

Engaging Students by Reclaiming Place and Purpose in Literacy Instruction

JERRY JOHNSON

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA UCF LITERACY SYMPOSIUM

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Overview

- Student engagement
 - What is it?
 - How is it measured?
- Place-based learning
 - What is it?
 - How is it operationalized/implemented?
- Literacy Instruction
 - How can PBL inform literacy instruction?
 - What are the implications for academic outcomes?
 - What are the implications for student engagement?

What is student engagement?

- Student engagement has been defined variously by different researchers and theorists, but there is consistency around key ideas and a broad conceptual definition:
 - *Student engagement is a measure of the extent to which a student **willingly** participates in schooling activities.*
- There is consensus among researchers and theorists that student engagement is best understood as a *continuum*.
- There is consensus among researchers and theorists that student engagement is a multidimensional construct with four elements:
 - Academic engagement.
 - Affective engagement.
 - Behavioral engagement.
 - Cognitive engagement.

Research on student engagement

- Student engagement is closely associated with desirable schooling outcomes (higher attendance, higher academic achievement, fewer disciplinary incidents, lower dropout and retention rates, higher graduation rates).

(Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Finn, 1989, 1993; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004; Jimerson, Campos, & Grief, 2003; Jimerson, Renshaw, Stewart, Hart, & O'Malley, 2009; Shernoff & Schmidt, 2008)

- Student engagement is closely associated with general measures of well-being (lower rates of health problems, lower rates of high-risk behaviors).

(Carter, McGee, Taylor, & Williams, 2007; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Patton et al., 2006)

- Student engagement levels can be effectively influenced through school-based interventions.

(Appleton, Christenson, Kim, & Reschly, 2006; Christenson et al., 2008; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004)

How is student engagement measured?

- Three primary data collection strategies are available for measuring student engagement:
 - Student self-reports.
 - Teacher reports.
 - Observational measures.
- Three of the four dimensions of engagement are assessed via available instruments:
 - *Behavioral* (i.e., the student's involvement in academic, social, and extracurricular activities).
 - *Affective/emotional* (i.e., extent of the student's positive [and negative] reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school).
 - *Cognitive* (i.e., the student's level of investment in his/her learning).

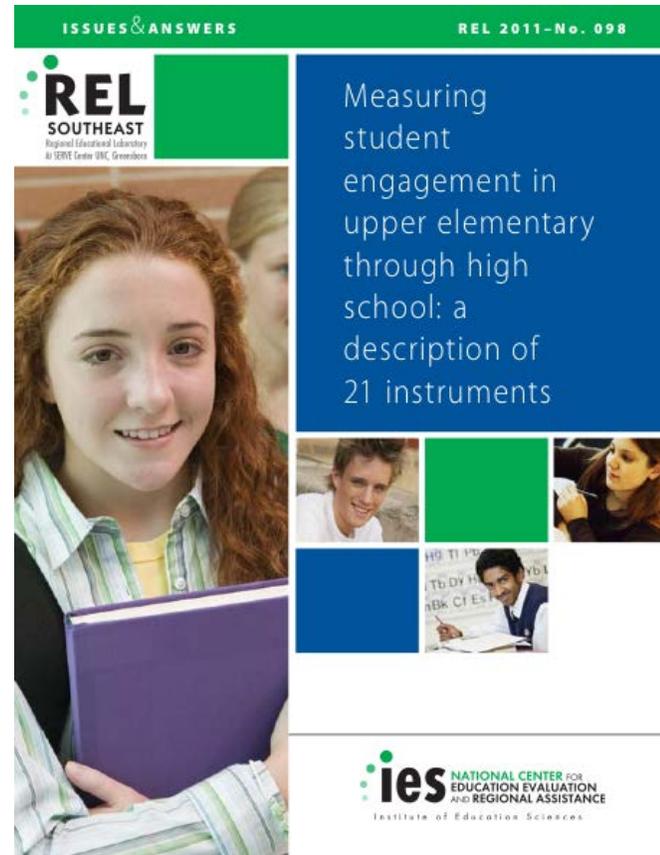
Note: Academic engagement is typically measured using traditional outcome data, such as student achievement results.

Uses of student engagement measures

- Research purposes:
 - Research on motivation and cognition.
 - Research on dropping out.
- Evaluation of interventions.
- Diagnosis and monitoring:
 - Teachers, school, or district level.
 - Student level.
- Needs assessment.

Instruments for measuring student engagement

Measuring student engagement in upper elementary through high school: a description of 21 instruments



Overview of the REL-SE report

- Stated purpose of the report
- Content and structure
 - Definitions, instrument types, psychometric properties
 - Instrument abstracts
 - Tables for comparing instrument attributes (e.g., developer/availability, engagement dimensions assessed, intended purposes/uses)
- Potential uses for stakeholders
- Accessing the report http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2011098.pdf

Highlighting one measure: the SEI

- Student self-report survey; designed for grades 6–12.
- Measures affective/emotional and cognitive engagement (*bidimensional*).
- Includes five sub-scales:
 - Teacher-student relationships (affective engagement)
 - Peer support for learning (affective engagement)
 - Family support for learning (affective engagement)
 - Control and relevance of school work (cognitive engagement)
 - Future aspirations and goals (cognitive engagement)
- Designed for use with research on dropping out; evaluation of dropout prevention interventions; monitoring engagement levels at the teacher, school, or district level; and diagnosing/monitoring at the student level.
- 33 items; approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The SEI

Appendix A Student Engagement Survey (SEI)

Item	Dimensions of Engagement				
	Affective			Cognitive	
	TSR	PSL	FSL	CRSW	FG
1. Overall, adults at my school treat students fairly.	●				
2. Adults at my school listen to the students.	●				
3. At my school, teachers care about students.	●				
4. My teachers are there for me when I need them.	●				
5. The school rules are fair.	●				
6. Overall, my teachers are open and honest with me.	●				
7. I enjoy talking to the teachers here.	●				
8. I feel safe at school.	●				
9. Most teachers at my school are interested in me as a person, not just as a student.	●				
10. The tests in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.				●	
11. Most of what is important to know you learn in school.				●	
12. The grades in my classes do a good job of measuring what I'm able to do.				●	
13. What I'm learning in my classes will be important in my future.				●	
14. After finishing my schoolwork I check it over to see if it's correct.				●	
15. When I do schoolwork I check to see whether I understand what I'm doing.				●	
16. Learning is fun because I get better at something.				●	
17. When I do well in school it's because I work hard.				●	
18. I feel like I have a say about what happens to me at school.				●	
19. Other students at school care about me.		●			
20. Students at my school are there for me when I need them.		●			
21. Other students here like me the way I am.		●			
22. I enjoy talking to the students here.		●			
23. Students here respect what I have to say.		●			
24. I have some friends at school.		●			
25. I plan to continue my education following high school.					●
26. Going to school after high school is important.					●
27. School is important for achieving my future goals.					●
28. My education will create many future opportunities for me.					●
29. I am hopeful about my future.					●
30. My family/guardian(s) are there for me when I need them.			●		
31. When I have problems at school my family/guardian(s) are willing to help me.			●		
32. When something good happens at school, my family/guardian(s) want to know about it.			●		
33. My family/guardian(s) want me to keep trying when things are tough at school.			●		

Note. TSR = Teacher-Student Relationships; PSL = Peer Support for Learning; FSL = Family Support for Learning; CRSW = Control and Relevance of School Work; FG = Future Aspirations and Goals

Contemporary context

(some factors that have diminished the salience of place and narrowed understandings of purpose in education)

Balancing standards and standardization

Human capital and utilitarianism

Postsecondary education, CCR, citizenship, and a joke from MQP

Place and purpose in learning - Dewey

From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in school comes from his inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. That is the isolation of the school, its isolation from life. When the child gets into the classroom he has to put out of his mind a large part of the ideas, interests, and activities that predominate in his home and neighborhood.

So the school, being unable to utilize this everyday experience, sets painfully to work, on another tack and by a variety of means, to arouse in the child an interest in school studies.

Dewey (1899/1959)

Place and purpose in learning - Smith

Valuable knowledge for most children is knowledge that is directly related to their own social reality, knowledge that will allow them to engage in activities that are of service to and valued by those they love and respect.

Collectively then, Dewey and Smith contend that student engagement is dramatically enhanced when students

1. learn content that is grounded in and validates their own experiences, and
2. apply that knowledge in ways that benefit what they care about.

What is place-based learning (PBL)?

PBL is teaching and learning that is rooted in what is local—the unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place. The community provides the context for learning, student work focuses on community needs and interests, and community members serve as resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning.

The Rural School and Community Trust (2003)

Common Characteristics of PBL

Local phenomena are the foundation for curriculum development.

Emphasis on learning experiences that allow students to create knowledge rather than just consume knowledge created by others.

Students' questions and concerns play a central role in determining what is studied.

Teachers in these settings act as experienced guides, co-learners, and brokers of community resources and learning opportunities.

The wall between the institution and the community becomes much less solid and is crossed with frequency.

How is PBL implemented

1. Community asset mapping
2. Identification of opportunities
3. Alignment to standards/curriculum
4. Instruction
5. Products
6. Assessment

Asset mapping

A systematic process to identify and inventory existing elements of a community with the potential to positively impact that community.

An approach that explicitly rejects deficit models to working with community (but does so in a way that is realistic and grounded in rational thinking).

Key activities involved:

1. Identify and activate assets
2. Organize and catalog results
3. Communicate results

Identification of opportunities

Opportunities represent the intersection between assets and challenges (i.e., *where is there a fit between what we have and what needs to be done?*).

Alignment to standards/curriculum

Important note/clarification: PBL is not intended to be an extra activity or a supplement or enrichment to the “main” curriculum.

Once an opportunity is identified, the activities and processes required to accomplish its objectives are cross-walked with what students are expected to know and be able to do (per district and/or state standards). PBL then becomes an approach to accomplishing both existing goals (goals that weigh heavily on educators) and goals that promote engagement (which can be expected to indirectly further those existing goals).

Instruction

PBL instruction demands some greater flexibility on the part of the teacher, including the use of differentiation and a more student-centered approach (characteristics that align well with evolving roles of and expectations for teachers—e.g., as presented in Marzano and Danielson frameworks).

Products and assessments

PBL products are authentic and their design is driven by the broader purpose of an activity, not simply by the need to generate a grade.

Rubrics should reflect both this broader purpose and the mastery of relevant standards/expectations.

How can PBL promote academic success?

Four major activities characterizing successful students (Cuseo et al., 2007):

- Active Involvement
- Utilizing Resources
- Social Interaction/Collaboration
- Self-reflection

Four outcomes associated with student-faculty interaction outside the traditional roles of teacher/learner (Cuseo et al., 2007):

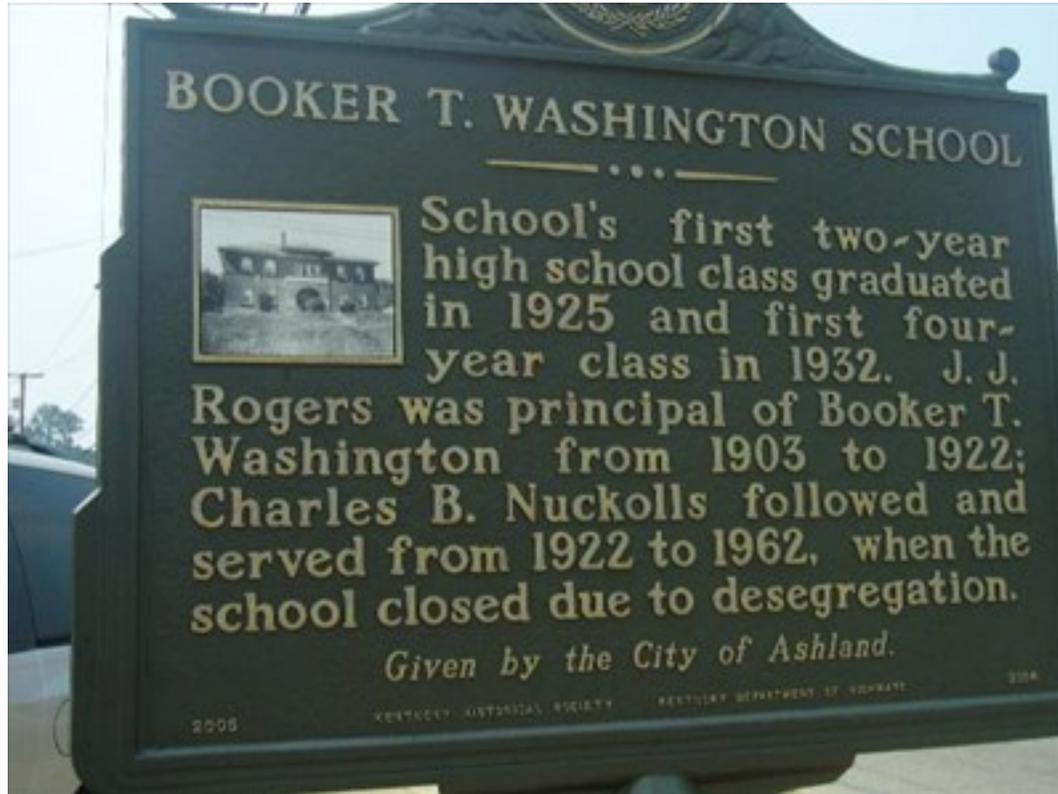
- Improved academic performance
- Increased critical thinking skills
- Greater satisfaction with the educational experience
- Stronger desire to further education

How can PBL inform literacy instruction?

By focusing attention on what students know and care about, PBL promotes greater engagement in the immediate activity related to literacy instruction (academic engagement) and, through enhanced engagement across other domains (cognitive, affective, behavioral), promotes and reinforces literacy instruction and other activities.

The nature of PBL creates opportunities for learning activities and products that naturally align with nearly any/all literacy-related standards and expectations (e.g., reading different types of text, writing for varied audiences and for varied purposes).

How can PBL inform literacy instruction?



Assets:

- Motivated high school students
- Knowledgeable community members
- Technology, other school resources

Opportunity:

- Formal recognition of historical landmark

Products

- Strategic planning documents
- Grant proposals
- Meeting agendas and invitations
- Op-Ed pieces for local newspaper
- Interview protocols
- Documentation of oral histories
- Legislative request, draft legislation
- Scripts for public events
- Press releases for media communication

Engagement, place, purpose, literacy

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Questions