understand student engagement.

1.3 Significance of the Study

As a veteran educator in the public schools of North Carolina, with experiences as a high school teacher, Assistant Principal of Instruction, and Academic Content Facilitator, the researcher has acquired first-hand knowledge of the impact of the educational reform legislation of the last decade. In an era of increased accountability associated with standardization as measured through assessments and data collection, it is critical that stakeholder groups within educational communities possess a clear understanding of student engagement. Bakhtin suggests with his concept of dialogic pedagogy that language in use is a fluid process (Morrell, 2004). In other words, meaning is negotiated due to the context of other people's words and experiences. Therefore, the culture of a time and place, state education agency (SEA), local education agency (LEA), school, or classroom could influence understanding of the construct and help to define the

meaning of student engagement. In other words, how stakeholder groups within schools experience student engagement may affect the meaning of the construct.

The accountability measures of the educational reform legislation of the 21st century and the roles this researcher has held within the public schools of North Carolina have demonstrated the need for research to increase understanding of the construct of student engagement. Specifically, while serving as an Assistant Principal of Instruction (API), the Director of Secondary Education required all of the APIs to conduct classroom walkthroughs as a team in order to develop a common understanding of the elements of the Teachscape instrument before implementation within the district.

Classroom walkthroughs were being implemented to support the development of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) initiative to standardize the delivery of the content through the DuFour model (DuFour et al., 2005) and to fulfill the requirements of the Race to the Top initiative as North Carolina was one of 19 states to be awarded a Race to the Top grant. In an effort to implement data systems to assess and measure student growth and success as defined by college and career readiness as well as inform teachers and administrators to facilitate the improvement of instruction, the PLC model was introduced within the district. Within the DuFour model, professional learning communities as team of teachers center the work around four guiding questions; “what do we expect our students to learn?”; “how will we know when they are learning?”; “how will we respond when they don’t learn?”; and “how will we respond if they already know it?” (DuFour et al., 2005). Ultimately, this model promotes collaboration within professional learning communities to guide instruction to support increased student

learning outcomes. Within each of the four questions, the construct of student engagement is considered when determining the responses.

To assist the district leadership, administrators, and teachers with data collection regarding effective instructional practices to support positive student outcomes, the LEA implemented the Teachscape classroom walkthrough instrument (Teachscape, 2006). The Teachscape walkthrough was developed to "analyze patterns and trends in teaching and learning, monitor the efficacy of professional development, determine areas of focus for improvement, and build professional culture and dialogue around teaching and learning" (Teachscape, 2006). Possible outcomes cited by the Teachscape organization include "improved instructional practices, increased student engagement, more positive interaction between school leadership and students, and increased collaboration between school leaders and teachers" (Teachscape, 2006).

To achieve the goals and potential outcomes of the classroom walkthrough model, the Teachscape instrument is designed to collect data by using "Standard Look-Fors" during brief, five-minute classroom observations called "snapshots" to generate data for analysis and dialogue within the educational community. The Standard Look-Fors of the instrument include the following elements: Focus on Curriculum, Focus on Instruction, Focus on the Learner, Focus on the Classroom Environment, and Focus on the Needs of All Learners (Teachscape, 2006). Within all of the above Foci, levels of learner engagement and classroom engagement are considered. Thus, the LEA's new walkthrough instrument included student engagement as one of the five elements to be observed and data collected.

The five minute walkthroughs were conducted in all seven high schools so the API team could consider the elements across diverse communities and within the high school classrooms of the district. The Director of Secondary Education explained this training was essential to reach a common understanding and standardization of the elements being observed. Classroom walkthroughs are just one data point for administrators to consider when evaluating teacher effectiveness and strategies to support instruction. Of the five elements, it was the student engagement element that proved the most difficult to observe, quantify, and to measure for the team of Assistant Principals of Instruction. Difficulties arose when the administrators considered and discussed important questions such as what is the difference between compliance and engagement? In other words, how does one define engagement?

Research literature affirms the researcher's experiences as a teacher and school leader that there is not a clear understanding of the construct of student engagement. This gap may be due to the fact that "engagement is one of the most widely used and overgeneralized constructs found in the educational, learning, instructional, and psychological sciences" (Azevedo, 2015, p. 84). This qualitative study has the potential to not only facilitate a dialogue and increase understanding within high schools regarding the phenomenon of student engagement but to inform policy and practical applications of the knowledge gained to create professional development opportunities around best practices to support student engagement and positive student learning outcomes. With increased understanding of the construct of student engagement and dialogue within educational communities, educators, both administrators and teachers, can develop a shared understanding to support student learning.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The objectives of this research are to describe how teachers and administrators perceive student engagement and to investigate the implications of these understandings as well as describe how socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement in an effort to develop a shared understanding of the construct to support student learning. The sample includes teachers and administrators in two high schools serving distinct populations within the same southwestern school district of North Carolina. The researcher examined student engagement through three dimensions; cognitive engagement, behavioral engagement, and emotional engagement (Azevedo, 2015; Cooper, 2011; Fredericks et al., 2004; Harris, 2008).

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the major common threads in understanding of student engagement among secondary teachers and administrators?
2. How do secondary school administrators' and teachers' understanding of student engagement diverge from each other?
3. How does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators' understanding of student engagement?

1.6 Statement of Methodology

To generate knowledge regarding student engagement, researchers have used both quantitative and qualitative inquiry. Within the literature, researchers conducted analyses to determine statistical relationships among characteristics of the construct as well as regression analyses. In addition, phenomenographic investigations, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, surveys, questionnaires, case studies, and mixed methods studies have been used to increase understanding of student engagement (Azevedo, 2015;

Cooper, 2011, 2014; Harris, 2008; Jonasson, 2012; Tlhoaele et al., 2014; van Uden, et al., 2013).

The primary aim of this qualitative research study is to generate knowledge regarding student engagement. The design is based upon a constructivist epistemology and a theoretical perspective of postmodernism as this researcher believes "truth" is a matter of perspective that is partially constructed as a result of experiences and the "maps" that an individual possesses. The methodology for this study is phenomenological research because it "explores the meaning of individual lived experience" (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 85). This methodology provides for an in-depth focus of the construct as perceived by two important stakeholder groups within schools; administrators and teachers as the participants. Through dialogue with the participants and an analysis of the language used by the participants, this research study aims to provide a greater understanding of student engagement within secondary schools.

1.7 Summary of Chapter 1 and Introduction to Chapter 2

Within the last three decades of the 20th century and the first two decades of the 21st century, the focus of reforms within America's public schools shifted from providing access to life chances for students of poverty to the school as the critical determinant of student achievement. With the shift to the accountability model of educational reform, the Effective Schools Movement, with support from the federal government, identified the school as the agent of change to promote equity and positive student outcomes. The Correlates (Lezotte, 2009) as identified by the Effective Schools Movement have emphasized the role of administrators and teachers in setting high expectations, and opportunities to learn for all students. Student engagement is

paramount to the Correlates (Lezotte, 2009) and the accountability model of reform. This qualitative research study investigated how the construct is understood by these major stakeholder groups within public schools and how socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study is threefold; to describe how secondary school administrators and teachers understand the construct of student engagement, to explore how socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement, and to investigate the implications of these understandings. A review of the literature is presented to provide historical context for the issues and to present themes found within the literature regarding the phenomenon of student engagement. An initial overview is provided to connect student engagement to the impact of the publication of *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (NCEE, 1983). The first theme discusses the impact of the school as the agent of change on student engagement and increased student learning outcomes. A second theme emerged in the literature which examines the role of the principal as the instructional leader in shaping the culture of a school to support increased student engagement; while the third theme within the literature review examines the role of the teacher in facilitating student engagement in the educational processes. Relationships and the establishment of trust as essential elements of student engagement emerged as the fourth theme within a review of the literature. The fifth theme presents the characteristics of the phenomenon as identified within the literature. As a potential tool for conceptualizing the phenomenon of student engagement, the sixth theme of the literature review is the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011). The seventh theme examines the connections between socioeconomic status and the impact on student achievement.

2.2 Student Engagement

Within the research, student engagement or lack thereof is perceived as integral to addressing the problems of low student achievement, student alienation within schools, and increased attrition (Jonasson, 2012; Fall & Roberts, 2012). While there is an increased interest in the construct of student engagement as illustrated by the numbers of research articles found within the literature of the last two decades, the phenomenon remains difficult to define (Azevedo, 2015; Barkaoui et al., 2015; Jonasson, 2012; Vuori, 2014). The literature suggests this is the case due to the behavioral, emotional/ psychological, and cognitive components of the construct (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Fall & Roberts, 2012; Leach & Zepke, 2011; Smyth, 2006). Furthermore, "the construct is widely used either by researchers, students, teachers, parents, school administrators, and government officials without proper and accurate definitions" (Azevedo, 2015, p. 84).

2.3 Overview

The National Commission on Excellence in Education was created during the first Reagan administration in 1981 by the Secretary of Education, Terrel Howard Bell. The mandate given to the Commission was to generate a report on the state of education within America and to share the information with the public. The report entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was released in April of 1983 and contained recommendations for changes to improve our public and private schools as well as the colleges and universities. This report was a result of the major finding that America's prominence in the world politically, militarily, and economically as demonstrated through commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation was no longer secure (NCEES, 1983).

Two specific recommendations presented within the report included the need to assess the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. The Commission concluded that America's schools were declining partly as a result of decreased student performance on standardized tests including the SAT and 19 other assessments in which the nation's schools were compared to other nations (NCEES, 1983). The second recommendation called for standardized tests of achievement administered as part of a system of state and local assessments with the fundamental purpose of assisting educators in evaluating and measuring the quality of teaching and student progress (NCEES, 1983).

Although education is a reserved power to the states, the shift to the school as the agent of change and the needs highlighted within *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* supported a new paradigm of increased federal involvement in educational reforms (Lezotte, 2009; NCEES, 1983). Coupled with the new paradigm and the shift to the school as the agent of change, is the fact that educators, researchers, and policy makers within local education agencies, state education agencies, and the federal government are increasingly interested in the phenomenon of student engagement. This interest is partly a result of the perceptions that increased student engagement is a critical factor in addressing the problems of low achievement, decreased graduation rates, student boredom, and high attrition rates within our nation's schools (Fredericks et al., 2004). As a result of the national attention on standards, technology, and 21st century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration to prepare students to problem solve and to compete in a global economy, within the last two decades, increasing school engagement has emerged as a goal of school improvement and

intervention to address the issues of America's schools (Fredericks et al., 2004; Fullan, 1992; Fullan & Watson, 2000).

2.4 School as an Agent of Change

The Effective Schools Movement identified the Correlates of Effective Schools during the last quarter of the 20th century, and while these have evolved somewhat over time they remain relevant today. Effective schools are defined as those schools that support learning for all students. The correlates are centered on learning communities shaped by instructional leaders who communicate a shared vision, create safe and orderly learning environments, ensure climates of high expectations, and conduct frequent monitoring of student learning outcomes (Edmonds, 1982; Fullan & Watson, 2000; Lezotte, 2009). Within this reform movement, researchers acknowledge the impact that principals and teachers have on student achievement (Fullan & Watson, 2000; Lezotte, 2009, Marzano, 2007; National Research Council, 2004).

The influences of student engagement or lack thereof on student learning outcomes suggest the phenomenon should be considered not only as perceived by the individual but the social context where learning takes place, in schools and classrooms (Fredericks et al., 2004; Jonasson, 2012). The school context and culture can impact the attachment of students to the learning community and also affect the understanding of the phenomenon of engagement. In other words, the learning climate is the organizational factor that connects principal and teacher leadership to increased student learning outcomes and engagement is an important component within climate (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). Current research and sociocultural theory suggest conceptualizations of student engagement cannot be disconnected from the time, place, space, and experiences

for meaning is negotiated within and across stakeholder groups (Fairclough, 2000; Jonasson, 2012; Morell, 2004; Wood & Wood, 1996).

2.5 Role of the Principal in Shaping the School Culture

Within the current climate of educational reform, accountability measures at the federal and state levels hold individual school leadership responsible for improving standardized test scores and ultimately improved student learning outcomes (Boberg & Bourgeois, 2016; Hattie, 2003, Leithwood et al, 2010). The indirect relationship between instructional leadership and student achievement highlights the importance of school leaders in shaping school environments.

According to Sergiovanni (1991), "administration can be broadly defined as a process of working with and through others to accomplish school goals efficiently" (p. 46). As the administrator, the principal's job is:

> To coordinate, direct, and support the work of others-is accomplished by defining objectives, evaluating performance, providing the necessary resources, building a supportive psychological climate, running interference with parents, planning, scheduling, bookkeeping, resolving teacher conflicts, handling student problems, dealing with the school district central office, and otherwise helping to keep the school running effectively day to day and improving its ability to achieve its objectives (p. 46).

Thus, principals are instructional leaders, leaders of teachers, and managers of their organizations to ultimately provide a safe environment to ensure that students learn.

Sergiovanni (1991) defined school culture as a "reflection of the shared values, beliefs, and commitments of school members across an array of dimensions that include but extend beyond interpersonal life characterized as not existent and not productive" (p. 217). The principal as instructional leader is responsible for developing a culture and fostering a climate supportive of collaboration to support student learning outcomes.

Research suggests when stakeholders feel valued, supported, and part of schools that promote meaningful learning, a collegiality around the problems of practice ensues which empowers the stakeholders to make contributions to improve instruction and learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Donaldson, 2009; Nieto, 2009). When principals as instructional leaders focus on students' achievement, effective instructional strategies, and promote challenging goals in a culture and climate of support and collaboration, increased student outcomes are achieved (Hattie, 2009).

A review of the literature supports the concept that student engagement is affected by culture (Smyth, 2006). Specifically, cultures that are characterized as inclusive, democratic, and compassionate are more conducive to learning (Smyth, 2006). In other words, relationships of and between stakeholders shape culture. Ranson's (2011) research concluded governance is critical because "it mediates the social and cultural conditions that engage young people in their learning" (p. 41). However, Sergiovanni (1991) argued that culture can represent a "double-edged sword" for principals in that "if allowed to emerge and progress informally, principals cannot be sure whether basic assumptions and ensuing practices will be aligned with goals and purposes that support teaching and learning" (p. 21). Thus, principals' interactions with stakeholders are paramount to school success. Since engagement is also paramount to school success, more research defining engagement through the school principals' perspective and the teachers' perspective is important.

2.6 Principals' Interactions with Teachers

As the instructional leaders of schools, principals' interactions influence the vision, beliefs, and goals of all school personnel as well as the beliefs and perceptions of

the teachers (Leithwood et al., 2010; Price, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Within the research, principals' social interactions, underlying beliefs within the school community, and the perceptions of principals regarding teachers have been connected to teachers' perceptions of student achievement and engagement (Leithwood et al., 2010; Price, 2015). Research supports the role of principals as instructional leaders who cultivate positive interactions and discussions regarding teaching and learning affect teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management, instruction, and student engagement (Bellibas & Liu, 2017). In other words, principals affect climate which affects teachers which ultimately affects student learning.

Price's (2015) research concluded that *latent beliefs* are integral to school cultures because they can affect the behaviors and actions of teachers and principals (p. 119). Furthermore, the literature highlights the potential impact of the underlying beliefs of trust and support as integral to the interactions between principals and teachers (Leithwood et al., 2010; Price, 2015; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Not only are trust and support significant beliefs underlying the interactions between principals and teachers, these beliefs can influence teachers' perceptions regarding student engagement and achievement (Price, 2015). Compelling findings within the current research are the importance of principal accessibility to the development of trust between teachers and administration, and "support and trust in teachers become powerful predictors of teachers' expectations of student engagement" (Price, 2015, p. 130). All these studies allude to the significance of the principal as instructional leader to shape the culture and climate of the school to support increased student learning outcomes of which engagement is a critical component of student achievement.

Deal and Peterson argued "school success flourished in cultures where there was a significant focus on student learning, a commitment to high expectations, support for innovation, dialogue, and the search for new ideas" (1998, p. 29). All of which are characteristics influenced by trust or the lack of it. In his book *Principal Centered Leadership,* Stephen Covey (1991) argued trust or the lack of trust is at the root of success or failure in relationships as well as the fact that relationships are essential to the results of organizations. To assist with developing trust, Fullan (2002) identified five competencies leaders must develop; "moral purpose, understanding change, developing relationships, knowledge sharing, and coherence making" (p. 276). Each competency suggests the necessity of the leader of the organization to facilitate a dialogue within the community to support the shared values and beliefs. As Hattie (2009) concluded, increased student learning outcomes are the results of the expertise of principals and teachers and the relationships between principals and teachers. These stakeholders define the narrative within the school and classroom to support increased student achievement. Student engagement is an important result of this complex equation. While principals as instructional leaders shape the culture and climate of schools, teachers cultivate positive learning outcomes within the classroom through teacher support, class structure, and authentic and challenging tasks (van Uden et al., 2013).

2.7 Role of the Teacher and Teachers' Perceptions of Student Engagement

The impact of teachers on increased learning outcomes is well documented in this era of high stakes testing and accountability (Fisher & Frey; 2008; Hattie, 2003 & 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005 & 2008; Marzano, 2007). In his meta-analyses of over 800 research studies, Hattie (2009) reasoned the excellent teacher is the most powerful

influence affecting student achievement. He suggested this was due to the impact of teaching rather than how a teacher teaches, which implies the relationships between the principal and teacher and the teacher and student. He defined high impact teachers as those who notice patterns within information, teachers who are able to retrieve information with little effort, those teachers who attribute success and failures to themselves, and teachers who possess high expectations for their students (Hattie, 2009). Teachers are effective when they promote self–efficacy among their students as they assist their students with exceeding their expectations by providing timely and meaningful feedback (Hattie, 2009; Marzano, 2007; Smyth, 2006; Tlhoaele et al., 2014; Willms, 2003).

Within the literature, teachers' perceptions of student engagement appear to be as complex as the construct of student engagement itself. The construct of student engagement has been examined to frame teachers' interactions with students, to support classroom management, to implement curricula, and researched as to how to facilitate student engagement within classrooms (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Harris, 2008; Hattie, 2009; Price, 2015).

A major study found within the literature was conducted by Barkaoui's team in 2015. This case study of three low performing schools located in poor, urban areas investigated how teachers understand the social and cultural dimensions of the phenomenon of student engagement. Sixteen teachers and administrators participated in focus group discussions centered on their definitions of student engagement, the characteristics of the phenomenon, as well as how to facilitate student engagement within their classrooms.

According to Barkaoui et al. (2015), "teachers become aware of behavioral, then psychological, and finally cognitive aspects of engagement" (p. 83). While some teachers might "emphasize engagement in learning, others tend to emphasize participation, or engaging students in schooling" (Barkaoui et al., 2015, p. 83). This may be due to the fact teachers perceive factors other than the school such as parental involvement and social issues including students coming to class tired, hungry, or concerned about issues outside of school as critical to fostering student engagement (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Harris, 2008; Leach & Zepke, 2011; Price, 2015).

The research suggests teachers' perceptions regarding the phenomenon of student engagement include factors that influence student engagement are outside of the classroom and therefore are out of their control (Barkaoui et al., 2015). The only factor teachers felt they had some control over was the curriculum in that they could implement strategies to make the curricula relevant and develop relationships with the students to present culturally specific curricula to interest the students (Barkaoui et al., 2015).

The research team concluded that additional research was needed given the major findings of the study were that teachers' understanding of student engagement has the potential to affect their pedagogy, and the relationships they cultivate with their students. Furthermore, the researchers concluded additional studies centered on the origins, development, and impact of the teachers' perceptions of the construct of student engagement have the potential to affect policies and educational practices within classrooms.

Within the literature, Harris' (2008) qualitative study found various understandings of the ways secondary school teachers understood the construct of student

engagement. The findings demonstrated high school teachers' perceptions of student engagement include: behaving, being interested and participating, being motivated, being involved by thinking, seeing purpose, and by assuming ownership and valuing learning (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Harris, 2008). In other words, important perceptions of the construct that emphasize engagement in the educational processes.

Teachers' beliefs about their motives for teaching, self-efficacy, competencies, and views about their own interpersonal behavior are related to teachers' perceptions of student engagement (van Uden et al., 2013). Within the literature, researchers examined motives as defined by three categories; altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic. Most teachers describe their motives for teaching as altruistic in that they chose teaching as a profession to contribute to the development of students and or society (van Uden et al., 2013). Self-efficacy as defined within the research is based on Bandura's understanding that "it arises from the experience of a particular degree of control in specific situations and reflects the extent to which someone believes in his or her own capacities to influence the desired outcomes" (van Uden et al., 2013, p. 46). Self-efficacy is affected by teaching experience, interactions with students, and interactions with principals through positive relationships and interactions (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; van Uden et al., 2013). When teachers experience increased self–efficacy due to low conflict relationships with students, to collaboration in creating a positive school climate and supportive school culture, to increased decision making and control, then teachers believe they can encourage student engagement (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; van Uden et al., 2013).

2.8 Relationships and the Establishment of Trust

It is clear from a review of the literature that relationships are essential to the construct of student engagement. Principals and teachers share the responsibility for creating and providing a context through the development of a shared culture and climate to facilitate student learning. For this to occur, faculty must trust in the principal and the principal must trust in the faculty. In other words, the research suggests individuals and stakeholder groups within schools are dependent upon others in the school. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) concluded "such interdependence necessarily means that trust must be present to some degree in order to facilitate the constant, innumerable interactions that occur among people in schools" (p. 68).

Tschannen-Moran (2015) defines trust as "making oneself vulnerable in the belief that your best interests or something that you care about will not be harmed" (p. 68). Researchers have concluded that the collective trust within and across stakeholder groups within schools is an important variable in positive student learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Zeinbaldi, 2014). Current research has demonstrated that faculty trust in the principal is directly related to student achievement (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Instructional leaders who are open, honest, competent, transparent, and willing to engage in a dialogue with teachers regarding the problems of practice work to earn the trust of their teachers.

Faculty trust in the principal supports a positive professional climate in which teachers feel comfortable to collaborate and to take risks to support student learning. Research has connected the professional climate of teachers to increased learning outcomes and student engagement (Weiner & Higgins, 2016). Weiner and Higgins

(2016) concluded that "when the teachers report a strong collaborative culture, believe they have the adequate materials, and feel physically safe, students report a stronger and more positive learning culture" (p. 21).

A review of the literature also highlights the fact that principals must trust in their teachers. Specifically, research has identified interpersonal trust in teachers as critical to teacher satisfaction, commitment to teaching, self-efficacy, and effective teaching (Price, 2015). Support of teachers is a belief held by administrators that manifests itself in the encouragement of teachers, the consideration of teachers' ideas and suggestions to improve the status quo, as well as the integration of the teachers' recommendations into policies demonstrate trust (Price, 2015).

Also within the literature, research speaks to different frames of reference with regard to the various stakeholder groups within educational communities (Smyth, 2006). Schools operate with one frame of reference, teachers with other frames of reference, and students with their own frames of reference (Smyth, 2006, p. 290). Breakdowns in communication among the stakeholder groups within educational communities can lead to "a lack of understanding by students of the cues in teacher talk, a failure by teachers to hear cues in student talk, an application of overly subtle criteria by teachers and a possible mis-reading by either the teacher or the students about what is going on in the context of the classroom" (Smyth, 2006, p. 291). Smyth suggests that "schools are places that have to do with personal dynamics which profoundly impact whether students attend and learn" (Smyth, 2006, p. 291). Smyth (2006) concluded power relations must be acknowledged and exercised. Furthermore, relational power "refers to the building of trust within and across a range of groups in schools" (Smyth, 2006, p. 292). Consistent

with this perspective is the belief that the voices of stakeholders must be considered to identify the various perceptions within school communities (Jonasson, 2012). In other words, trust between principals and teachers, as well as between teachers and students is facilitated through providing opportunities for stakeholders to share their voices. Within the literature, researchers acknowledge that engagement is a complex concept that can be used to frame interactions within educational communities.

2.9 Characteristics of Engagement

A review of the literature has illustrated the plethora of definitions of the construct of student engagement. Within the definitions and models of engagement, most research characterizes student engagement in terms of behavioral, emotional/psychological, and cognitive dimensions (Azevedo, 2015; Barkaoui et al., 2015; Fredericks et al., 2004). Although within the literature and among researchers there is a lack of consensus with regard to a hierarchy among these previously mentioned dimensions (Barkaoui et al., 2015). Fredericks et al. (2004) defined behavioral engagement as the degree to which students participate “in academic, social, and extracurricular activities” (Barkaoui et al., 2015, p. 81). It is considered critical to positive student learning outcomes (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Cooper, 2011 & 2014). Emotional engagement pertains to students’ reactions and feelings both positive and negative regarding teachers, peers, administrators, learning, willingness to learn and connections to school (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Fredericks et al., 2004; Jonasson, 2012). The third dimension of student engagement is cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement is when students’ interests, investment, and effort are present in the educational processes (Cooper, 2011 & 2014; Jonasson, 2012). Some models of

engagement include a fourth dimension which is academic. Academic engagement is distinguished from the first three dimensions in that it “concerns the time spent doing learning activities as opposed to the general behavioral engagement where students may be participating in non-academic pursuits” (Barkaoui et al., 2015).

These components of student engagement are not only complex due to the fact each can vary in time and duration, they also emphasize the psychological and behavioral dimensions of the phenomenon (Barkaoui et al., 2015; Cooper, 2011). Researchers have criticized these dimensions and definitions because they “view student engagement as “something students do and that teachers can organize for them” (Barkaoui et al., 2015). Zyngier’s (2007 & 2008) research questioned this characterization of student engagement because it emphasized the role of the individual rather than considering the context of place, time, socioeconomic class, race, gender, power, and perhaps most importantly the lived experiences of the students and the impact of such factors on student engagement.

2.10 Classroom Engagement Framework

Within the literature, engagement is defined through behavioral, academic, and emotional dimensions. All of which allude to the complexity of the construct. However, Cooper’s (2011) work provides a potential solution to the problem of developing a shared understanding of engagement. She examines the construct through a structure to “clearly delineate among types of engagement and instructional points of entry” (Cooper, 2011, p. 3). The key component of Cooper’s “Classroom Engagement Framework” (2011) is to enhance what she termed a “global concept that captures the interrelationships among the three dimensions of engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive” (p. 3). Furthermore, the model is built upon three points of entry for students to access global

engagement: “Lively Instruction”, “Academic Rigor”, and “Connective Teaching” (Cooper, 2011, p. 5). As Cooper acknowledged, considered individually, these components are not original (2011). However, she asserted; “teachers and administrators can use the framework to identify particular measures of engagement on which to focus and then identify strategies to increase global engagement” (Cooper, 2011, p. 7). In other words, both administrators and teachers can target the points of entry to not only increase student engagement but to develop a shared understanding around the three dimensions of global engagement. Cooper’s “Classroom Engagement Framework” (2011) may provide a new solution to the existing problem of an operational definition and shared understanding of engagement.

The components of the theory developed by Cooper are supported in the literature found within the psychology journals, sociocultural theory, educational leadership, as well as teaching and learning. The “Classroom Engagement Framework” could be an innovative idea that would benefit from additional applications within educational communities given the model was developed for a “schooling context” (Cooper, 2011, p. 8). Cooper (2011) explained the rationale as a result of the fact “students are motivated to seek out opportunities for competence, autonomy, and relatedness” and as such are more engaged in classrooms that provide opportunities to fulfill these basic needs (p. 8). Cooper (2011) further speculated that the positive emotional connections found within these classrooms results in increased behavioral and cognitive engagement.

Cooper employed the following methods to collect the data for the research: surveys, Likert scale, interviews, and case studies within a rural high school setting. She began by organizing classroom practices into categories with connections to the three

dimensions of global engagement. The dimensions of “Lively Instruction”, “Academic Rigor”, and “Connective Teaching” were analyzed to measure their impact upon the global engagement of students in schools and classrooms (Cooper, 2011).

Considering the work of Marzano and others, Cooper (2011) defined “Lively Instruction” as those “teaching practices in which the teacher emphasizes the delivery of instruction as a means to increase engagement” (p. 3). Thus, these teachers utilize games, projects, group work, and other activities considered “fun” by students. The second group of teaching strategies examined was termed “Academic Rigor.” This is when teachers provide challenges to push the students to work hard. In addition, these teachers use time efficiently, and demonstrate their passion for the content. The third group of teaching practices involves students’ connections to the teacher and students’ connections to the content. According to Cooper (2011), these teachers practice developing relationships with the students and strategies to connect the students to the content.

The critical difference among the three categories included in the Classroom Engagement Framework is that the first two; “Lively Instruction” and “Academic Rigor”, rely mainly on the teacher’s decisions regarding pedagogy such as the “what” and “how” to teach the content or even as Cooper suggests “setting the academic tone of the classroom” (2011, p. 17) whereas the “Connective Teaching” dimension of engagement affects the “who” within the classroom. Specifically, Cooper (2011) organizes the third dimension according to five strategies: “providing students with opportunities for self-expression, making the content relevant, demonstrating care for the students, understanding the students as people, and sending messages of affirmation through praise and acknowledgement” (p. 22).

In Cooper's (2011) study, surveys were administered to over 1,000 high school students regarding 13 teaching strategies used to engage students in the educational processes. The survey used one item per strategy in each of the three categories. The students rated each item according to the following Likert scale: "Never", "Once in a while", "About half of the time", "Quite Often", and "Always" (p. 30). Five strategies were included to measure the "Connective Teaching" category. Four items measured the "Academic Rigor" component of the framework while four additional strategies measured the "Lively Instruction" category. The strategies measured in the connective teaching dimension included practices for self-expression, connecting the class to real life, demonstrating care for the students, understanding students, and using affirmation to acknowledge student success. Within the "Academic Rigor" dimension the four practices include assigning challenging work, pushing students to do their best and to work hard, using class time effectively and efficiently, and demonstrating passion for the content of the course. Within the third dimension of "Lively Instruction", Cooper (2011) included the teaching practices of games and fun activities, projects, group work, and the teacher using strategies to entertain the students.

Cooper used a linear regression to investigate whether the three components of the framework can predict global engagement. The results of the "Connective Teaching: Eliciting Engagement in the High School Classroom" (2011) study, according to Cooper, indicated the dimension of "Connective Teaching" and classroom engagement is more than twice as strong than with "Lively Instruction" or "Academic Rigor" and classroom engagement (p. 22). In addition, this first investigation of the mixed methods study revealed the "Classroom Engagement Framework" as a valid instrument to conceptualize

instructional approaches to increasing global engagement among secondary school students (Cooper, 2011, p. 169).

Phase two of the research involved the case study method and multiple case study analyses. Five high school classrooms were analyzed in the case study and 33 high school students were interviewed to investigate how teachers utilized the five strategies of connective teaching. Specifically, Cooper investigated how their teachers facilitated opportunities for self-expression, made content relevant, demonstrated caring, understood students as individuals as well as affirmed and acknowledged growth and effort within their classrooms (Cooper, 2011).

Although the “Classroom Engagement Framework” is recent and as Cooper (2011) admits “tentative”, there needs to be additional research to examine the model within new contexts of educational communities (p. 169). Furthermore, this framework could provide a step toward developing a common understanding of the concept of engagement among administrators and teachers.

Cooper’s construct of global engagement as measured through the “Classroom Engagement Framework” (2011) might help to illuminate and acknowledge the potential of culturally constructed meanings of engagement. In the conclusion of her research study, Cooper (2011) discusses a finding not expected from the responses to her research questions. From the data, Cooper (2011) deduced the teachers who scored below the mean on connective teaching and engagement were characterized by the students as “easily frustrated”, or “short-tempered” (p.170). Cooper posed the critical question; “what is the source of all this tension for these teachers?” (p. 170). Cooper concluded; “Collectively, they (this group of teachers) come across as possibly overworked, possibly

exhausted or possibly disenchanted with teaching" (p.170). In this era of high stakes accountability, as measured by positive student learning outcomes, potential future research is needed to investigate how administrators and teachers as members of a community of educators and learners understand engagement. In other words, to support students, administrators and teachers must have a common understanding of the construct in order to enhance student engagement and student learning outcomes.

2.11 Socioeconomic Status

According to the American Psychological Association (2020), "socioeconomic status is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation." Research has affirmed there is a positive relationship between parents' socioeconomic status and the academic achievement of secondary school students (Asikhia, 2010; Berger & Archer, 2016; Caro, 2009; Chen, 2009; Udida et al., 2012; Ushie et al., 2012). In other words, it appears the parental level of income is significantly correlated with students' academic performance in that the higher the socioeconomic status of the parents, the higher the academic achievement of the students (Allington et al., 2010; Camilli et al., 2010; Udida et al., 2012). Furthermore, the US Department of Education (2015) concluded that poverty is a critical factor to be considered when examining the differences in academic achievement across urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

Within society, most would agree that the family unit is the primary agent of socialization for children. As such, researchers have also investigated the impact of a family's educational background on students' academic achievement and concluded that the level of parental education is the primary factor of student performance (Asikhia,

2010; Becker et al, 2019; Bempechat et al., 2011; Caro, 2009; Chen, 2009; Lareau, 2011).

In her seminal work on poverty, *Unequal Childhoods*, Lareau (2011) explored the impact of class, race, and family life on the lives of the middle class and working class children. The original longitudinal, ethnographic, qualitative research included twelve families with whom Lareau, between 1989 and 2002, interacted with through interviews and observations of the parents and children. In the original phase of the study, the field work was conducted in a small, Midwestern, university town whereas the remainder of the interviews were conducted in schools and homes located in a large, northeastern, urban community. In addition, the original data included interviews with the key educators of the children. Approximately, a decade later Lareau (2011) re-interviewed the now adult participants and family members to as she explained; "I wanted to know whether the differences in child rearing practices described in *Unequeal Childhoods* had or had not continued over time" (p. 261).

This research, both the original and follow-up studies, was based on the premise that "individuals carry out their lives within a social structure" (p. 14). Lareau (2011) found middle class parents utilize child rearing practices she coined as "Concerted Cultivation" whereas working class parents follow child rearing practices which are the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth."

Concerted Cultivation is the belief that the primary responsibility of parenting is to develop and to cultivate the talents of the children. Middle class parents organize activities for their children and provide experiences as in travel, clothes, and the ability to pay the fees for extracurricular activities to foster skills deemed valuable for success in

the future or in the world of work. According to Lareau (2011), “Concerted Cultivation” will help children “gain important institutional strategies, gain access to highly valued resources such as the possession of wealth; having an interesting and well-paying and complex job; having a good education; and owning a home” (p. 7). In addition, within these child rearing practices, middle class parents engage in discussions with their children which can lead to middle class children developing their “voices” and to a sense of entitlement. Lareau (2011) reasoned this sense of entitlement is found “especially in institutional settings where middle class children learn to question adults and to address them as relative equals” (p. 2).

In blue collar neighborhoods, according to Lareau (2011), parents follow child rearing practices shaped by economic constraints such as putting food on the table, arranging for housing, and providing for the basic needs of the family. The child rearing practices of the lower socioeconomic parents was termed as the “Accomplishment of Natural Growth” (Lareau, 2011). Within these practices, children’s daily lives are less structured, involve less routines, and include many conversations about money or the lack thereof. Lareau (2011) concluded working class parents have less control over their children’s activities and daily interactions. Rather than direct the activities and experiences of the children as is often the case with middle class families, working class children fend for themselves and entertain themselves after school. Lareau (2011) found these children “watched unrestricted amounts of television” (p. 242). In addition, Lareau (2011) reasoned; “these mothers and fathers do not view a critical responsibility of parenthood as eliciting their children’s feelings, opinions, or thoughts” (p.2). While these parents also want the best for their children they often use directives rather than

persuasion with reasoning as is the case in middle class homes. Another critical distinction found by Lareau (2011) is that working class families often spend more time together with extended family and as a family. Rather than scheduling activities and experiences after school to cultivate the talents of their children, working class parents value daily interactions with their kin (Lareau, 2011).

With respect to social institutions, Lareau (2011) also cited distinct differences between the children raised through the child rearing practices of "Concerted Cultivation" and those who were raised with the philosophy of the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth." She concluded that working class children learn to keep a distance and exercise constraint when interacting within institutions. In other words, they are less apt to question authority figures. Educators are viewed as professionals by working class parents and this can lead to distance and separation from the school. Lareau (2011) found that "working class parents and poor parents seemed baffled, intimidated, and subdued in parent-teacher conferences" (p. 243). Whereas with the child rearing practices of "Concerted Cultivation", middle class parents have experiences with educational institutions and interactions with professionals. According to Lareau (2011), they have acquired the vocabulary, knowledge, confidence, and the ability to question, and to criticize. These parents consider these as valuable skills to be taught to their children as they are skills deemed necessary for success. Thus, even the students' view of engagement will vastly differ.

Many of the lessons learned from Lareau (2011) have been affirmed in more recent research. The socioeconomic status of the parents affects the ability to communicate the aspirations and expectations for their children, expectations regarding

how school works, school performance, achievement, expectations for post-secondary education, and the ability for the children to self-advocate (Alordiah et al., 2015; Berger & Archer, 2016; Farooq et al., 2011; Chiu & Chow; 2015; Huang, 2015; Hoff, 2013; Mein et al., 2013; Shute et al., 2011; Powell, & Marshall, 2011; Prince & Howard, 2002; Schmitt-Wilson, 2013). In other words, “class position influences critical aspects of family life; time use, language use, and kin ties” (Lareau, 2011, p. 236).

2.12 Summary of Chapter 2 and Introduction to Chapter 3

A review of the literature has highlighted one shift from the family as the primary determinant of student learning outcomes to the school as the agent of change. Within this era of increased accountability to reform the nation’s schools, school executives, specifically the principals as instructional leaders are held responsible for improving student learning outcomes for all students. Principals shape the climate and cultures of schools primarily through their interactions with teachers and other stakeholders as they build trust in their leadership and the defined goals of school improvement plans to support positive learning outcomes. Through the development of relationships based upon the latent belief of trust, principals and teachers can influence student engagement within schools and classrooms. As principals and teachers work to develop trust among the stakeholders within their communities to facilitate student engagement, a review of the literature has illustrated the need for educators to consider the socioeconomic status of the parents and students as they shape inclusive schools.

While the construct of student engagement is complex, a review of the literature has highlighted the characteristics of the phenomenon through the dimensions of behavioral, emotional/psychological, and cognitive engagement. The fourth dimension of

academic engagement supports the activities students participate in as they engage in the educational processes.

As a tool for conceptualizing the phenomenon of student engagement, the "Classroom Engagement Framework" (Cooper, 2011) supports the existing research on student engagement and provided an organizational structure to incorporate the three dimensions of the phenomenon to consider through qualitative research and the lived experiences of administrators and teachers. Through semi-structured interviews of secondary administrators and teachers, this research has the potential to generate new knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement within high schools to support increased learning outcomes for all students.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 The Qualitative Paradigm

The primary aim of this qualitative research study is to generate knowledge regarding the phenomenon of student engagement through the investigation of three questions; what are the major common threads in understanding of student engagement among secondary teachers and administrators; how do secondary school administrators' and teachers' understanding of student engagement diverge from each other?; and how does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators' understanding of student engagement? Qualitative research is inductive by nature and requires the active participation of the researcher through a deliberate process to gain new knowledge. To gather data rich in description, the researcher co-constructed knowledge with the participants to describe and analyze the phenomenon of student engagement (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Terrell, 2016). Due to the fact that meaning is negotiated as a result of the context of people's words, experiences, and positions within society and in this case secondary schools, qualitative research through deliberate processes provided opportunities to investigate significant questions with the aims of utilizing the data instrumentally to enlighten stakeholders, and possibly transform or reform policies, or to begin a conversation within schools to support increased student learning outcomes through a shared understanding of the construct of student engagement (Gee, 2014 & 2015; Morrell, 2004). Through qualitative interviews or conversations with a purpose, the researcher followed Brinkmann and Kvales' seven stages: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, and reporting (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008; Mann, 2011; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). As an educator, this researcher hopes to

understand the experiences of teachers and administrators to generate a robust description of student engagement to promote a general understanding of the construct within secondary schools.

3.2 Research Design: Phenomenology

To generate knowledge regarding how administrators and teachers understand the phenomenon of student engagement, the design is centered on a constructivist epistemology. Within this theory of knowledge, the individual creates his or her own knowledge and understanding as part of a process in which learners connect new ideas to previous held understandings of phenomena (Ultanir, 2012). The interpretivist assumptions inherent in this epistemology focus on the subjective experience and include contextual dependency, “working understandings”, analysis of data, data in the form of words, and the belief that the researcher is integral to the research processes through direct involvement, collaboration, and the generation of a dialogue within the semi-structured interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Terrell, 2016; Ultanir; 2012). In other words, the researcher acknowledges that meaning is constructed, negotiated, and fluid (Fairclough, 1992 & 2000; Gee, 2014; Morrell, 2004; Wood & Wood, 1996). Through this lens, the culture of classrooms and schools mediate understanding of constructs and phenomena.

The methodology for this research is phenomenology as part of an interpretive paradigm. In other words, this method provided opportunities to explore the meaning of student engagement as perceived by administrators and teachers. Phenomenological research draws on in-depth, semi-structured interviews focused upon the participants’ experiences with the aim of accurate descriptions from each individual’s perspective

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Terrell, 2016). As a methodology, phenomenology assumes a structure and a framework to identify shared experiences that can be narrated (Finlay, 2009; Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The researcher not only selected this design because phenomenology allowed for direct interaction with the participants and the data generated is in the words of the participants but because this methodology provided the structure to explore the research questions. As a result, the investigator was able to observe verbal and nonverbal responses to the questions posed, and ask clarifying questions to gain additional insight into the participants' understanding of student engagement during the semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the researcher believes the flexibility of phenomenology as a research tool facilitated the collection of data through the rich description of the lived experiences of the participants.

3.3 Research Questions

1. What are the major common threads in understanding of student engagement among secondary teachers and administrators?
2. How do secondary school administrators' and teachers' understanding of student engagement diverge from each other?
3. How does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators' understanding of student engagement?

3.4 Research Sites and Participants

The iterative processes of qualitative research include a consideration of the methods to collect data. The investigator used purposive sampling of high school administrators and teachers representing two diverse communities within a school district to provide rich descriptions of the construct. According to Finlay, phenomenological research requires at least three participants (Finlay, 2009). This design included a sample

of five high school administrators and five high school teachers. The researcher used an intentional sample to reflect culture, gender, age, at least seven years of experience in a professional education role, teaching disciplines, and diverse educational communities.

To recruit participants for this study, the researcher contacted principals and assistant principals from two high schools within the district to provide and explain the rationale for the study and specifics of the requirements for participation within the study; one high school representing the upper socioeconomic classes and the other a Title 1 community. The investigator used a demographic survey to collect information to identify potential participants who met the eligibility criteria for the study. See Appendix B. During the meetings, the researcher explained the rationale with regard to potential risks and benefits of participation. Even though risk was minimal, the investigator explained the process of data collection, sharing of the data, storing of the data, and efforts to maintain confidentiality to protect the participants and to facilitate an ethical study. Although the researcher planned the second step, after receiving approval, to send questionnaires to prospective participants to ascertain interest and feasibility of participation this proved not to be necessary. With the assistance of the principals and the previous relationships the researcher has with some of the participants, the results of the initial conversations included the selection of individuals willing to participate in the study. These steps communicated the respect for person and choice with regard to participation (de Landa, 2009; Terrell, 2016). The purposive sample of participants were required to sign Informed Consent documents. See Appendix A.

3.4.1 School A

3.4.1.1 Background Information

Built in 2007, School A, sits in an upper class neighborhood surrounded by horse farms. Most homes are valued between $400,000.00 and $2,000,000.00. Visitors enter into the campus passing the middle school and surrounding parking lots filled with late model cars; cars that belong to the faculty, staff, and students. As an International Baccalaureate school, School A displays flags from across the globe. Visitors are greeted by colorful flags, flower pots overfilled with pansies, and a modern glass entrance. Once inside the doors, visitors find themselves in a large, open space, flooded with light and a grand staircase to the second level.

School A is one of 11 high schools in a southwestern district of North Carolina. A comprehensive high school serving 1,756 students. School A and county demographics are presented in Table 2. The teachers of School A describe the culture as “a bubble where the community is very strong”; “a culture of high expectations, competitive, and where the students are afraid to take risks.” While the administrators defined the culture through statements such as; “one of high expectations”; “students do well here academically”; “the students push themselves here”; and “education is valued here.” In Table 3, the NC School Report Card 2018-19 reflects these sentiments.

Table 2

School A and County Demographic Percentages, 2018-19

	Total ADM[1]	ELL	Race/Ethnicity Black	Hispanic	White	Other
School A	1,756	*	4.51%	3.31%	82.33%	9.86%
LEA	41,935	*	11.97%	18.83%	59.35%	9.85%

Average Daily Membership[1] *Statistic not reported for 2018-19

Table 3

School A-NC Report Card, 2018-19

	School Grade/Growth	% ED	Incoming Student Readiness	Biology	Eng. II	Math I	ELL	4 year GR
School A	A=95 Exceed=99.7	5	78.2%	91.9%	92.4%	88.4%	*	95%
NC	40.9%	46	40.9%	59.6%	59.7%	41.2%	38.6%	86.5%

*Statistic not reported for 2018-19

According to the administrators, the strengths of School A include the "robustness of the instructional offerings"; "the students monitor each other whether it is behavioral or academics"; and "the students help each other, they want to see their friends succeed." Administrator Two shared that School A is rated by US News and World Report as "one of the gold schools within the nation with regard to college and career readiness." The administrators spoke of the following opportunities for improvement; "change the mindset of what the end goal should be"; "a lot of our students are put in the position of extreme stress, stress from the parents…you have to take all AP classes," or "the kids are struggling with their own support unit at home." The other Administrator shared that School A is "not as strong in the PLC (professional learning community) culture." An opportunity to improve would be to support the development of PLCs through manipulating the master schedule to provide for common planning time for the PLCs.

Administrators' perceptions of the students can be summed up with the following sentiments; "in the main, delightful, good social skills"; "interactive"; "very respectful, engaged in the community"; "the majority are well behaved, compliant…and busy kids." When asked to describe the students the teachers responded; "they are wonderful"; "most

days I like them"; "they are teenagers with the same thoughts and fears as other children"; "competitive"; and "concerned with grades."

3.4.1.2 Site Visits and Interviews

The researcher visited the campus of School A on four separate occasions. Once in late January 2019 to speak with the principal to discuss the study and to review the University of North Carolina Charlotte Adult Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A). The other three visits were conducted between the week of March 4, 2019 and the week of March 29, 2019. The semi-structured interviews for both the administrators and teachers were conducted in a small conference room located in the front office suite. The principal selected this location so as to provide privacy and as a way to ensure the conversations with a purpose would not be interrupted (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In fact, the administrators made certain to communicate via their radios when their interviews began and at the conclusion of each conversation. The investigator appreciated this fact as each conversation unfolded according to the protocols and ended at the logical conclusion rather than as a result of being called away via the radio. This was not a concern during the semi-structured interviews with the teachers as these conversations were scheduled according their planning blocks at mutually agreed upon dates and times.

3.4.1.3 The Administrators

Administrator One is new to the district as most of her career was spent in Virginia and New York. She explained that she recently relocated to North Carolina to be closer to her daughter. Having previous experience in administration as a principal and athletic director, she serves in the assistant principal role at School A. She was in her second year at School A. It is important to note the past experiences as her understandings and perceptions of student engagement involve her current position and the accumulation of

experiences across her 30 year career in public schools. In fact, during our conversations, she often responded with a comparison of the students and teachers at School A juxtaposed with the experiences she has had with students and teachers of schools more like School B. Title I schools serve as her frame of reference for her work.

Administrator Two has only worked in the district in which School A is located. In fact, she is one of three principals currently in the LEA who began their teaching careers in the county, assumed leadership roles as assistant principals, principals of middle schools, and their current positions as principals of high schools within the same district. This perspective is unique as Administrator Two's leadership roles have been in the same feeder pattern of schools within the district and as such she is well known and respected within the community surrounding School A and across the district. See Table 4 for the demographics of the participants.

3.4.1.4 The Teachers

Teacher One grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan and moved to South Carolina when she was in high school. As she explained, "I never did not consider myself academically accelerated, then the move in my junior year in high school…a different experience thinking I was average." At Clemson, she "secretly" changed her major from chemical engineering to a B.S. in Secondary Education and a minor in Physical Science. At School A, she teaches AP Chemistry and Honors Physics.

As a self-described "individual learner who likes to teach herself", Teacher One centers her pedagogy on making connections and "to use the connections to build on their (the students) foundation." Furthermore, she tries to "keep them moving and engaged." However, although she tries to "push them as much as they can be pushed", she is cognizant

of the fact that “these kids have a lot of stress on top of them.” She explained, “their parents have really drilled success and failure is not an option.” My philosophy is “more of a do your best kind of teacher and if you are working yourself too hard where you are studying 12 hours for a quiz, then you are harming yourself.” She concluded this thought with the statement; “that is not an opinion that is normally met positively by the parents.”

Teacher Two holds a B.A. in English and a Master’s Degree in Secondary Education in English Language Arts. She believes students learn “by doing, by being engaged.” She does not “like to lecture” and if she has to (lecture) she “makes sure they are engaged by doing group work.” She likes to use “Brain Breaks” to keep the students focused. In addition, she uses “discussions so I am not spoon feeding them the information.” She works with the students to increase “motivation.” Teacher Two explained; “if you have a good relationship with the students, they will work for you. I let my students know I care.” In a later conversation, Teacher Two shared she has been working with the administration to strengthen her delivery of the content.

Teacher Three teaches AP US History, AP World, and IB History of the Americas at School A. He is a graduate of UNC Charlotte and has been teaching in the district for 12 years. He currently serves as the Social Studies Chair. Teacher Three described the culture of School A as “high achieving, competitive, and (students are) afraid to take risks.” He centers his pedagogy on connecting the content because “history is more than facts, it is the connections to the ideas.” His classes “are different each day”; however, there are established routines to structure the learning. Teacher Three teaches with the “end in mind” as he works to develop the critical thinking skills all the while developing relationships so

that the students "are comfortable to take risks and to make mistakes." See Table 4 as the demographics of the participants are presented.

Table 4

Demographics of the Participants-School A

Role	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Experience	Current Role	At School A
A1	60	F	White	30+ years	6 years	2 years
A2	47	F	White	26 years	18 years	5 years
T1	46	F	White	8 years	3 years	3 years
T2	59	F	White	17 years	17 years	12 years
T3	37	M	White	12 years	12 years	11 years

3.4.2 School B

3.4.2.1 Background Information

Although School B's history dates back to 1897, the current building was constructed in 1960. Surrounded by older homes, medical offices, and housing projects, School B occupies the corner of a busy street. Located in the city one large block behind a major North Carolina highway and across the street from the hospital, visitors often find it difficult to determine the front entrance from the rear of the school. While the one story building is well kept by the custodial staff, the school is low to the ground and dark due to the long, narrow hallways with few windows. As this is the Title 1 high school, most of the cars in the parking lots belong to the faculty and staff. The majority of students ride the buses to and from school.

As the oldest of the 11 comprehensive high schools within the district, School B is the majority, minority high school that serves less than 1,089 students (See Table 5). Both the administrators and teachers described the culture as "diverse with a large Hispanic population"; "more like a family"; and "little to no competition" (among the

students). With respect to the culture of the faculty; “cliquey”, “little pockets” as in the departments as opposed to the “team model in middle school.” Unlike School A, there have been three principals in five years at School B. One teacher commented this resulted in the teachers having to “be there for each other, to support each other.” According to the administrators and teachers, strengths of the school include “strong community support”; “traditions”; “faculty who care about the students”; “athletics”; and “solution oriented school.” Challenges or opportunities for improvement include the following; “majority of students reading below grade level”; “attendance”; “building better relationships (with the students)”, and “lack of parent participation.”

The teachers described the students as “lazy”; “lazy as in I just don’t want to do your work” and in some instances “lazy as in apathetic”; “unmotivated”; “needy”; “sweet”; “loveable”; “lack of intrinsic motivation”; and “very social.” While the administrators described the students as, “wanting to be accepted”; “not equipped with the tools to participate”; “not reading on grade level”; “unmotivated”; and “not wanting to attend school.”

Table 5

School B and County Demographic Percentages, 2018-19

	ADM[1]	ELL	Race/Ethnicity			
			Black	Hispanic	White	Other
School B	1,089	21%	33.31%	50.88%	13.04%	2.78%
LEA	41,935	*	11.97%	18.83%	59.35%	9.85%

Average Daily Membership[1] *Statistic not reported for 2018-19

3.4.2.2 Interviews

As the researcher worked at School B during this study, there were no site visits. However, the semi-structured interviews were conducted in two locations at School B.

All three conversations with a purpose for each of the two of the administrators and both teachers took place in the investigator's office (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). While the first interview with Administrator Five was conducted in the researcher's office, the last two conversations were held in Administrator Five's office. These conversations began the week of March 4, 2019 and ended the week of March 25, 2019. Unlike the semi-structured interviews at School A, the researcher was able to schedule the conversations across the entire week so that the five interviews were not conducted back to back on any given day as was the case at School A. Another distinction between the conversations at School A and School B was that the administrators at School B did not make arrangements to leave their radios behind or to communicate with the faculty and staff that they would be unavailable for the duration of the interviews. In fact, this only proved problematic for Administrator Five during two of the interviews as he was interrupted and had to stop the conversations for brief periods. However, both of these interviews were concluded on the scheduled dates.

3.4.2.3 The Administrators

Administrator Three grew up in North Atlanta and moved to Charlotte when she began college at Johnson C. Smith University. As a lateral entry English teacher, Administrator Three began her teaching career at a middle school. She then attended Gardner Webb University for her M.A. in Administration. While working at School B as an instructional facilitator, she changed roles four years earlier to serve as an assistant principal. Administrator Three believes School B is much different than a lot of other schools in the district "just because of the whole makeup of the school…the high population of Hispanics and African Americans." Administrator Three shared that she

"loves the fact that the culture here is diverse", because "it means we have to learn their culture and understand why the students do the things they do as far as sometimes not coming to school or dropping out of school."

Administrator Four grew up in Colombia, South America. He attended a Catholic high school and later earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in languages. With his family, he emigrated to the United States in 2001. He began his teaching career, in the U.S., by teaching adult students English. His administrative experiences include working at the feeder middle school of School B as an assistant principal. Administrator Four serves as an assistant principal at School B and is a part time doctoral student at UNC Charlotte in Curriculum and Instruction. As was the case with Administrator Three, he believes School B is "not very similar" to other high schools in the district. "We're not, we couldn't say that that we're just a traditional high school because of the demographic composition, the learning needs of the students, the structure of the school itself…we have too many needs."

Administrator Five is from eastern North Carolina and attended the University of North Carolina as a Teaching Fellow. He began his career in middle school teaching Social Studies. While Administrator Five shared that he was served as a Principal Intern in a high school and worked as a middle school principal, he did not share how long he has been an administrator nor would he share his age. He commented; "this information is not applicable to the research study." Administrator Five commented that School B "is similar to other high schools in the LEA in expectations and policies" and different in the "demographics and resources provided." See Table 6.

Table 6

School B-NC School Report Card, 2018-19

	School Grade/ Growth	Incoming Student Readiness	% ED	Biology	English II	Math I	ELL	4 Year GR
School B	C=60 Exceed=87%	12.7%	70.4	34.4%	36.9%	37.5%	5%	76 %
NC		40.9%	46.5	59.6%	59.7%	41.2%	39%	87%

3.4.2.4 The Teachers

Teacher Four is from New York and has been a Math teacher for 21 years. At School B, she is the lead Math I teacher and the department chair. She shared that "education is not important" (to the students). She continued by explaining; "It is not that they don't value it…I think it is that they think it is not attainable." Teacher Four's experiences at School B have led her to conclude; "parents don't know any better…if you graduate great, if not, oh well…you'll just get a job." Furthermore, she described her teaching philosophy as "one cannot lecture them" (the students), "the students need to be involved", "learning has to be fun", and utilizes "activities to get them engaged."

Teacher Five grew up and was educated in Israel. She served time in the Israeli Army. Teacher Five explained that she is a product of a culture that "values education." She was taught that "school was her job" and that her parents' role was to provide for her needs so that she "could concentrate on her education." She has been an English Language Learner teacher for 14 years and has worked at School B for four. Teacher Five shared with regard to the students; "I am close, tight with them, but it is a double edged sword because they are not really motivated to learn English." Her pedagogy is based on

the belief that one should "teach for life to make connections to real life not just for the standardized test." Demographics for the participants at School B are found in Table 7.

Table 7

Demographics of the Participants-School B

Role	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Experience	Current Role	School B
Administrator Three	38	F	Black	16 years	4 years	5 years
Administrator Four	49	M	Hispanic	23 years	15 years	5 years
Administrator Five	N/A*	M	Black	11 years	2 years	0.5 years
Teacher Four	51	F	White	21 years	21 years	5 years
Teacher Five	37	F	White	14 years	9 years	3 years

3.5 Data Collection Methods

In an effort to go beneath the surface of student engagement, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to conduct the phenomenological research. The researcher followed the process as outlined by Seidman (2006) of using iterative interviews each with a specific purpose. The major purpose of the first interview was to begin building the relationship between researcher and participant, to collect data on the participant's history and life story as well as to orient the researcher and interviewee on the topic of student engagement. See Appendices C and D. Whereas, the second interview connected the first interview through a conversation regarding the meaning of the interviewee's experiences and history with the phenomenon of student engagement (Seidman, 2006; Terrell, 2016). See Appendices E and F. The third interview provided the opportunity for the researcher to engage the participants in deeper conversations centered on their

reflections of the meaning of their experiences with the phenomenon of student engagement. See Appendices I and J.

The semi-structured interviews took place in the high schools during prearranged and mutually convenient dates and times for the participants and investigator. The first interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes in length. The second interviews were longer in duration as they lasted 40 to 60 minutes. While the third and final interviews with the least number of questions included in the protocols lasted 45 to 75 minutes. The researcher scheduled the interviews three to seven days apart to limit the time frame of working with each participant to facilitate the dialogue and continuity between the interviews (Seidman, 2006). The investigator was able to complete all 30 interviews between February and April of 2019.

3.6 Data Analysis

Finlay (2009) identified three interlocking steps of phenomenological research; phenomenological reduction, description, and search for essence. To support the third step, this design included the selection of one teacher and one administrator of the larger participant group to engage in deeper conversations around student engagement. However, the researcher chose to interview all 10 participants a third time with the hope of extending the conversations to facilitate the search for essence. Horizontalization analysis of the verbatim transcripts of the in-depth conversations did not begin until all 30 semi-structured interviews were completed. Within phenomenology, the interactions between researcher and participants are critical to the iterative processes of qualitative research and require the researcher to consider the data in the participants' words. Goals of this study include acquiring new knowledge of the construct of student engagement,

and a shared understanding of the construct within high schools, as well as the building of community to support student learning. Phenomenological research as a method to find meaning in the language provided rich descriptions of the construct of student engagement.

The investigator recorded and transcribed verbatim the semi-structured interviews because student engagement is a complex construct that frames interactions within and across communities and because Bakhtin, Vygotsky, and Gee remind us that meaning of language in use is often cultural, negotiated, constructed, and fluid (Gee, 2014; Morrell, 2004; Wood & Wood, 1996). This researcher utilized inductive content analysis to identify themes through reduction, bracketing of information through chunking, and analyzing connections within the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Seidman, 2006). Within the iterative processes, the investigator utilized both in vivo and a priori codes to generate themes. After listening to the recordings of the first and second interviews, the investigator added deductive content analysis as a means of checking the codes derived during the inductive analysis of the interviews. Using the a priori codes of the three components of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011, 2014) of "Connective Teaching", "Lively Instruction", and "Academic Rigor" and Lareau's (2011) "Concerted Cultivation" and "Accomplishment of Natural Growth" assisted the investigator with recognizing patterns within the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). See Appendix K. The data collection across the three semi-structured interviews based upon a preliminary scanning or listening of the recorded sessions and analysis were conducted concurrently to represent the perspectives of the participants who shared their perceptions and experiences of student engagement (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

3.7 Strategies for Quality

A major strength of phenomenology as a methodology is that data are collected in the participants' words. This required the researcher to interact with the participants and data to generate new knowledge. These characteristics of phenomenological research promote benefits to the participants. The researcher facilitated transparency through the systematic processes of debriefing sessions of the data, member checks of the rich descriptions found within the data, and communicated to the participants across the study. Procedural fidelity within this study was considered through conducting semi-structured interviews utilizing Seidman's structure for conducting phenomenology through three in-depth conversations (Seidman, 2006), and through the ways in which the investigator began each conversation with a purpose (Rossman & Rallis, 2017) by sharing the data from the previous interviews and answering the questions of the participants before beginning the next conversation. Across the research processes, the investigator also consulted with a peer debriefer to discuss the data being collected.

Qualitative research does not involve using metrics to establish standards of validity and reliability as is the case with quantitative research. Trustworthiness is often considered in the context of the credibility of the research and findings of the study, in the context of the transferability of the findings, in the context of the confirmability of the findings, as well as the dependability of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Terrell, 2016). A trustworthy study includes research conducted through a systematic and deliberate process based upon ethical and rigorous considerations. In qualitative research, trustworthiness connects to validity and reliability. To support trustworthiness, the researcher used member checks within the investigation during the second and third

interviews. Each interview began with providing opportunities to the participants to ask questions, clarify, elaborate, extend or amend responses from earlier conversations or to inquire about thoughts between interviews. In fact on more than one occasion, a participant began the interview with "I have been thinking about our last conversation…" or "do you think it is possible that…" These comments and questions provided opportunities for the participant and investigator to explore in depth previously discussed perceptions. In addition, to promote a quality study, the investigator linked research to relevant theory to provide a "coherent and explicit chain of reasoning" (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 52; Terrell, 2016). In other words, checking and reflecting throughout the process on the conceptual background, methodology, and transparency of the research. Strategies to help ensure the credibility and rigor of the study included the triangulation of data points checked through the literature review, coding of the data, identification of the themes within the data, and the ranking of the teaching practices as developed by Cooper (2011) to define the three components of the Classroom Engagement Framework. The deductive analysis using Cooper's Classroom Engagement Framework (2011) provided direction. After the second interviews and listening to the recordings, the investigator thought the participants were discussing the three categories of instructional practices of the Classroom Engagement Framework; "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching", and "Academic Rigor" (Cooper 2011). Utilizing a common strategy of phenomenological research to isolate the phenomenon in order to search for essence, the researcher asked the participants to rank the 13 teaching practices. See Appendices G and H. These rankings, by each participant, served as member checks as well as a means to comprehend the essence of student engagement to validate the emerging findings

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Rossmon & Rallis, 2017). In other words, the investigator utilized these rankings as a means of establishing a priority among the 13 teaching practices to check the apparent findings.

3.8 Risks and Benefits

Research involving people may present risks; however, the risk is minimal due to the fact that the researcher is not in a position of power regarding the participants. The purpose of the study is to generate new knowledge regarding student engagement and to increase understanding of the phenomenon to support student learning.

Ethical issues to minimize risk to the participants included measures to secure confidentiality and bias using pseudonyms for the participants. Due to the researcher's role within the district and one of the high schools, she reflected and remained cognizant of the facts to focus on the research questions in the semi-structured interviews and to reflect upon her actions throughout as these actions may affect the outcomes of the study. While the risks are minimal there are potential benefits of participation in the research. The research hopefully will provide valuable insights within school communities to support a "Big C" conversation regarding student engagement (Gee, 2014). Gee (2014) defines the "Big C" conversations as those discussions in which participants are engaged in "a myriad of interactional events taking place among specific people at specific times and places within specific institutions" (p.190). Inherent in these conversations are the values, beliefs, and partial understandings of student engagement held by educators and stakeholders which might identify issues and ultimately contribute to the greater collective understanding within society of the phenomenon. The research provided rich description of the phenomenon which could be used to develop meaningful professional

development to support student learning outcomes and to support the development of trust through information sharing and collaboration. The data generated could be used by administrators, teachers, content facilitators, and district administrators to support professional development with the aim of fostering mastery of the content for all students through increased understanding of engagement in the educational processes.

In this study, it was important for the researcher to establish a fair, respectful, and trusting environment in which to conduct the semi-structured interviews. In the effort to foster such an environment, the participants agreed to, and signed an informed consent document as outlined in the IRB protocol. The researcher advised the participants of their rights to privacy, of the steps to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected, as well as the potential risks, and benefits of participating in the investigation.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher remained cognizant of the lenses through which she interacted within the educational communities. Although the researcher understands the need to examine the phenomenon of student engagement from the perspectives of the teachers and administrators, to do so required consideration of not only the participants' thoughts regarding the definition of student engagement, the roles of teachers, students, and administrators with regard to student engagement, but her own beliefs regarding the phenomenon of student engagement.

As an educational leader, it has been the experience of this researcher that *power is the ability to influence;* therefore, it also needed to be considered within this conversation. The position held within a community can affect the discourse or dialogue within schools as well as between stakeholders in schools and districts. This study

regarding how teachers and administrators understand the concept of engagement needed to be examined and conducted from a position of influence rather than power. In other words, the researcher needed to consider the relationships she developed with the teacher and administrator participants of the low performing, Title 1, high school. The investigator remained cognizant of the lenses through which they viewed the research and the view(s) they possess of her as she gathered and analyzed the data. The researcher acknowledged the facts that the relationships and lenses through which she collected data could vary within and across the participants of both communities.

3.10 Summary of Chapter 3 and Introduction of Chapter 4

Qualitative research is subjective and involves systematic inquiry in which the researcher and participants' co-construct knowledge to gain a greater understanding of the phenomenon studied. The methodology selected for this study is phenomenology, which allowed the researcher to not only participate in the research process but to actively engage in the process. The primary aim of this study is research and data analysis that hopefully is of use in fostering a conversation regarding the three research questions within secondary schools; what are the major common threads in understanding of student engagement among secondary teachers and administrators; how do secondary school administrators' and teachers' understanding of student engagement diverge from each other; and how does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators' understanding of student engagement?

The researcher included 10 participants selected through purposive sampling from two diverse secondary schools located within a LEA serving 41,000 plus students and 55 schools (retrieved from https://www.uspc.k12.nc.us/page 218). At each school, there

were five participants; two administrators and three teachers at School A and three administrators and two teachers at School B.

Data collected through semi-structured interviews of teachers and administrators followed Seidman's framework for conducting phenomenological interviews (2006). Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews were taped and transcribed verbatim by the investigator to provide for a thorough understanding of the data bits collected. This researcher utilized both inductive and deductive content analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Seidman, 2006).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 is a presentation of the findings from the phenomenology conducted at two secondary schools located within the same southwestern district in North Carolina; School A is the upper socioeconomic school whereas School B is the Title 1 high school. The participants are identified as either Administrator or Teacher. Administrators are identified by number; Administrators One and Two lead at School A while Administrators Three, Four, and Five lead at School B. Teachers One, Two, and Three teach at School A and Teachers Four and Five at School B. Identifications are intended to provide anonymity. The researcher made no connections between the identifiers and the actual schools, locations, or participants. All participants signed informed consent documents approved by the UNC Charlotte IRB (see Appendix A) to ensure and to maintain confidentiality.

Part two presents the common findings among the Administrators and Teachers of both schools: (a) students as active participants, (b) the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper 2011), and (c) impact of socioeconomic status on student engagement. Part three of this chapter high-lights the differences found between the two schools, (a) the disparities among stakeholder groups, (b) the roles of the stakeholders, (c) feedback and trust, and (d) rankings of instructional practices.

4.2 Common Findings

4.2.1 Common Findings among Stakeholders at Both Schools

Phenomenological research utilizing both inductive and deductive analysis of the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix K) through the steps previously outlined in

Chapter 3 led to the identification of dominant themes (see Tables 8, 9, and 10) related to the research questions.

1. What are the major common threads in understanding of student engagement among secondary teachers and administrators?
2. How do secondary school administrators' and teachers' understanding of student engagement diverge from each other?
3. How does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators' understanding of student engagement?

While the study was conducted at high schools serving distinct student populations, the findings suggest agreement regarding the impact of socioeconomic status on student engagement as well as collective understandings of the phenomenon. Table 8 illustrates the common findings of the administrators and teachers that students are viewed as active participants. A second common theme which emerged in the findings is the participants' recognition of the significance of the instructional points of entry of Cooper's (2011) Classroom Engagement Framework; "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching", and "Academic Rigor" to student engagement. The third common theme found within the data connects to Lareau's concepts of "Concerted Cultivation" and the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth" as descriptions of the child rearing practices of middle and lower class parents.

Table 8

Key to Common Dominant Themes

Themes:	Identifications:
Students as active participants	A
Students' responsibility to be engaged	A'
Teachers' responsibility to engage students	A''

Table 8 (continued)

"Lively Instruction"	B
"Connective Teaching"	C
"Academic Rigor"	D
"Concerted Cultivation"	H'
"Accomplishment of Natural Growth"	H''
Building trust with students	E'
Building trust with teachers	E''
Feedback provided to students by teachers	F'
Teachers' expectations for feedback	F''
Administrators' expectations of feedback	F'''
Teacher's role as viewed by teachers	G'
Administration's role defined by teachers	G''
Teacher's role defined by administration	G'''
Administration's role defined by administrators	G''''

Table 9 depicts the themes found within each participant's responses during the conversations with a purpose centered on the three research questions. In addition, the table highlights the differences within the data due to the specific roles of each participant as well as the similarities and differences between the participants of School A and School B.

Table 9

Coding of Dominant Themes

School:	Dominant Themes:
School A	
Administrator One	A, A'', B, C, D, E', F', F''', G''', G'''',H', H''
Administrator Two	A, A'', B, C, D, F', F''', G''', G'''', H'
Teacher One	A, A', B, C, D, E'', F', F'', G', G'', H'
Teacher Two	A, A', B, C, E'',F', F'', F''', G', G'', H'
Teacher Three	A, A', C, D, E'',F', F'', G', G'', H', H''

Table 9 (continued)

School B	
Administrator Three	A, A'', B, C, D, F''', G''', G'''', H', H''
Administrator Four	A, A'', B, C, D, E', F', F''', G''', G'''', H', H'',
Administrator Five	A, A'', B, C, D, F', F''', G''', G'''', H', H''
Teacher Four	A, A', B, C, F''', G', G'', H''
Teacher Five	A, A', B, C, E', E'', G', G'', H''

Table 10 provides a description of each theme found within the data in the participants' own words. The rich descriptions provided by the participants assisted the researcher with identifying the shared understandings within the data to search for the essences of the lived experiences. As a result of the conversations and the language used by the participants to describe their understandings of student engagement, the researcher applied both in vivo and a priori codes to the data to identify themes.

Table 10

Overview of the Common Dominant Themes

Theme	Dominant Themes within Interviews
Students as active participants/A	• Focusing attention • Physically active • Something that says they are choosing to participate • Deciding learning is purposeful and meaningful
"Lively Instruction"/B	• Group work; activities • Demonstrations • Projects • Working with other students • Hands on learning
"Connective Teaching"/C	• Care for students; form relationships • Share experiences to build a bridge • Show purpose; contextualize learning • Guide students; counselor; supportive • Connect lesson for students to be able to make a personal connection to learning • Provide opportunities for students' voices

Table 10 (continued)

"Academic Rigor"/D	• Productive struggle; critical thinking skills • Solve problems • Use time efficiently
Impact of Socioeconomic Status	Social conditions set expectations for schooling; ready to work, ready for school, ready to learn
"Concerted Cultivation"/H'	• If parents are serious about education, then students are committed; high level of students who want to learn, motivated, and engaged • More resources, more opportunities, more privileges to access experiences • Increased compliance, increased socioeconomic status • Students as advocates for their learning, and needs
"Accomplishment of Natural Growth"/H''	• It takes a lot to get them engaged; to want to learn, to motivate them • Change expectations for students • Communicate advantages of coming to school • No just delivering the content…need to inspire students • Getting students to believe they are capable

4.2.2 Students as Active Participants

A significant finding of this research based on the data from all participants is that students should be active participants in the educational processes. Both administrators and teachers believe the phenomenon of student engagement is dependent upon the participation of the students.

Students have a responsibility to be engaged. Teacher One explained that engaged students are "thinking, talking, and working with other students." Teacher Five believes it is the responsibility of the students "to listen, to be attentive" as she explained; "student engagement doesn't have to be active" in that students who are "looking at me and I have their eye contact and attention are engaged." Teacher Three stated; "being active is not

passively accepting but doing something to actively take on knowledge or be involved." Administrator One echoed these sentiments in that students have a responsibility to "be willing to discuss, to participate and to buy in", while Administrator Two feels "we are relying on them (the students) to have some sense of motivation either internal or external, and ownership in the processes." Administrator Three shared; "it is ultimately, intrinsically up to the student to engage and Administrator Five expressed his belief; "intrinsically it is up to the student to engage in whatever the teacher is doing."

4.2.3 The Classroom Engagement Framework

This research was conducted as the investigator believed based upon her experiences as a veteran teacher and administrator as well as a review of the literature, there was not a precise definition of student engagement. However, within the literature Cooper's (2011) Classroom Engagement Framework upholds the existing research on student engagement and provided an organizational structure to incorporate the three dimensions of the phenomenon; behavioral, emotional, and cognitive.

A significant finding of this study is the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as a structure to frame and guide discussions within secondary schools around the construct of global engagement through the three instructional points of entry of student engagement. This study supports Cooper's finding (2011) that the Classroom Engagement Framework established "a clear definition of engagement; common language for discussing engagement, and collective understanding for effective classroom practices for engaging students" (p. 169). Cooper's (2011; 2014) practices of "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching", and "Academic Rigor" are understood by the secondary school administrators and teachers in both schools.

Teaching practices grouped by Cooper (2011) within “Lively Instruction” were cited by the participants of this research. They include; “games such as Brain Pop”, “demonstrations to deliver the AP chemistry content”; “projects so that students can create a product”, “collaborative learning around a critical question”, “group work to solve a problem”, and “DNA assignment where the students were creating DNA with candy.”

“Connective Teaching” practices as in Cooper’s original and subsequent works (2011; 2014) were cited as critical to engaging students in the educational processes. Within her study (2011), Cooper identified the practices of demonstrating care, understanding students, affirming student success, connecting class to real life, and enabling self-expression to describe emotional engagement through connective teaching.

Even though many of the students at School A according to the participants “come to school motivated, ready to learn, and possess the tools to learn”, the administrators and teachers spoke of the importance of developing relationships with the students. Teacher One explained the importance of developing a “rapport so the students feel comfortable coming to me.” Teacher Three discussed creating an “environment in which the students take risks; where students are comfortable enough to make a mistake.” He further explained this as being significant within the highly competitive, high stakes culture of School A where the consequences of grades have the potential to affect students’ college admissions, careers, and futures. To achieve such an environment, Teacher Three makes it a priority to attend “one event for every student he is teaching each semester.” He believes this will help with getting the students to “connect and relate

to their lives" which may in turn affect the students' willingness to participate and share within class."

These sentiments were also heard in the conversations with the administrators at School A. Both administrators shared their beliefs regarding the importance of developing relationships. Administrator One expressed that teachers should "let everyone know you care, take the extra steps to make students feel included, and develop relationships." Administrator Two echoes these sentiments in that she believes teachers should develop relationships. She further explained to do so requires "interest and showing consistency."

A second instructional practice of "Connective Teaching" viewed as critical to student engagement is making content relevant. For Administrator Two:

> Always a make, or do, or a create. Bringing outside parties in, being authentic for what we are learning gives purpose to the learning. Finding ways to apply what we are learning to real world concepts.

At School B, the participants shared that relationships are essential to connecting the at-risk students to school. The importance of "Connective Teaching" practices are even more significant when considered with the impact of the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth" child rearing practices of many of the lower socioeconomic students. As Administrator Four shared, "teachers should build relationships to communicate the advantages and importance of coming to school." Furthermore, he added:

> I think this piece of building the relationship is key because once you can do that you can talk to the student (about) all different aspects of school, and how the content relates (to the student) and how it relates to the real world.

Teacher Five's perspective of the importance of building relationships includes establishing trust. She shared:

> I have a student who was having a rough year. I was able to form a relationship with him where he trusts me and is able to share some of his experiences with me. It gave me a better understanding of why he acts the way he acts. Once we formed this connection his interest level in my class, once he knew I cared about him he began to get the attention of other students and he became a leader in my classroom. He made more eye contact, he would ask more questions, and he was more involved.

Cooper's instructional practices aligned with cognitive engagement involve "Academic Rigor" (2011). Included in these practices are using time efficiently, demonstrating passion for the content and academic press. When Teacher Three talks about "productive struggle" as an essential element of his Social Studies classes to promote student growth, he is referring to academic rigor and academic press. Working with his students to develop their critical thinking skills and to make the "students want to know more" is viewed as essential to student engagement. Administrator Four shared his belief that critical thinking questions are integral to academic rigor and student engagement. With probing questions, teachers can promote student engagement. He explained; "students begin to ask questions, teachers respond and probe further, then students might say I don't get it. I get this part but I don't get this. Then the students are probing."

4.2.4 Impact of Socioeconomic Status on Student Engagement

The investigator purposefully selected Schools A and B from a school district in southwestern North Carolina to conduct the research on student engagement realizing that these secondary schools work with distinct populations. In fact, within the district, these two high schools reflect a general disparity between the upper and lower socioeconomic statuses of students. While conducting the interviews and engaging in conversations with the participants it became apparent that collectively the participants

think about the socioeconomic statuses of their students routinely as they are aware of the positive relationship between socioeconomic status and student achievement.

The upper socioeconomic statuses of the majority of students at School A, according to the administrators and teachers, has not only led to similar life defining experiences as to having their basic needs met, participating in sports, clubs, competitions, or in travel to other cities and countries, but to the development of a school culture centered on “high expectations, academic achievement, and competition.” This finding is consistent with Lareau’s (2011) conclusion that students who are raised with the child rearing practices of “Concerted Cultivation” know how to do school as they are familiar with social institutions and they understand how to interact and are aware of the expectations. The administrators and teachers of School A shared and explained their understandings that the majority of their students come to school interested and motivated to learn, and with goals for the future that most often include post-secondary education. As Teacher One explained:

> Compared with where I taught before, students take more accountability for their learning, for themselves, and are more proactive…they are pushed at home…this is quite significant…it starts in the home…if your parents are serious about your education, you tend to be more serious about your education.

Although Teacher Three expressed similar sentiments, he believes his students benefit from these child rearing practices in that they come to school with “considerable background knowledge” which results in the fact that “I can lay out my expectations, they (the students have access to technology) and if I really want something, I will put a grade on it, attach a grade and they will do it.” In other words, high expectations cultivated at home that have the potential to impact learning. The teacher participants of School A express how oftentimes the students are interested and motivated to learn

whereas the two administrators discuss how these child rearing practices of "Concerted Cultivation" often result in as Administrator Two shared:

> Working with a high percentage of students who want to learn, who know how stand up, speak and advocate for their learning…if they feel like something is awry or could be better they communicate their needs.

The administrator and teacher participants of School B are also cognizant of the homes in which their students are raised. The lower socioeconomic statuses of most of the students is viewed as a contributing factor to the culture of the school. A culture they describe as 'a family." The majority of these students are raised with the child rearing practices of the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth" (Lareau, 20110) as the administrators and teachers believe their families are concerned with putting food on the table, paying the rent, or looking for child care. Add to this sentiment, the shared belief expressed by the participants of School B that these parents are often not the products of secondary schools or the fact they have experienced limited success in school. The Teachers and administrators shared their perceptions that expectations for school are not communicated at home. As Teacher Four commented, "education is not as important…it is not that they don't value it. I think it is that they think it is not attainable." She went on to share:

> Parents don't know any better…if you graduate great; ok; well, if not you'll get a job. This is what it is. They (students) are concerned with family and their living arrangements, financial issues, child care, being parents, and not being ready to be parents.

These sentiments are held and were communicated by all the participants in this study. Even at School A there is an understanding that often times students from the lower socioeconomic classes may find it difficult to participate in the educational processes. As

Teacher Three communicated, “I know I had kids when I was at another school, they were worried about food…they didn’t care about Rome.”

With little to no guidance in how to interact within social institutions and in this case school, many students from the lower socioeconomic classes according to Administrator Three; “it takes a lot to get them (the students) engaged, it takes a lot to want to learn, it takes a lot to motivate them, and to connect them to school.” Administrator Four extends this notion by comparing the students at School B with students at other schools serving students from upper socioeconomic homes:

> At our school, in particular, we are labeled a high needs school…things that may work for your typical student that may go to another school in the county may not work for us…I am thinking of a few schools where a teacher could just walk in and give some general directions, give them some busy work and say this is going to be your grade and let them have at it and they (the students) would all get it done. Then I think of other schools, our school, it is going to take some prodding, some motivating to get it done.

According to the participants at School B, having little to no routines and guidance as to how to navigate school, students raised by the “Accomplishment of Natural Growth”, do not typically advocate for themselves. Administrator Four believes these students are often the “invisible students.” Invisible due to the fact the parents are not involved, nor do they interfere in the educational processes which results in students not learning or knowing how to advocate for their needs. Administrator Three shared one exception to this characterization; “there are some parents who will intervene and question with regard to disciplinary actions assigned to their students.” However, she went on to clarify, in School B, “very few parents question consequences or take it upon themselves to intervene.”

4.2.5 Summary and Reflection of the Common Findings

Common findings within the dominant themes that emerged from this study include (a) the role of students as active participants in the phenomenon of student engagement, (b) the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as an organizational structure to define and discuss student engagement, as well as (c) socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement. These findings were consistent across the groups of administrators and teachers at Schools A and B.

However, within these common themes there are subtle yet important differences within the understandings and essences of student engagement. Differences that need to be considered to support a shared understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement.

4.3 Differences within the Findings

The primary purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of secondary administrators and teachers to generate a robust description of the construct to promote a dialogue and shared understanding. While the common themes that have emerged from the study will add to the understanding of student engagement it is perhaps significant that the distinctions within the dominant themes (see Table 11) may identify the salient understandings of the phenomenon. The disparities within the findings center on (a) whose responsibility is it to engage students in the educational processes, (b) the role of stakeholders in facilitating student engagement, (c) feedback and trust, and (d) rankings of instructional practices to support behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Table 9 is included a second time to facilitate the discussion of the disparities within the findings of the research.

Table 9

Coding of Dominant Themes

School:	Dominant Themes:
School A	
Administrator One	A, A’’, B, C, D, E’, F’, F’’’, G’’’, G’’’’,H’, H’’
Administrator Two	A, A’’, B, C, D, F’, F’’’, G’’’, G’’’’, H’
Teacher One	A, A’, B, C, D, E’’, F’, F’’, G’, G’’, H’
Teacher Two	A, A’, B, C, E’’,F’, F’’, F’’’, G’, G’’, H’
Teacher Three	A, A’, C, D, E’’,F’, F’’, G’, G’’, H’, H’’
School B	
Administrator Three	A, A’’, B, C, D, F’’’, G’’’, G’’’’, H’, H’’
Administrator Four	A, A’’, B, C, D, E’, F’, F’’’, G’’’, G’’’’, H’, H’’,
Administrator Five	A, A’’, B, C, D, F’, F’’’, G’’’, G’’’’, H’, H’’
Teacher Four	A, A’, B, C, F’’’, G’, G’’, H’’
Teacher Five	A, A’, B, C, E’, E’’, G’, G’’, H’’

Table 11 illustrates the differences heard within the rich descriptions of the lived experiences of the participants. A significant finding of this study includes the distinction among the participants of whether it is the teacher’s responsibility to engage the students or whether it is the student’s responsibility to participate in the educational processes. This theme connected to the importance of the roles of the teacher and of the administrator to facilitate student engagement within their schools.

Table 11

Overview of the Distinctions within the Dominant Themes

Theme	Dominant Themes within Interviews
Students as active participants	
Students’ responsibility to be engaged/A’	• Take accountability for their learning • Students care, are invested • Students seek help • Voice their thinking

Table 11 (continued)

Teachers' responsibility to engage students/A''	• Make lessons relatable to students • Putting responsibility for learning back on the student • Responsibility to establish culture where students are not afraid to take risk • Responsibility to create "buy in'; to communicate why learning is important
Trust	
Building trust with students/E'	• Students have to know they can say something without fear of ridicule • Students to learn to trust themselves; to accept they don't know everything
Building trust with teachers/E''	• Demonstrating care as human beings and professionals • Providing support
Feedback	
Provided to students by teachers/F'	• To lead students if struggling • To help students be better
Teachers' expectations for feedback/F''	• Good, honest, specific feedback • Discussion of what is working and what isn't working • Observing what is actually going on in classrooms
Administrators' expectations of feedback/F'''	• Guide post-observation conferences • Based on data • Standards driven • To guide instruction
Role/Expectations of Stakeholders	
Teacher's role as viewed by teachers/G'	• Involves planning • Guide students; help students • Form relationships • To be adaptable • To set expectations for learning • To facilitate productive struggle • Not to entertain or perform

Table 11(continued)

Administration's role defined by teachers/G''	• To be supportive of teachers and students • Communicate expectations regarding achievement • Not to be judgmental of teachers • Lead by example • Show interest in what students are learning • Instructional leaders rather than disciplinarians
Teacher's role defined by administration/G'''	• Plan for hands on learning, PBL • Scaffold instruction • Utilize standards based assessments • Model • Make lessons relatable • Make learning visible • Capture students' attention
Administration's role defined by administration/G''''	• Provide resources • Provide opportunities for training • Observe and give feedback • To facilitate change through communication and modeling expectations • Share data • Reflective, instructional leaders

4.3.1 Disparities among Stakeholders

Even though the administrators and teachers of both schools agree that active student participation is essential to student engagement the findings suggest a disparity among the participants of the study with regard to whether it is the student's responsibility to actively engage or the teacher's responsibility to facilitate student engagement. Teachers at both schools agree that the students must take responsibility for engaging in the educational processes whereas the administrators concur that it is the teacher's responsibility to facilitate student engagement within their classrooms.

Teacher Five explained: the first step to student engagement is that the students need to "do their due diligence." She went on to define this term as "when students listen and do as asked." This is important as she believes "if you do not have the students' attention or if they are not listening to you (then) they won't be able to be engaged." For Teacher Three it is a matter of the fact that:

> I can tell things all day long BUT until the kid decides to do something with it- whether its, even if its, I am going to hold on to this because it can be helpful later. Anything, until THEY (students) decide that it is meaningful and purposeful to them.

Teacher Two echoes these sentiments in that "the students have to be willing to discuss, to participate, do group work appropriately, be willing to work hard, and to be focused."

During the second interviews with the participants, the teachers discussed their perceptions of student engagement and whether or not they are concerned with the phenomenon of student engagement (see Appendix E). At School A, the collective sentiment is that the majority of students are engaged because they are motivated and as such student engagement in not something they are concerned about nor do they prioritize it in their practice. When I asked as a probing question to Teacher One regarding whether student engagement is something she plans for in her lessons, she explained; "not consciously. Innately it is important that you are discussing things, questioning things and interpreting things with each other but I do plan group activities, labs, and discussions." Teacher Two responded to these questions with "I do not know if I set out in the beginning to engage the kids." However, Teacher Three responded "absolutely." Although he went on to clarify it is prioritized in his practice through the "building of relationships with his students" because the relationship will "help the

students to grow, think and engage." He was not referring to planning activities to facilitate student engagement.

An important and common, dominant finding of this study is that socioeconomic status contextualizes student engagement. As is the case with School A, that students come to school interested and motivated to learn as a result of being raised with "Concerted Cultivation", many of the students at School B due to the fact they are not connected to school or motivated to learn as their working class parents reared them using the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth", the teachers are concerned with student engagement. Teacher Four shared; "student engagement is something I prioritize because if they are not engaged they are not really learning." She added; "they (the students) have to want to learn." As a result of these sentiments, student engagement is something she plans for in her lessons.

The second conversations with a purpose involving the administrators at both schools centered on the phenomenon of student engagement (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). See Appendix F. As opposed to the teachers, all five administrators are concerned with student engagement and it is something they prioritize in their practice. At School A, "student engagement is "very important." Administrator One went on to say; "I am very concerned that I don't see it enough." Administrator Two believes; "student engagement is an area of continuous improvement for us." She explained:

> To make certain we are really creative in our methodologies. Keeping it varied and making it such that there are days in a week, in a month where students are so immersed in the learning or project, with guest speakers or game, scavenger hunt…whatever it was we set up to enhance the learning that the students lost track of time.

At School B, the administrators' perceptions center on connecting the students to school and to preparing them for 21st century society. Administrator Three believes only "15-20% of the students are actually engaged." For Administrator Five, it is a question of "is the teacher really meeting them (the students) needs to the point where the students are totally engaged?" Implied in this response is the fact that he feels "teachers need to utilize engaging strategies to reach the students." Furthermore, Administrator Five expressed his belief that it is the teacher's responsibility to build relationships with students so they (teachers) know what method they can reach the students."

Collectively, the administrators perceive the teachers as responsible for engaging students in the educational processes while the teachers perceive the students as responsible for engagement. What then are the roles of the stakeholders within secondary schools to facilitate student engagement?

4.3.2 Roles of the Stakeholders

Although both groups of participants in this study perceive planning as essential to the facilitation of student engagement, there is disparity within these two secondary schools regarding the roles teachers and administrators perform with respect to student engagement. The primary role of the teacher as perceived by the teachers is to build relationships to establish connections with the students thereby connecting the students to the content and to school. The five teacher participants use language such as "to lead", "to guide", "to set expectations for learning", "to form connections, "to provide help", "to care", and "to provide a safe environment for learning." Whereas, the administrators perceive the role of the teacher as responsible for student engagement. From this lens according to the administrators, teachers should "give positive feedback", "make lessons

relatable", "make learning visible", "model" as they "scaffold instruction", "utilize standards based assessments", and "use data to plan instruction." Administrator One, at School A, in addition to being "systematically planned", a teacher "must be ready for those hurdles when students are no longer believing they can do it." She went on to explain; "a good plan is a well written lesson plan that is standards based."

At School B partially a result of the students' demographics in addition to the above roles, Administrator Four explained the teacher's role is to be the bridge:

> It is not just about you are going to come to my class to hear me talk, do my homework, and you are going to go home. We need (the teacher) to be that bridge that connects the school to the kid's reality. Teachers have to be those kids who are going to show students how to make those connections between what they are learning and outside of school.

In other words, this data suggests at Title I schools an additional role of the teacher is to negate the effects of a student's socioeconomic status through fulfilling the aforementioned roles and through connecting the content to the importance of a high school education.

Within the data, a second discrepancy concerning the roles of stakeholders in facilitating student engagement was found in the perceptions of the teachers and the administrators regarding the administrators' role. Teachers understand the role of administration as one of support. More than one teacher participant shared the sentiment: "there are high expectations for teachers." With regard to student engagement and achievement, teachers look to the leaders for "clearly communicated expectations", as well as "honest and specific feedback." In addition, as Teacher One shared:

> Administrators should lead by example by showing interest in what the students are learning. If they pop in to our classrooms and they may actually be interested in what we are teaching, the students will see that and they might be a little more interested.

When asked to consider their roles in facilitating student engagement, the administrators discussed the roles of "providing resources", "conducting observations" and "providing feedback in post conferences." Only one administrator, Administrator Two, spoke of the role of instructional leader as the "tone setter" in shaping the culture to support student engagement and increased student learning outcomes. She shared; "an administrator's role is making sure we are keeping the focus on learning and instruction and comfortable talking the talk of instruction." Administrator Two believes her most important role is "instructional leader to set up experiences that model good instructional practices." This is interesting data in that the other four administrator participants spoke of challenges to being the instructional leaders within their schools. As Administrator Three shared:

> It is a challenge, biggest challenge I face here and I have talked with other administrators at other schools, on a daily basis, we deal with a lot of referrals…this takes away from the support I would like to give our teachers.

4.3.3 Feedback and Trust

Perhaps the most salient finding of this study regarding secondary administrators and teachers' understanding of student engagement is the apparent discrepancy among the teachers' perceptions of feedback regarding student engagement in their classrooms and the administrators' comprehensions of the feedback they provide to the teachers. This dominant finding is based not only on the inductive and deductive analyses of the semi-structured interviews including the codes, patterns, and themes but also a result of the researcher taking note of the words the participants used to describe their interactions with other stakeholders regarding student engagement.

Within the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher found that the teacher participants are aware of the roles of administrators in the evaluation of their performance with regard to data as in student achievement as measured by student learning outcomes, the role of administrators as disciplinarians, and also the fact that principals have the influence and responsibility to shape the culture of their schools. The findings suggest it is the evaluative role of administrators which affects the lived experiences and perceptions of student engagement possessed by the teachers. This may partly be due to the fact often times administrators are in or only visit classrooms while conducting observations or classroom walkthroughs where the construct of student engagement is paramount to the tools used to conduct the evaluations. The teacher participants expressed comprehension of the fact this may be the case due to the other responsibilities of administrators such as handling discipline. The principle take away is the understanding that while administrators visit classrooms to evaluate teachers, teachers perceive these assessments as judgments or evaluations regarding their performance partly based upon the phenomenon of student engagement. In other words, observations are conducted by administrators with tools to collect data to inform instruction and to appraise a teacher’s performance.

The data suggested that often times these understandings are based upon the interactions teachers have with administrators when they are in the classrooms and also of the feedback provided to teachers during post-observation conferences and during the summative evaluation discussions conducted late in the year. Teacher Four described one experience when a team of administrators visited her Math I class during the previous school year:

> When they came in the classroom before they jump to a conclusion like it is loud in here…that they take notice of what is actually going on. The administration that came in last year left me with the impression that I was not teaching because the desks were not in rows and the kids were talking. Until someone, another admin pointed out, did you hear the conversation those kids were having? AND they were talking about math.

Teacher Four concluded her response with "I think admins' (the administrations') expectations changed." She went on to explain that she views the primary role of the administration as "communicating their expectations" for if "they walk in the room one time and it is loud you (administration) might be like man these kids are talking, loud and off task but they need to understand this is not always the case."

While these impressions can be the result of classroom visits as described previously, it is often the feedback provided, how the feedback is communicated, and the effects of the feedback that influence teachers' understandings of student engagement. Teacher Five's perceptions of the role of administration in facilitating engagement as one of support. She shared during the conversations that the purpose of the observations and walkthroughs in the current climate of School B has shifted from one where administrators were:

> Concerned about me as a person and he wasn't concerned about performance. Me first as a human being and next the professional aspect. Every time he walked in to my classroom he shared something positive as opposed to this year where the administration are coming in to see what she is doing wrong. I felt like I was being judged.

to

> The role of the administrator is to be supportive and not to judge. And if you want to give feedback, there are ways to give feedback. Start with the positives, then talk about the main point you would like to see improved, and then end the conversation with a positive.

Teacher Five concluded her response with the point "this helps with student engagement because the positive helps you try harder and once you try harder you plan better and the

kids see it." Furthermore this teacher's perceptions are influenced by the fact "the post-observation feedback was not delivered in person but through an email sent at 9:30 in the evening listing the areas for improvement." This mode of communication to deliver feedback was perceived by the teacher as "a slight" in that the administrator did not care enough to discuss his evaluation or to gather input with which to provide a context for the observation.

Taking the time to provide "honest, specific feedback" and "showing interest in what the students are learning" are also viewed by the teacher participants at School A as essential to a shared understanding of student engagement. Teacher Three sees the administrator's role regarding student engagement as:

> Two fold, in some ways let us be frank about what we are seeing in classrooms, about what is and what isn't working overall, BUT at the same time never forget what it is like to be in a classroom. Just good, honest feedback is needed and I get worried that the tools that are used for observation are just not a best fit for students. There are too many boxes to fill out that you (Administrators) spend more time checking boxes both figuratively and literally than seeing people involved and active in class.

While Teacher Three admits he:

> Understands that the administrator's side is to look for in observations isn't always what kids are needing to see and do and feel in class…it's hard to describe. There is a disconnect between what I know administratively they are required to do and then what in the classroom we as teachers are trying to get done.

The researcher probed by asking "then, how do you facilitate that good, honest feedback?" Teacher Three from the perspective of a secondary teacher of History and department chair replied:

> To just have the ability to sit down and chat is a good thing. It would be nice to modify the master schedule to just set aside time every month or so to just say "hey", this is a good time for a one on one or (an opportunity) to provide assistance.

In other words, the investigator suggested maybe engage in conversations regarding student engagement other than during post-observation conferences and discussions about data. Teacher Three responded, “exactly.” Furthermore, Teacher Three admitted it can:

> Be difficult in a building like this as we have 80-100 teachers and four administrators. In the same way it can be difficult with one teacher in a classroom with 25-30 students it is tough to get with them on an individual basis. It is just a matter of it being tough to get good feedback when an administrator might be able to devote 20 minutes to your classroom twice a year and they have to provide feedback with how you are as a teacher.

When the administrators discussed their roles with regard to facilitating student engagement within their schools, they also spoke of the importance of feedback and the post-observation conferences including the summative evaluations to codify a teacher’s performance across a year. Student engagement according to Administrator Five is “most often discussed with teachers during post-observation and summative evaluation conferences.” He clarified by stating “student engagement is a good talking point.” Administrator Five continued by explaining:

> Student engagement is key. You talk with teachers about data and about the level of engagement you are seeing or not seeing in classrooms. One should center the conversations on how do you (teacher) feel the students are doing in your class? How do you feel students are engaged in your class? How do you feel like you reached 45% proficiency on benchmarks and exams? Why do you feel like you met or did not meet growth or exceed growth this year?

Within this excerpt it is clear that Administrator Five believes it is the responsibility of the teacher to engage the students. However, he went on to clarify, “the questions are good talking points but it does go back to were the students engaged enough or did you engage the students enough in order to receive the data or results you (teacher) really wanted?”

Administrator One added the essential understanding that administrators "need to understand what student engagement looks like to even have the conversations with teachers during conferences." She also shared:

> I don't think we all do to the point of 100% involvement with student engagement but I think administrators for sure have to understand the premise of student engagement so that they can share with what they are seeing and being able to verbalize what I saw…taking what I saw and turning it into a little bit more of student engagement until the teacher gets comfortable with it.

Listening to the recordings of the interviews, transcribing verbatim, and applying inductive and deductive analyses of the data provided the researcher the opportunity to reflect upon the words the participant groups were using when discussing the phenomenon of student engagement. While the researcher did not perform a discourse analysis of the interviews, she did note language used by the stakeholders. To summarize, the teachers spoke of "us" and "we" and referred to the administration as "them." As a previously discussed finding, teachers used judgement, expectations, and evaluations to describe their experiences with administrators. On the other hand, the language of the administrators included evaluative words such as good, great, effective, engaged, and engagement more often than the teacher participants. In addition, the administrators included the language of measurement as in standards driven, data, assessment, benchmarks and exams as well as achievement. This language seems to allude to the incongruence within the participant groups' lived experiences of student engagement.

4.3.4 Rankings of Instructional Practices

According to Sage Methods, "ranking is a question response format used when a researcher is interested in establishing some type of priority among a set of objects- whether they be policies, attributes, organizations, individuals, or some type of property

of interest"(https://methods-sagepub.com/Reference/enclyclopedai-of-survey-researchmethods/n443.xml). Although this is a qualitative study, the researcher used the median to describe the central tendency of the ordinal data collected with the rankings of instructional practices.

Descriptive statistics are useful in highlighting trends within data. As a means to check the emerging findings of the study, the researcher asked the participants at both schools to rank in order the instructional practices defined by Cooper (2011) of the three points of entry to the construct of global engagement. As explained in Chapter 3, between the second and third semi-structured interviews, the researcher thought she was hearing the participants discussing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. As the interviews were not yet listened to, transcribed, or analyzed, the researcher and participants had not discussed "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching" or "Academic Rigor" (Cooper, 2011). The participants were instructed to rank in order of importance the 13 instructional practices from 1 as the most important to the facilitation of student engagement to 13 as the least significant practice. See Appendices G and H. Within the two appendices documents, the instructional practices are listed randomly and not reflective of the instructional points of entry defined by Cooper (2011). In addition, the rankings were anonymous as the participants identified by school and role.

Table 12

Median Statistics for the Points of Entry of the Classroom Engagement Framework

	School A		School B	
	Teachers	Admin.	Teachers	Admin.
"Lively Instruction"	11.0	11.5	6.8	9.9
"Connective Teaching"	3.3	4.0	5.0	5.3
"Academic Rigor"	7.7	6.0	8.5	6.0

The descriptive statistics (see Table 12) and rankings (see Table 13) support the dominant finding of this study and Cooper's research (2011; 2014) that emotional engagement defined by Cooper (2011) as "Connective Teaching" is the most important point of entry to the global engagement of students. The rankings also check the findings that due to the socioeconomic statuses of the students at both schools, there appear to be differences in the rankings of the other two points of entry. At School B, in addition to understanding students and demonstrating care for the students, perhaps due to the effects of the "Accomplishment of Natural Growth" (Lareau 2011), the teacher participants ranked entertaining teacher and games and activities as the most essential to facilitating student engagement. At School A, perhaps due to the child rearing practices of "Concerted Cultivation" (Lareau, 2011), both participant groups rated "Lively Instruction" as least significant to student engagement. This data is consistent with the perceptions shared by the participants, at School A, that many of the students come to school interested, motivated, and ready to learn. The participants rated the "Academic Rigor" instructional point of entry as second most important to facilitating student engagement. This is consistent with the patterns within the data using phenomenology.

Table 13

Participants' Rankings of Instructional Practices of the Classroom Engagement Framework

Instructional Practices	School A		School B	
	Teachers	Administrators	Teachers	Administrators
"Lively Instruction"/BE Entertaining Teacher	10.7	13.0	3.5	11.7

Table 13 (continued)

Games & Activities	11.0	11.0	2.5	9.7
Assign Group Work	11.0	9.0	10.0	6.7
Assign Projects	12.7	12.0	12.5	10.0
"Connective Teaching"/EE				
Understand Students	2.3	4.0	3.5	3.3
Demonstrate Care	1.0	1.0	5.0	3.7
Affirm Student Success	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.3
Self-Expression	5.3	8.0	7.5	7.3
Relevance	3.3	2.0	7.0	6.3
"Academic Rigor"/CE				
Assign Challenging Work	8.3	7.0	11.5	6.3
Academic Press	7.0	10.0	10.0	5.7
Use Time Efficiently	8.3	3.0	6.0	6.7
Demonstrate Passion	4.0	5.0	7.0	5.7

4.3.5 Summary and Reflection of the Differences within the Findings

The major findings with respect to differences among the stakeholders include whether it is the student's responsibility to engage or if it is the teacher's responsibility to engage the students in the educational processes. In addition, among the stakeholder groups the results suggest a disparity between understandings of roles of the teachers and administrators in facilitating student engagement. The findings suggest that feedback and trust or the lack thereof may influence not only the understandings of student engagement but how administrators and teachers interact and discuss the phenomenon. Differences within the rankings of instructional practices connected to the three points of entry to

global engagement (Cooper, 2011) served as a check on the emerging data while also highlighting the significant findings of the phenomenology. The disparities which have emerged in the data suggest that the lived experiences of the participants perhaps partly as a result of the roles the participants hold within secondary schools have led to divergent understandings of student engagement.

4.4 Summary and Reflection of Chapter 4 and Introduction to Chapter 5

Chapter 4 includes the findings of the phenomenological research conducted at two secondary schools serving distinct populations of students. The demographics of each school are reflective of the socioeconomic statuses of their students. The data generated is the result of both inductive and deductive analyses of the 30 semi-structured interviews. The qualitative codes, descriptive codes, and patterns were reported. In addition, the rankings of instructional practices were included to member check the data. The descriptive statistics help to explain the commonality within the findings and also highlight the divergent results after the commonality.

Significant themes emerged describing the understanding and lived experiences of the participants. Although the findings suggest similarities in the understandings of the phenomenon there were also major disparities which emerged from the study. Common findings include the student as active participant, the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as an organizing structure to frame and guide discussions around student engagement, and the role of socioeconomic status in contextualizing student engagement. However, notable findings within the data include disparities regarding the role of the student and teacher in student engagement, the role of the teachers and administrators in facilitating engagement, the impact of feedback and trust on the understandings of the

phenomenon, as well as the differences found within the rankings of instructional practices by the participants.

Collectively these results shed light on the complexity of the phenomenon within secondary schools. While there appears to be an operational definition of student engagement to guide the discussions within high schools, the findings suggest it is more than this. By the very nature of the inherent differences in the roles of administrators and teachers in the educational processes, the findings support that the culture of classrooms and schools to mediate the understandings of student engagement as critical to the implications of these understandings.

In Chapter 5, limitations of the study, implications of these understandings for educational leaders, and directions for future research will be presented and discussed. Chapter 5 will complete the conclusions for this phenomenological research.

CHAPTER 5: TOWARD A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction

As a teacher and administrator with experience in secondary schools during this era of accountability and standards based instruction, I began this dissertation with the hope of building community around the problem of practice; student engagement. It is well documented in the literature that student engagement or disengagement has led to increased attrition, lower graduation rates, and a nation of stakeholders many of whom see our schools as failing the students (Fall & Roberts, 2012; Fredericks et al., 2004; Jonasson, 2012; Markowitz, 2018). The researcher as practitioner is interested in how to facilitate a dialogue within schools to support not only increased student learning outcomes for all students but to build relationships among stakeholders and to work toward a shared understanding of the construct.

With considerable practical experience in high schools, the researcher knows first-hand the challenges of shaping cultures that empower teachers, administrators, and students to participate in the educational processes. Her interest in student engagement began when the assistant principals, representative of all the high schools in a district, could not agree on the essential elements of student engagement. However, the investigator's experiences have broadened from identifying a working definition of student engagement to the primary purpose of this research to generate a conversation among stakeholders to facilitate engaging the students in their learning.

Through phenomenological research, the investigator explored the understandings and lived experiences of the participants in search of a robust description of the understandings of student engagement. Through the conversations with a purpose

(Rossman & Rallis, 2017), the researcher and participants co-constructed knowledge to promote a dialogue with the aim of engaging teachers and administrators in a “Big C” conversation (Gee, 2014).

In Chapter 4, the findings of this study shed light on the understandings of the teachers and administrators with respect to their experiences with student engagement and to the third research question; how does student socioeconomic status contextualize secondary school educators’ understanding of student engagement? Within this final chapter of the dissertation, the limitations of the research, the implications of these working understandings (Rossman and Rallis, 2017), and the directions for future research are discussed.

5.2 Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

In an effort to go beneath the surface of the phenomenon of student engagement, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with administrators and teachers. The researcher utilized Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2008) stages for conversations with a purpose. One assumption made by the researcher is that all participants interviewed were truthful (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). This researcher worked to develop respect and trust with the participants to promote a fair and open research environment. Realizing that the data collected and the knowledge gained are contextual, the researcher developed trust and respect by answering the participants’ questions at the beginning of each conversation, by communicating the purpose of each conversation, and through sharing the significant points from the previous conversations. As a result, the researcher acknowledged the fact that subjective truths and diverse viewpoints could have resulted from the interactions during the semi-structured interviews.

The primary limitation of this phenomenology is that it was conducted in two secondary schools within one district and as such the data is bound by location and time. The findings are not generalizable to the larger population as the data was co-constructed with 10 participants; five teachers and five administrators. Thus, the essential understandings of the research findings are not representative of all the stakeholders at each school nor are the findings representative of the other teachers and administrators within the other 53 schools of the district or of the public schools within the state.

Although this investigator is cognizant of the fact she is vested in the research, to limit potential bias, the researcher utilized strategies to increase credibility and the rigor of the study. Triangulation was conducted through systematic inquiry during the 30 semi-structured interviews, conversations with a peer debriefer, and member checks at the beginning of each interview and with the rankings of the instructional practices. However, given the qualitative research potential bias remains a limitation.

A third limitation of this study is that the search for working understandings (Rossman & Rallis, 2017) regarding student engagement did not include semi-structured interviews with the students of either school. Given a significant finding of the study is that students are viewed by both teachers and administrators as active participants in the educational processes, a limitation of this research is that the students' voices are not included.

5.3 Implications of the Understandings

The title of this chapter is "Toward a Shared Understanding of Student Engagement." While the researcher began this dissertation with the primary goal of increasing understanding within schools among the stakeholders responsible for

supporting increased student learning outcomes, the implications of the significant findings have the potential to frame the conversations regarding students' engagement within schools, across districts, and states. This understanding is consistent with the research in that the phenomenon of student engagement needs to be considered within the context of where the learning occurs. In other words, the culture of schools and classrooms can affect student engagement (Fredericks et al., 2004; Jonasson, 2012). Schools with cultures characterized as inclusive, democratic, and based upon shared values shaped by principals as instructional leaders and through the relationships of the stakeholders; administrators and teachers, promote collaboration to support increased learning outcomes (Sergiovanni, 1991; Smyth, 2006). The significant finding of the study of the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as an operational definition of the phenomenon which reflects the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive characteristics of student engagement, administrators and teachers appear to have an opportunity to use the instructional points of entry of "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching", and "Academic Rigor" to frame their conversations which may in turn support a shared understanding and ultimately build community around student engagement among and across stakeholder groups.

Cooper (2011) posed the, as it turns out, salient question; "what is the source of all this tension for these teachers?" (p. 170). Cooper concluded; "Collectively, they (this group of teachers) come across as possibly overworked, possibly exhausted or possibly disenchanted with teaching" (p.170). Nevertheless, these findings suggest the tensions may be the result of the discrepancies among stakeholders regarding the role of the students to engage in the educational processes or whether it is the teacher's role to

engage the students, the differences as viewed by the teachers and administrators with respect to their understandings of the roles they play in facilitating student engagement within the classrooms and schools, as well as the relationships between teachers and administrators that is often affected by the feedback provided by principals. Feedback which can strengthen trust within the relationship or contribute to a lack of trust with the potential to negate the understanding of student engagement.

5.3.1 Alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework

The implications of the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) as an organizing structure are three fold: provides a common vocabulary with which the stakeholders can engage in a dialogue across schools within districts and states regarding the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of engagement; provides a tool with which stakeholders as leaders in classrooms, schools, and districts to conduct observations, and ultimately a frame of reference as an operational definition of the phenomenon to potentially remove the “judgments” teachers’ perceive as part of the evaluations within public schools. Within North Carolina, the evaluation system is based on a growth model. As instructional leaders within schools, principals are required to perform observations of their teachers to support increased learning outcomes for all students. While this will not change in the forseeable future, the common vocabulary and connected instructional practices of the framework provide a means to communicate what is and what is not happening in classrooms and a means to communicate areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. Data can be viewed through the lens of “Lively Instruction”, “Connective Teaching”, and “Academic Rigor” (Cooper, 2011). The professional learning community model (DuFour et al, 2005) used in the district where

this research was conducted is based upon four guiding questions. Through these questions, teachers are asked to analyze data and use the analyses to guide instruction. Connecting the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) to the works of the professional learning communities not only empowers the teachers to reflect but also contribute to the development of cultures within their classrooms and across their schools to cultivate student engagement.

The third research question of this study explored the relationship between socioeconomic status and student engagement. The research found within the literature identified a positive relationship; the higher the socioeconomic status of the students the greater the achievement of the students. This research affirms this relationship; however, these findings also suggest the potential of the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) to support increased student learning outcomes no matter the fact that students might be raised with “Concerted Cultivation” or under the “Accomplishment of Natural Growth” (Lareau, 2011). In other words, whether students come to school interested, motivated, and with the tools to learn, or whether they need to be connected to the educational processes, good teaching is good teaching. The instructional practices found within the points of entry of Cooper’s Classroom Engagement Framework are strong pedagogical practices with which all students would likely benefit (2011).

5.3.2 The Stakeholders

Relationships are essential to the understanding of student engagement. The findings of this research confirm that administrators and teachers share in the responsibility in the development of cultures within classrooms and schools to facilitate the engagement of students. While all the participants in this study agree that the

relationship between teacher and student is the principle factor in the cultivation of student engagement, the results of this phenomenological study highlights the significance of the relationship between teacher and administrators as paramount to the educational processes. As leaders within their schools, teachers and administrators engage in conversations as they work to increase student learning outcomes.

The current research on the relationship between principal and teacher supports the conclusion that feedback and the trust which is cultivated partly as a result of the interactions among the stakeholders is directly related to increased student learning outcomes (Tschannen-Moran and Gareis, 2015; Weiner and Higgins, 2016). As Smyth (2006) suggested, the power relationships need to be acknowledged and considered within the frames of reference of the stakeholders. Furthermore, current research indicates that faculty trust in the principal supports a climate in which teachers feel comfortable to collaborate regarding the problems of practice and may be more willing to take risks to support student learning (Price, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Weiner & Higgins, 2016). Thus, a critical implication of this study is that feedback and trust are the essential themes within the discussion of how to facilitate student engagement within secondary schools.

5.3.2.1 The Teachers

The results of this research indicate that teachers as instructional leaders within classrooms, departments, and the school community possess working understandings (Rossman & Rallis, 2017) of the phenomenon of student engagement. They plan for instruction. Instruction that includes a consideration of how to engage students in the lessons; some consciously as is the case with the teacher participants at School B or

indirectly as is the case with the teacher participants at School A. Even so, at both schools, teachers expressed the difference between beginning teachers' understandings of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement and those understandings of experienced teachers. As teachers are often in different places with their content knowledge, pedagogical practices, and classroom management practices, the Classroom Engagement Framework has the potential to frame discussions within the professional learning communities and also the potential to identify areas to assist beginning teachers with strengthening as well as make contributions to the collective understanding of the instructional points of entry (Cooper, 2011).

5.3.2.2 The Administrators

Shaping the cultures of schools, engaging students, teachers, and parents in the community, discipline, conducting evaluations and observations, and providing feedback are significant responsibilities of public school principals. The outstanding implication of this research is the effect of feedback on the understandings of student engagement. All the participants in this study agreed that feedback is given most often during the post observations and summative assessment conferences thereby linking evaluation with student engagement. From the administrative perspective, using student engagement data to evaluate teacher performance and their students' learning outcomes is efficient and necessary to drive instruction. Whereas from the teachers' perspectives, using student engagement data to evaluate teacher performance and their students' learning outcomes after as in most cases for these participants two, 20 minute observations or with walkthrough data is, at best, perceived as judgmental. While this researcher is aware of the time constraints principals face due to their many responsibilities, the lack of a clear

understanding or working definition of student engagement, and other barriers to "good, honest, feedback" the significant implication of this research is to engage stakeholders in a "Big C" conversation (Gee, 2014). Administrators might be better served if they interacted with students and teachers in classrooms, during professional learning community meetings routinely without connecting the visits or the interactions to the observation cycle. In other words, increase the opportunities to engage teachers and students in discussions centered on student learning independent of the evaluation cycle.

5.3.2.3 District Leadership

The significant implication of this research for district leadership is to increase opportunities for teachers and administrators to have those "Big C" conversations (Gee, 2014) around student engagement. This may require adjustments in the calendars with regard to the number of professional development work days, additional resources, and a "united front" as in engaging teachers and administrators from all levels of schools in the dialogue regarding student engagement. Just as is the case with principals as instructional leaders who shape the cultures of their schools and as such need to walk the walk and talk the talk as instructional leaders, the district leadership might be well served by visiting schools routinely. In other words, additional visits to schools to provide opportunities for district leadership to interact with the students and teachers to engage in the dialogue promoting a shared understanding of student engagement. The findings of this study regarding socioeconomic status suggest the more stakeholders from the district level to the parents to the students we can engage in this dialogue the better our students will be served.

5.3.3 The Importance of Professional Development

As I reflect upon the results of this phenomenology and the operational understandings of student engagement, a significant consequence is the call for and need of professional development within schools and districts regarding the phenomenon of student engagement. For, within the literature, teachers' perceptions of student engagement have been investigated to frame teachers' interactions with students, to support strategies for classroom management, to deliver content, and to facilitate student engagement within classrooms (Bakaoui et al., 2015; Harris, 2008; Hattie, 2009; Price, 2015). With the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework as a working definition complete with instructional practices linked to the points of entry, professional development in the three components of global engagement; "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching", and "Academic Rigor" would facilitate not only the conversations but the tools with which to observe the phenomenon (Cooper, 2011).

Due to the findings regarding the roles of the stakeholders in facilitating student engagement, the role of feedback in building community, and the fact that the socioeconomic status of students contextualizes student engagement, professional development for district leaders, administrators, teachers, and perhaps during an open house for the parents and students, centered on Cooper's Framework (2011) would go a long way toward developing a shared understanding of student engagement. Professional development centered on the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) and delivered according to Guskey's model (2000) to support a shared understanding among the stakeholders within public schools. Both Guskey and the non-profit group, TNTP, challenged the widely held perception among educational leaders and within educational

communities that we already know how to help teachers improve, and “if we could just get the teachers the right type and amount of support educational excellence would be right around the corner” (TNTP, 2015, p. 1). The problem, as defined by Guskey, is that often there is difficulty connecting professional development to improved student achievement. In fact, he argued this is the case due to the fact that those responsible for planning and implementing professional development do not know “how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of what they do” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 495).

The following essential components of effective professional development which lead to improved student learning outcomes were identified by Guskey. The first essential component is that those responsible for planning and implementing professional development “learn how to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development activities” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 498). Specific recommendations include while planning professional development the following steps should be enacted; the setting of goals, the determination of evidence that will be used to best reflect the achievement of the stated goal(s), and how the evidence will be gathered in a meaningful and scientific manner. In other words, evaluating the effectiveness of all professional development activities by structuring professional development so that the impact can be measured (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). An additional suggestion included that the “practitioners should demand better evidence from consultants” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 499). Therefore, effective professional development is everyone’s responsibility; those who design and plan the professional development as well as the consumers of the professional development. The final essential component of effective professional development recommended is that

implementation of new professional development should begin small so that the activities can be carefully controlled in order to be able to assess the effectiveness of the professional development.

Building from Kirkpatrick's model of the 1950's, Guskey (2000) developed five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation to critically assess and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities. The levels are as follows: Participants' Reaction, Participants' Learning, Organizational Support and Change, Participants' Use of New Knowledge, and Student Learning Outcomes. The Mirage Report (2015) concluded that to effectively assist teachers with growth and improvement, educational leaders and school districts must redefine what it means to help teachers improve, reevaluate existing professional development supports and programs, and reinvent how effective teaching is supported. The five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation (Guskey, 2000; Guskey & Yoon, 2009) provide educational leaders with a tool to plan, formally assess, revise if necessary, and summatively assess the impact of professional development on student learning outcomes. A tool which makes it possible, in fact even mandates, for the evaluation to include the voices of the participants which in turn empowers all stakeholders in the professional development processes.

With this model of professional development and the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) educational leaders and teachers can collaborate to redefine, reevaluate, and reinvent how we promote improved student learning outcomes all the while engaging in a dialogue of the working understandings of student engagement (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Furthermore, the findings suggest that the professional development offerings could be aligned to the needs of the stakeholders; district leaders, administrators,

and teachers. District leaders, school administrators, as well as lead teachers could support beginning teachers through the development of one or more instructional points of entry for student engagement to support their knowledge and pedagogy. Thus, aligning the professional development with the current research in that "teachers become aware of behavioral, then psychological, and finally cognitive aspects of engagement" (Barkaoui et al., 2015, p. 83). In fact, due to the varying degrees of experience, expertise, and skill sets of teachers, the instructional points of entry and the instructional practices aligned to "Lively Instruction", "Connective Teaching" and "Academic Rigor" provide not only an organizational definition and structure to engage stakeholders in discussions but strategies, practices, and methods to support increased student learning outcomes (Cooper, 2011).

With respect to the finding affirming the positive relationship between students' socioeconomic status and academic achievement, the professional development opportunities could also be contextualized. The schools serving a population of students from the higher socioeconomic status may choose to deliver professional development to support "Connective Teaching" through exploring the social and emotional needs of the students as well as strategies to support "Academic Rigor" within the delivery of the content to promote student engagement (Cooper, 2011). Whereas, the schools serving the students of the lower socioeconomic status might focus their professional development opportunities to address "Connective Teaching" and strategies to support the delivery of the content through "Lively Instruction" as they work to connect their students to school (Cooper, 2011).

5.4 Directions for Future Research

A primary purpose of this research was to identify a working definition of student engagement and an increased understanding of student engagement among two important stakeholder groups within public, secondary schools. With the alignment of the Classroom Engagement Framework as an organizing structure to frame and guide conversations with stakeholders, future research could explore the framework with educators who teach at the middle and elementary school levels (Cooper, 2011). Cooper (2011) conducted her study in high school classrooms. This phenomenology was conducted in two public high schools serving distinct and divergent student populations within the same district. Future research could be conducted in schools; public, private, or charter, as well as in other districts within the state or nation.

This phenomenology included teachers from five disciplines; English, ELL, Math, Science and Social Studies. Although, this group of participants numbered five teachers in all. A possible direction for future research is to examine other disciplines and possibly more than one teacher of selected disciplines to investigate their working understandings and lived experiences of student engagement to contribute to the description of the phenomenon (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Utilizing the trends from the ranking of the instructional practices, future research could be conducted to investigate these trends across disciplines and levels of instruction such as inclusion classes, college preparatory classes, honors courses as well as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.

As noted in the limitations discussion, this research did not include the students' perspectives nor their lived experiences with engagement. Additional research could

include the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011), the teachers' and administrators' perceptions, as well as the students' voices to explore the prominent findings of this study.

Even though this study was qualitative in nature as the investigator wished to co-construct knowledge with the participants and actively engage in the research, another direction for research could include a quantitative investigation of the significant findings. Researchers might use regression analyses to explore the nuances of the rankings of the instructional practices of the points of entry for the Classroom Engagement Framework (Cooper, 2011) among various stakeholder groups.

5.5 Conclusion

As educational leaders we work to support increased student learning outcomes with the hope of providing access to life chances for all students. This phenomenology was conducted at secondary schools serving two distinct populations of students. The researcher finds comfort in the fact that while students come to our schools with different talents, abilities, and needs, the administrators and teachers work diligently to connect their students to the educational processes. The findings here regarding an operational definition of student engagement along with the nuances of the construct as understood by the stakeholders within our schools have the potential to contribute to a shared understanding of student engagement and to make school a meaningful experience for all.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Document

Department of Educational Leadership

9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of the Project: Student engagement as understood by secondary administrators and teachers

Principal Investigator: Karen Smith Mitchell, Doctoral Candidate, UNCC

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Rebecca Shore, UNCC

You are invited to participate in a research study. Participation in this research study is voluntary. The information provided is to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

Important Information You Need to Know

- The purpose of this study is to explore how secondary administrators and teachers understand the phenomenon of student engagement.

- Eligibility criteria include secondary teachers with seven years of teaching experience and secondary administrators with six years of administrative experience.

- I am asking high school principals, assistant principals, and teachers to complete an informed consent document, demographic survey, and to participate in three semi-structured interviews. I will conduct the semi-structured interviews in two secondary schools within a southeastern local education agency during mutually convenient times at each high school. Upon completion of the research conducted through the survey and interviews, each participant will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card.

- Some of the questions I'll ask you are potentially personal and sensitive. For example, I'll ask you about what you might look for as you enter a secondary classroom with regard to students' engagement or how you prepare to engage students in the educational processes. These questions are personal and you might experience some mild emotional discomfort. You may choose to skip a question you do not want to answer. You may not personally benefit from taking part in

this research but the study results may help us better understand how secondary administrators and teachers understand student engagement.

- Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether to participate in this research study.

Why am I doing this study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand how teachers and administrators perceive student engagement in an effort to develop a shared understanding of the construct to support student learning.

Why are you being asked to be in this research study?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an administrator or teacher in one of two high schools within a southeastern local education agency.

What will happen if I take part in this study?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will sign an informed consent document, complete a demographic survey, and interact within three semi-structured interviews while being audio-recorded. You will be asked to complete a demographic survey with questions about age, race/ethnicity, gender, teacher preparation program, years of experience as a teacher and/or administrator, and high school where currently employed. If selected for the study, then you will be asked to participate in three semi-structured interviews scheduled at mutually convenient times.

Your total time commitment if you participate in this study will be two (2) hours; 10 minutes to complete the demographic survey and 110 minutes for the three semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews will occur within three to seven days after the conclusion of each interview.

What benefits might I experience?

You may not benefit directly from being in this study. However, others might benefit due to an increased understanding of the phenomenon of student engagement.

What risks might I experience?

The questions I'll ask you are potentially personal and sensitive. For example

These questions are personal and you might experience some mild emotional discomfort. I do not expect this risk to be common and you may choose to skip questions you do not want to answer.

What are the potential benefits to society?

This researcher has experienced first-hand as an educator, a school leader, and found within the literature, there is not a clear understanding of the construct of student engagement. This gap may be due to the fact that "engagement is one of the most widely

used and overgeneralized constructs found in the educational, learning, instructional, and psychological sciences" (Azevedo, 2015, p. 84). This qualitative study has the potential to not only facilitate a dialogue and increase understanding within high schools regarding the phenomenon of student engagement but to inform policy and practical applications of the knowledge gained to create professional development opportunities around best practices to support student engagement and positive student learning outcomes. With increased understanding of the construct of student engagement and dialogue within educational communities, educators, both administrators and teachers, can develop a shared understanding to support student learning.

How will my information be protected?

I will transcribe the audio recordings of the semi-structured interviews verbatim and then delete the recordings.

To maintain the confidentiality of the data, I will code the collected data as A1, A2, A3, T1, T2, T3 from School Y. A4, A5, A6, T4, T5, T6 from School Z. The information gathered from the demographic survey which will be used to select participants will not be connected to the data coding of the transcribed semi-structured interviews.

The data will be shared with the Chair of my Committee, Dr. Shore. All other Committee members will not have access to the data until the review of the Dissertation.

Data will be coded using the UNCC NVIVO software on university-owned devices. Data will be shared with Dr. Shore via email and the use of a USB device.

How will my information be used after the study is over?

After this study is complete, study data may be shared with other researchers for use in other studies or as may be needed as part of publishing the results. The data I share will NOT include information that could identify you.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study?

You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card. Incentive payments are considered taxable income. Therefore, I am required to give the University's Financial Services division a log/tracking sheet with the names of all individuals who received a gift card. This sheet is for tax purposes only and is separate from the research data, which means the names will not be linked to (survey or interview) responses.

If you are not selected for participation in this study, in partial compensation of the time and effort put forth to read and sign the informed consent document and to complete the demographic survey, you will be notified and will receive a $5.00 Starbucks gift card.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

It is up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Who can answer my questions about this study and my rights as a participant?

For questions about this research, you may contact Karen Smith Mitchell, ksmitche@uncc.edu, 704-743-6584, or my faculty advisor, Rebecca A. Shore, rshore6@uncc.edu, 704-687-8976.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 704-687-1871 or uncc-irb@uncc.edu.

Consent to Participate

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will receive a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

____

Name (PRINT)

____

Signature Date

____

Name & Signature Principal Investigator Date

Appendix B: Demographic Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gather information to ensure participants meet the eligibility criteria required for this project. I am intentionally seeking secondary teachers of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies as well as secondary administrators for this study of the phenomenon of student engagement.

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Race/Ethnicity:
4. Gender:
5. Years of experience as an educator:
6. Years of experience in current role:
7. Years of experience at your current school:
8. Name of high school:

Thank you for your consideration and time to complete this survey.

Karen S. Mitchell, M.A., NBCT

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Appendix C: Teacher Interview Protocol 1

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. I appreciate you taking the time to read and sign the Informed Consent document.

1 Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Personal Background

2 What is your educational background?
Probe: How long have you been a teacher?
Probe: Tell me about your preparation to become a teacher.
Probe: Did you teach elsewhere before coming to ______?
Probe: How long have you been working here _____?
3 How long have you been in your current role at the school?
4 How would you describe the culture of your school?

Pedagogy

5 Tell me about your teaching philosophy.

Probe: How do students learn?

Probe: How do you plan for instruction?

Probe: When planning a lesson, what are your priorities?

6 What do you consider effective classroom practices?
Probe: How would you describe a typical lesson in terms of learning activities?
Probe: Why…?

Classroom Structures

7 What are some of the ways you prepare your students to learn?
Probe: At the beginning of the semester, how do you prepare your students for your course?
Probe: Why…?
8 What are your philosophies regarding the management of student behaviors?
Probe: How would you describe your classroom management?
Probe: Is classroom management something you plan?
Probe: Why…or why not?

Perceptions of Students

9 Tell me about the students you teach?
Probe: What are they like?
Probe: Are there students who present challenges with regard to learning?
Probe: If so, can you identify the top two or three challenges you encounter as you try to keep the students focused and on task?
Probe: How do you work with these students?
Probe: How do you work with students who are focused and on task?

Appendix D: Administrator Interview Protocol 1

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. I appreciate you taking the time to read and sign the Informed Consent document.

1 Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Personal Background

2 What is your educational background?
Probe: How long have you been an administrator?
Probe: Tell me about your preparation to become an administrator.
Probe: What other professional experiences have you had before your current role?
Probe: How long have you been working here _____?
3 How long have you been in your current role at the school?

The High School Community

4 How would you describe the culture of your school?
Probe: How is __________________similar to other schools in the LEA?
Probe: How is __________________different?
5 How have the recent redistricting plans impacted _____________?
Probe: How have these changes affected the community?

Probe: How have these changes affected the students?

6 What are the strengths of the high school?
Probe: Identify the top three strengths of __________?
Probe: What do you consider __________'s opportunities for improvement?

7 How would you describe the teaching staff at ______?

8 How would you describe the students at _________?

Pedagogy

9 Tell me about your philosophy of teaching.

Probe: How do students learn?

Probe: How should teachers plan instruction?

Probe: When planning a lesson, what do you consider the priorities?

10 What do you consider effective classroom practices?
Probe: How would you describe a best of campus lesson in terms of learning activities?
Probe: Why…?

Classroom Structures

11 What are some of the ways teachers prepare students for their courses?
Probe: At the beginning of the semester, how do you want teachers to prepare?

Probe: Why…?

12 What are your philosophies regarding the management of student behaviors?
Probe: How would you describe effective classroom management?
Probe: Is classroom management planned by teachers?
Probe: Why…or why not?

Perceptions of Students

13 Tell me about the students at _______?
Probe: What are they like?
Probe: Are there students who present challenges with regard to learning?
Probe: If so, can you identify the top two or three challenges you encounter as you keep the students focused and on task?
Probe: How do you work with these students?
Probe: How do you work with students who are focused and on task?

Appendix E: Teacher Interview Protocol 2

Do you have any questions before we begin today? Today, the topic for the interview is student engagement.

Student Engagement

1 Are you concerned with student engagement?
  Probe: Why?
2 What perceptions do you have regarding the phenomenon of student engagement at _____________?
3 What does the concept student engagement mean to you?
  Probe: How would you describe students who are engaged in learning?
4 What do you consider best practices to engage students in learning?
  Probe: In the classroom?
  Probe: Within the school?
  Probe: Can you describe an example of student engagement in your classroom?
5 Is student engagement something you prioritize in your practice?
  Probe: Why?
6 Is student engagement something you plan for in your lessons?
  Probe: Specifically, how do you engage students in the classroom?

  Probe: Identify activities you have used to engage students in your classroom

7 What are the characteristics of a good teacher?
  Probe: Identify the top three characteristics a good teacher possesses.
8 How would you describe the ideal relationship between a secondary teacher and student?
9 How would your students describe you?
10 How would the other teachers describe you?
11 How would the administrators describe you?
12 How would you describe the ways in which administrators emphasize engagement?
13 Why do you think participation in this study could be beneficial to teachers?
  Probe: to students?
  Probe: to administrators?

Follow-up questions to probe regarding socioeconomic status:

14 Please tell me a little bit more about the make-up of School __?
15 How do the students at School __ share “distinct life defining experiences?
16 What types or kinds of serious life problems do students at School __encounter?
17 Can you tell me a little bit more about how the parents/guardians interact within the community of School ____?
18 Why do parents intervene in their students’ education? How would characterize these interventions?
19 How do students use language in the educational community of School ___?

Appendix F: Administrator Interview Protocol 2

Do you have any questions before we begin today? Today, the topic for the interview is student engagement.

Student Engagement

1 Are you concerned with student engagement?
Probe: Why?
2 What perceptions do you have regarding the phenomenon of student engagement at _____________?
3 What does the concept student engagement mean to you?
Probe: How would you describe students who are engaged in learning?
4 Are there specific messages about student engagement the administration sends to teachers at _______________?
Probe: To students?
5 What do you consider best practices to engage students in learning?
Probe: Can you describe an example of highly engaged students in a classroom at __________________?
6 Is student engagement something you prioritize in your practice?
Probe: Why?
7 Is student engagement something you require teachers to plan for in lessons?
Probe: Specifically, how do you think teachers engage students in the classroom?

Probe: Identify activities you have observed teachers using to engage students in learning.

8 What are the characteristics of a good teacher?
Probe: Identify the top three characteristics a good teacher possesses.
9 How would you describe the ideal relationship between a secondary teacher and student?
10 How would the students describe you?
11 How would the teachers describe you?
12 Why do you think participation in this study could be beneficial to administrators?
Probe: to teachers?
Probe: to students?

Follow-up questions to probe regarding socioeconomic status:

13 Please tell me a little bit more about the make-up of School __?
14 How do the students at School __ share “distinct life defining experiences?
15 What types or kinds of serious life problems do students at School __encounter?
16 Can you tell me a little bit more about how the parents/guardians interact within the community of School ____?
17 Why do parents intervene in their students’ education? How would characterize these interventions?
18 How do students use language in the educational community of School ___?

Appendix G: Ranking of Instructional Practices-School A

Please circle your role: Teacher Administrator

Within the research literature, 13 established teaching practices are connected with student engagement. Please rank these practices by order of importance with **1** as the most important for engaging students in learning at School A and **13** as the least important.

_____ Enable Self-Expression

_____ Assign Challenging Work

_____ Be "Entertaining"

_____ Connect Class to Real Life

_____ Push Students to Work Hard

_____ Use Games and Fun Activities

_____ Demonstrate Care

_____ Use Time Efficiently

_____ Assign Projects

_____ Understand Students

_____ Demonstrate Passion

_____ Assign Group Work

_____ Affirm Student Success

Why do you believe this is the case? Please provide a brief explanation of your rankings.

Cooper, K., (2011). Connective teaching: eliciting engagement in the high school classroom. Dissertation Ed. D. Harvard Graduate School of Education, WorldCat.

Appendix H: Ranking of Instructional Practices-School B

Please circle your role: Teacher Administrator

Within the research literature, 13 established teaching practices are connected with student engagement. Please rank these practices by order of importance with **1** as the most important for engaging students in learning at School B and **13** as the least important.

_____ Enable Self-Expression

_____ Assign Challenging Work

_____ Be “Entertaining”

_____ Connect Class to Real Life

_____ Push Students to Work Hard

_____ Use Games and Fun Activities

_____ Demonstrate Care

_____ Use Time Efficiently

_____ Assign Projects

_____ Understand Students

_____ Demonstrate Passion

_____ Assign Group Work

_____ Affirm Student Success

Why do you believe this is the case? Please provide a brief explanation of your rankings.

Cooper, K., (2011). Connective teaching: eliciting engagement in the high school classroom. Dissertation Ed. D. Harvard Graduate School of Education, WorldCat.

Appendix I: Teacher Interview Protocol 3

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. Do you have any questions before we begin today? Today, the topic for the interview is to discuss your reflections of the meaning of the experiences with the phenomenon of student engagement.

1. Based upon your experiences as a classroom teacher, what do you perceive as the student's role in engaging in the educational processes?
   Probe: Why?
   Probe: Do you believe this is the case in all high schools?
2. Can you describe an experience you have had with a student regarding engagement?
3. What is the teacher's role in the phenomenon of student engagement?
   Probe: Have you always believed this is the case?
   Probe: Why?
   Probe: If you worked at a school other than ____________ would your beliefs still hold true?
   Probe: Why or why not?
4. Can you think of a time you have discussed student engagement with another teacher or group of teachers?
   Probe: Do you remember why the topic was discussed?
   Probe: The take-away(s) from the conversation?
5. What is the administrator's role with regard to the phenomenon of student engagement?
   Probe: Why do you believe this is so?
6. Can you describe an experience you have had with an administrator regarding student engagement?
7. Do you have any other thoughts, perceptions, or beliefs regarding student engagement that you would like to share?

Appendix J: Administrator Interview Protocol 3

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me. Do you have any questions before we begin today? Today, the topic for the interview is to discuss your reflections of the meaning of the experiences with the phenomenon of student engagement.

1. Based upon your experiences as an administrator, what do you perceive as the student's role in engaging in the educational processes?
   Probe: Why?
   Probe: Do you believe this is the case in all high schools?
2. Can you describe an experience you have had with a student regarding engagement?
3. What is the teacher's role in the phenomenon of student engagement?
   Probe: Have you always believed this is the case?
   Probe: Why?
   Probe: If you worked at a school other than ____________ would your beliefs still hold true?
   Probe: Why or why not?
4. Can you think of a time you have discussed student engagement with a teacher or group of teachers?
   Probe: Do you remember why the topic was discussed?
   Probe: The take-away(s) from the conversation?
5. What is the administrator's role with regard to the phenomenon of student engagement?
   Probe: Why do you believe this is so?
6. Can you describe an experience you have had with an administrator or group of administrators regarding student engagement?
7. Do you have any other thoughts, perceptions, or beliefs regarding student engagement that you would like to share?

Appendix K: Qualitative Codes

Descriptive Codes

D-best practices to engage students
D-challenges
D-classroom management
D-communication
D-community of school
D-connection to school
D-culture of school
D-culture of class
D-expectations
D-evaluation
D-family
D-motivation
D-opportunities for improvement
D-parental interaction
D-parental intervention/involvement
D-pedagogy
D-perceptions of administrator's role
D-perceptions of engagement
D-perceptions of student's role
D-perceptions of teacher's role
D-students as advocates
D-student-teacher relationship

Interpretive Codes-Regarding the Students

IS-afraid to take risks
IS-choosing to participate
IS-deciding to engage
IS-deciding learning is meaningful
IS-deciding learning is purposeful
IS-environment; where students come from
IS-focus attention
IS-grades viewed as important
IS- motivated to succeed
IS-physically active
IS-pushed at home
IS-responsibility to be engaged
IS-visible rather than invisible students
IS-take accountability for their learning
IS-talk and work collaboratively
IS-to be attentive
IS-to listen

Interpretive Codes-Regarding the Teachers

IT-barriers to feedback
IT-bridge between home and school
IT-challenges in amount of content
IT-challenges of time
IT-command attention
IT-communicate purpose
IT-competition with students' attention
IT-connect content
IT-counselor to students
IT-demonstrate care for students
IT-difficult to be only one to help students
IT-evaluation/judgment by admin
IT-facilitate learning
IT-form relationships
IT-giving feedback to students
IT-guide students
IT-help the students
IT-inspire students
IT-lead students
IT-make lessons interesting
IT-maintain eye contact
IT-meet students' needs
IT-monitor to ensure students on task
IT-not to be a performer or entertainer
IT-not open to group work
IT-plan for instruction
IT-provide real world examples
IT-question to promote engagement
IT-receive feedback from administrators
IT-role model to students
IT-set expectations
IT-support system for students
IT-understand students

Interpretive Codes-Regarding the Administrators

IA-assessments; formative and summative
IA-concerned about teacher as a person
IA-data driven instruction
IA-expectations of activities in lessons
IA-evaluation of effective classrooms
IA-evaluation of non-effective classrooms
IA-give feedback
IA-interactions with students
IA-interactions with teachers
IA-language of evaluation/judgment
IA-looking for critical thinking skills
IA-looking for student centered instruction
IA-model expectations to see in classes in PD
IA-observations in classrooms
IA-post-observation discussions
IA-primary role; teacher to build relationships
IA-provide resources to teachers
IA-teachers to employ engaging strategies
IA- teachers model, present, learning visible
IA-teachers open to change
IA-teachers' responsibility create safe space
IA-teachers' responsibility to plan
IA-using standards to evaluate

Pattern Codes

P-"Academic Rigor"
P-"Accomplishment of Natural Growth"
P-active participation
P-"Concerted Cultivation"
P-"Connective Teaching"
P-feedback
P-"Lively Instruction"
P-roles of stakeholders
P-trust