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# Engagement of Early College Students in the Graphic Design Classroom

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ENGAGEMENT OF EARLY COLLEGE STUDENTS  
IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN CLASSROOM

by

Kelly Ann Vander Kley

A thesis submitted to the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Masters of Arts  
Western Michigan University  
April 2017

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# ENGAGEMENT OF EARLY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN THE GRAPHIC DESIGN CLASSROOM

Kelly Ann Vander Kley

Western Michigan University, 2017

This thesis creates recommendations for methods to increase classroom engagement, specifically in classrooms consisting of art/design students within a dual enrollment setting. The recommendations follow the investigation of literature and the examination of studies related to engagement features of young college students who are studying graphic design. This thesis examines factors that potentially reduce classroom connectivity, and looks deeper into how those factors play a role in the engagement levels of students. I begin with a focus on overall classroom engagement followed by a closer look at engagement of early college students in the graphic design classroom. After an examination of the literature, I reveal ways instructors can improve their instruction to connect as deeply as possible with as many students as possible.

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There are many people I would like to thank for their support of my dream. Part of that dream is to be that art educator who students will truly grow and learn from in their technical skills in graphic design, their ability to add self-expression and meaning to their creativity through the art process, and their personal growth toward their future careers.

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My mother, Cindy, was an inspiration to me with her own dream to one day become an art teacher. This was a dream she stopped pursuing when I was born and I am hopeful she knows it is going to be fulfilled through me. My father, Jack, has forever been supportive of anything I set my mind to and this degree is no exception.

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## INTRODUCTION

My path into the field of teaching has been a relatively short one, though the journey here was long. At the time of my writing this, I have been teaching for three years. I teach graphic design as an adjunct faculty member for two colleges, one with a dual enrollment classroom setting that includes both high school and college-aged students. My career experience, however, spans two decades of graphic design work in a professional setting. I have a lot of experience and ideas to share with young people beginning their careers in graphic design, but not a great deal of professional teaching know-how, which brought me back to college to learn new skills and to work toward becoming the best graphic art teacher I can possibly be.

I am extremely passionate about sharing what I know and specifically about helping students in my classes succeed in their lives and careers. It did not take me long to realize that no matter how much I love graphic art, and no matter how much I care about students learning what I know, if I don't teach it well and in a way that encourages engagement, there will be some students who disconnect and fail when I feel they can succeed. In my mind, a student failing will be, in part, a failure of mine. I celebrate tremendously the successes of students in my classroom, and seek ways to increase those successes.

The questions that brought me here are the same questions that drive all research. What? Why? And How? This exploration into the topic of student engagement of early college students in the graphic design classroom will be guided by the following questions:

- What's going on in the graphic design, dual enrollment classroom and what does an instructor need to know to help ensure positive levels of engagement within the classroom?
- Why are some students disengaged in these classrooms?
- How can an instructor teach in a way that addresses those disengaged students and to bolster the overall learning, especially considering the different age ranges learning graphic design skills in dual enrolment classrooms?

I began my teaching career by discussing instruction tactics with other teachers as a way to gain insight on practices that have proven success in the classroom. I talked with both high school art teachers and college art instructors. I heard a lot of advice and concluded that it would be helpful to study documented research, compile pertinent information, and devise a helpful directive for those instructors who find themselves in similar situations. I asked myself: what can I learn from the vast amount of research which exists that applies to motivating students and how can that research be applied to the dual enrollment graphic design classroom? As Karling (2008) asks, "How do you motivate students who are disengaged and do not see the relevance of their educational experience?" (p. 5).

The graphic design classroom is, in itself, a complication. As I design course content for each lesson I will give, I pay attention to the fact that I am teaching both technology associated with the computers in today's graphic design classroom, as well as the process of creating art and the principals of design. Each lesson must teach both the technology and the art. Because of the unique situation within a graphic design classroom in contrast to the traditional art classroom which is typically reliant on technology, I wonder if there is an impact specific to graphic design students and how the split subjects of technology and art would play a role in engagement, if at

all. If, for example, a student feels connected with the artistic side of design, but struggles with understanding the technology, is there an impact on engagement?

I am also wondering how trends for classrooms containing a wide range of ages, specifically those with early college students in dual enrollment situations impacts the learning environment within a graphic design classroom. Specifically, I am interested in uncovering how these age differences and the experiences of these younger students are playing a role with their connectivity or engagement with college-level learning. The dual enrollment classroom seems to be common in today's college setting. Immersing a high school student into a classroom with older, more experienced students may impact the level of engagement for those students within the classroom.

The goal of this thesis is to create a recommendation based on investigation of existing literature for ways to increase classroom engagement, specifically to help instructors in graphic design classrooms consisting of students who are very diverse in age, as well as other socio-economic measures. I hope to reveal factors that potentially reduce classroom connectivity, and to delve deeper into how those factors play a role in the learning ability of students. Finally, I am motivated to reveal ways instructors can improve their instruction to connect as deeply as possible with as many students as possible.

I will examine the causes of engagement and lack thereof within a classroom. Specifically, I will examine student engagement in the art/design classroom, focusing on students within dual enrolled classrooms. I will begin with a focus on overall classroom engagement, followed by a closer look at engagement in the graphic design classroom.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM

### **Classroom Engagement**

First, we should define exactly what is meant by the term, student engagement. Is it showing up for class and making eye contact with the instructor during presentations? Or, is it something deeper and more profound? According to Cremascoli (2011), “engagement, and more specifically, student engagement, is a broad metaconstruct that refers to student motivation and behavior, sense of belongingness and perceptions of the school climate” (p. 17) which indicates engagement is something far beyond occasional answering of questions in class. Cremascoli further describes student engagement:

Over the past 50 years, student engagement has been operationally defined in a wide variety of ways within educational research. Behaviorally, student engagement can be defined and measured through attendance, learning behaviors, attention to task, and classroom or school participation. Student engagement can also be measured through the internal and motivational aspects of active cognitive participation in school as well as in terms of students’ social and emotional investment in school. (p. 52).

This idea of what it means to be engaged indicates that there is a larger context around what will drive a student to move beyond polite participation toward a more complete connection with the school. A truly connected student will be involved within specific classrooms and the school overall.

There is a difficulty in measuring student engagement because it is not something that can be assigned a quantitative value. “Student engagement cannot be measured directly but can be inferred from observable behaviors such as regular attendance and participation in class, or

from quantifiable outcomes such as improvement in marks” (Rutherford, 2015, p. 90).

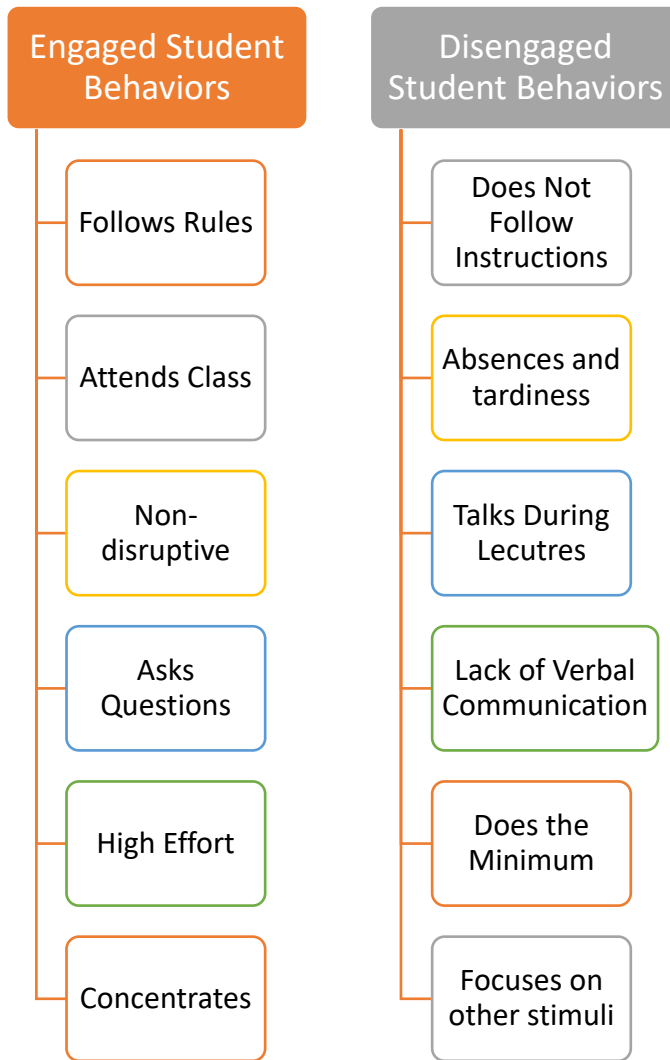
Rutherford expanded to say, “Genuine engagement may therefore be ‘invisible’ if students do not manifest the particular behaviors with which we (may mistakenly) equate it and expect them to manifest” (p. 90).

In my search for a working method for providing measurement of student engagement, I found several resources that pointed to best practices for observing what an instructor could perceive to be positive levels of engagement within the classroom. In a study which focused primarily on early college high school students conducted by Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013), the term engagement is divided into two areas, indicators of engagement and facilitators of engagement. They described indicators of engagement as “actions that a student may take or perceptions or attitudes they may have, such as attendance, problem behavior, or sense of belonging to the school” (p. 3). They explained that facilitators of engagement include such things as connection to the school, peer attitudes, those situations that strengthen the level of engagement (p. 3).

Similarly, other descriptions in the literature of the term engagement do offer means of measuring engagement that include those above-mentioned indicators. Rocca (2010) defined engagement as “a broader, more encompassing term, which consists of four factors (skills, participation/interaction, emotional, and performance)” (p. 185). Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) who studied early college high schools consisting of high school students in a college setting described behavioral engagement as “specific actions completed by students in school” (p. 3) and listed the measures as following rules, attending school, not being disruptive in class, asking questions in class, putting effort into tasks, concentrating, and persevering in doing class work.

Taking all of these descriptors and assessments about the situation of student engagement in the graphic design, dually enrolled classroom into consideration, they can be categorized by similar concepts, or those indicators of engagement.

For the sake of this examination, I will reference student engagement as related to the indicators of engagement or those actions that demonstrate connection between student and teacher (Figure 1). Attendance, the frequency of responding to teacher questions, the frequency of offering thoughts and critique in class, and the level of effort as measured through assignment and testing outcomes will be within our definition of student engagement. The presence of these indicators can be easily observed by a teacher with any level of experience. They can serve as cues to gauge the level of engagement being presented by each individual student.



*Figure 1 – Student Engagement Activities.* This figure illustrates a comparison between activities of a primarily engaged student with a primarily disengaged student.

**The Early College, Graphic Design Classroom**

The classroom I am investigating through this examination will be specific in that it exists in a dual enrolment situation and the subject is graphic art or design. These parameters demonstrate a need for additional thought because of the different characteristics of students who range widely in ages and experience because they are part of a dual enrollment classroom. There is also a necessity to look at the needs for facilitating engagement within graphic design studies.



Rutherford (2015), who studied commercial art and design, noted the importance of student connectivity to their digital arts and said, “the responsibility to engender the particular skills and aptitudes required by the creative industries provides art and design programmes with an ideal opportunity in which to improve levels of engagement and thereby lead our graduates to become capable and committed self-directed lifelong learners” (p. 90).

The graphic design classroom relies on foundation principals of design seen in traditional art classrooms. There is a level of creativity involved in creating digitally generated, graphic art. There are also some important differences to be noted between the levels of engagement within a traditional art classroom and those courses with digital focus. As one study on engagement differences between digital and traditional art found, “for the beginning art student, hand-created and computer-based methods had distinct consequences on the level of engagement with the task and environment. Creativity was more likely where student engagement with the environment was strong and where hand-created methods were implemented” (Peters, 2010, p. 2). Peters noted that, “data from the students’ perspectives showed clear interest, enjoyment and enthusiasm for creating imagery by hand over computer-created imagery” (p. 1).

One of the biggest differences between the traditional art student and the graphic art student is found in the tools used. Traditional art students use tools such as the brushes found in painting, the shaping tools found in pottery, and the manipulation of fibers and found objects in many other mediums. In what is considered to be traditional art, the student is directly working with tangible materials and using those tools to form, shape and create art. In the graphic design course, a student is using computer technology which must be approached in a very different way. As Peters (2010) explained:

There is an important distinction in the effects of tools and intelligent technology. The tool has no pre-programmed code and the computer does, it is artificially

intelligent. We assimilate the program as part of our brain. When we do this we stop our native artistic thinking and assimilate the thinking of the programmed code. ...The computer gives powerful extension of visual perception but immobilizes and paralyzes the hand-brain feedback which is native to our perceptual thinking. (p. 18).

In this specific exploration of engagement within the early college, graphic design classroom, we must also consider those characteristics that make a dual enrollment classroom different from a standard college environment, which is growing in popularity. D'Amico, Morgan, Robertson, and Rivers (2013) found that “approximately 813,000 high school students participated in college-level courses in 2002-2003, with 76% of all dual enrollees completing their courses in two-year colleges” (p. 770). This growth of popularity among our high school students is, for some, because it is seen as a way for high school students to improve their school studies. Karling (2008) conducted research in dual enrollment studies and found that “all of the participants in the study felt that the dual enrollment vocational program had a positive impact on the students and improved their overall educational experience” (p. vii).

Kanny (2014) defines dual enrollment as an arrangement that “allows high school students to enroll in college courses and, in most cases, earn college credit” (p. 4). She explained that “dual enrollment represents a unique opportunity for students to take *actual* college courses and earn credit for them by successfully completing the course, rather than having to pass a performance exam” (p. 4).

In the dual enrollment classroom, students often consist of the early college, high school level students and the traditional college student, along with occasional non-traditional students. The ages of the student in this classroom, and thus, the experience represented in this type of class, are very broad in range. While college instructors may have experience teaching college-aged students, they do not always have knowledge in instructing younger students based on

limited years of those students' experiences. "College faculty... who may be unfamiliar with teaching high school students, are faced with how best to engage them and what level of support to provide in order to ensure student success" (Hughes & Edwards, 2012, p. 30). Hughes and Edwards found that within the dual enrollment classroom, "many students were struggling academically and not persisting in their dual enrollment courses" (p. 30).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The many studies about classroom engagement that I explored provided a great deal of insight on the categories of overall engagement, but were not specific for dual enrolled students within the graphic design classroom. Some studies addressed students in an art classroom and others addressed engagement of high school students as well as college students independently. It is my goal through reviewing this literature to link information in a manner that provides insight specific to the level of engagement within the dual enrolled, graphic design classroom.

### **Why Engagement is Important**

Student engagement, or lack thereof, has important implications to the success or failure of students. According to Arndt (2014), who studied male and female levels of engagement, “not only were academically engaged students more likely to succeed over their disengaged counterparts, they did so in a shorter timeframe and had higher grade point averages” (p.22). When a student is interested in the class materials, working to gain knowledge and skill, he is engaged and gains from that experience. He will succeed and the teacher will have helped him to truly learn.

The benefits of engagement leading to the success of an early college student are even greater. Early college classrooms, according to Karling (2008) “are specifically designed to help students at risk of dropping out of high school, meet graduation requirements and transition into post-secondary education. Students in middle college high schools are exposed to the demands of

college while at the same time receiving support and academic assistance through mentoring, in addition to career and social counseling” (p. 9).

Engagement itself is behavioral, task specific, and directly connected to achievement. Student engagement in the classroom can bring about positive results for students and lack of engagement can have negative implications. Research conducted in the college classrooms to study levels of participation has found that “only one minute of a 40-minute class was spent in student participation” (Papa, 2015, p.12). Further, “about 90% of interactions were made by a handful of students and only one-third were regular participants” (Papa, 2015, p. 12). Student participation, one of the basic indicators of engagement, is low in many classrooms. If student participation is low, engagement is also low, indicating that students are potentially not gaining skill or knowledge at a beneficial level.

It is important for the success of a student to be fully engaged. “Studies show that if students are prepared and participate in class, students are motivated, learn better, become better critical thinkers, and have self-reported gains in character,” (Papa, 2015, p. 11). As Weaver and Qi (2005) pointed out, “Students who actively participate in the learning process learn more than those who don’t” (p. 570)

In my review of materials, the depth of student engagement was explored. While the visible engagement indicators can reveal to the instructor who is participating, there is a deeper level of what causes or encourages that participation, which the teacher must tap into in order to achieve success. The student needs a reason to be motivated to participate. It was found that “instructors receive only part of the picture if they focus on the obvious signs of engagement such as raising hands and asking questions” (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005, p. 190). There is an entirely deeper, emotional engagement level that needs to be considered when

attaching meaning to the idea of what encompasses student engagement (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005, p. 190).

Engagement is important in any classroom and so these implications remain true in the graphic design classroom and include those courses which have dual enrollment as well as standard high school courses and college-level instruction.

### **Factors that Affect Engagement**

The factors that affect the level of classroom engagement cover a broad spectrum dealing with everything from the characteristics of the student to the ability of the instructor and the effectiveness of the educational institution itself. The reasons can be directly connected to the specific classroom or attributed to aspects of the students' lives that extend to the whole school, their own socio-economic status, or a multitude of self-to-classroom connections.

According to Park's (2003) studies within the college classroom setting, "girls, high SES (socio-economic status) students, and higher achievers are significantly more engaged in academic activities. Black students are less engaged in school work than White students, while Asian and Hispanic students tend to be more engaged than the White students" (p. v). Park further explained variables that affect engagement include student background characteristics such as gender, socio economic status, race, and prior levels of achievement (2003, p. 23).

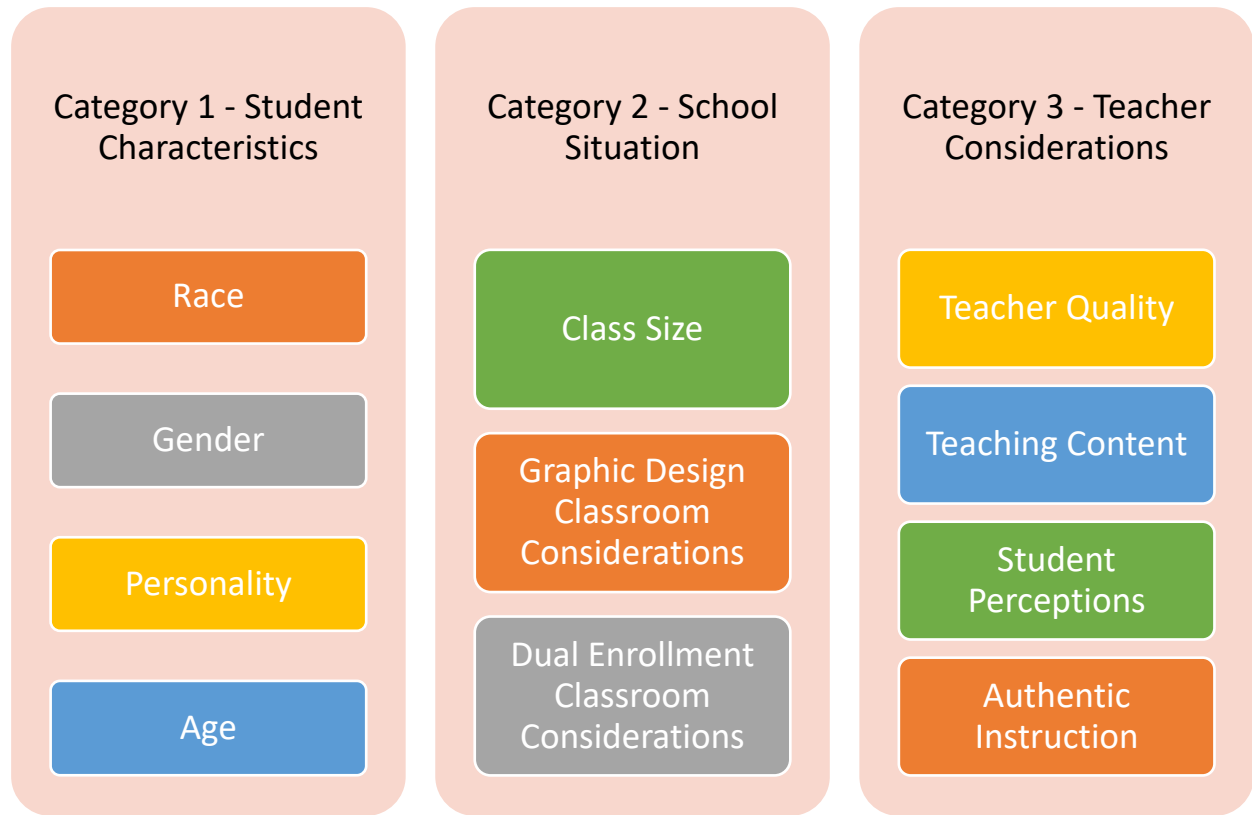
I will now discuss those different variables of a person's characteristics and situation based on what my research uncovered because it is important to understand, as a new instructor or as a person wanting to increase engagement, that the means of connection with students can be as unique as every student who is present in a class. Park (2003) stated correctly that "education is an interactive phenomenon between teachers and students" (p. 2).

## **Specific Causes and Considerations of Classroom Engagement**

Classroom engagement has been directly attributed to three categories (Figure 2), though these categories are not predictive. In other words, because a student is black, or male, or from a lower socio-economic status does not mean he or she will not be successful or will react to a classroom setting in a prescribed way. These categories are important in the exploration of attaining increased engagement and will be covered throughout this examination. The three categories are:

- Category 1: Student Characteristic – This category includes race, gender, socio economic status, student learning style, and overall student personality.
- Category 2: School Situation – Included in this category are availability of and support toward out-of-classroom activities, class size, and considerations specifically related to the graphic design classroom and the class that has dual enrollment.
- Category 3: Teacher-Related Considerations – Including teacher quality, teaching quantity, the ability of the teacher to provide meaningful content, and the students’ interpretation of the teacher, and level of authentic instruction provided.

To further understand how each of these categories play a role in the desire of a student to engage in the classroom, we must take a look at each of the categories and realize how they interconnect to form areas to consider when building the most engaging classroom possible.



*Figure 2 – Categorical Arrangement of Engagement Considerations.* This figure illustrates three identified categories that impact student engagement levels.

### **Category 1 – Student Characteristics**

The category of student characteristics includes the entire culture, background, and history of a student. “In order to promote overall student engagement, it is important to investigate the effect of student characteristics on student engagement” (Chang, 2012, p. 10). This category can be minimized down to the unique qualities that are part of the character of each individual within a classroom because every student in the room has a completely different background and history than the student seated next to him or her. Each characteristic makeup of each student provides situational material that could potentially lead to disengagement and



ultimate student failure within the classroom and those implications can be exponentially multiplied based on the acceptance or perceived acceptance of that classroom toward those characteristics.

**Gender considerations.** Student gender plays a significant role in the level of engagement of a particular student within the classroom. Arndt (2014) found that, within the college setting, males tend to have lower grades than female students and revealed that “it is reasonable to anticipate that because of the pressure to conform to gendered norms of behavior, males may be reluctant in asking for help, support or engaging in behaviors or activities that run counter to their masculinity” (p. 7). In other words, the idea of what makes a male “masculine” can be a deterrent to male students in classroom participation.

Considering roughly half of our population is male, the impact of a potentially reduced engagement level due to gender points at what could amount to a detriment toward a significant population of the student body and “it is estimated that there will be 156 women per 100 men earning college degrees by the year 2020” (Arndt, 2014, p. 27), so the impact on not only classroom performance, but also enrollment will be impacted by issues related to gender and engagement due to the expected roles of males in Western society. “Boys police the behaviors of their peers academically by denouncing things like spending time on one’s school work, which is viewed as being feminine and therefore unacceptable” (Arndt, 2014, p. 30).

Another aspect of gender roles that have been discovered through research is how the student, based on gender, more frequently reacts to the teacher, based on his/her gender. As Karp and Yoels (1976) found, “the sex of the teacher affects the likelihood of whether male or female students will participate in class” (p. 434). It was explained that a teacher who is male

will provide different expressions or tones than a teacher who is female and those nonverbal cues affect students differently based on the students' own perceptions.

Also, the interactions between male instructors and students of like or different genders can differ. Karp and Yoels (1976) found in their research that "male instructors are more likely to call on male students than on female students" (p. 434), but that "female instructors are just as likely to call on female students as on male students" (p. 434).

**Race considerations.** One cannot look into student-related reasons for classroom disengagement without considering how the student's own race statistically demonstrates levels of engagement. "There is a growing body of research regarding the impact of student engagement on achievement as well as the disparate overall achievement and educational outcomes experienced by various racial/ethnic subgroups of students" (Cremascoli, 2011, p. 1).

Racial considerations and impacts on engagement can be determined by studying the results of standardized testing as well as enrollment rates and achievement rates. It has been found that "minority students and students living in poverty demonstrate less proficiency on high-stakes assessments, receive more frequent discipline referrals, and are more likely to drop out prior to graduation than their peers attending the same schools" (Cremascoli, 2014, p. 15). Through research, Cremascoli (2011) also discovered that minority students reported feeling disengaged from their schools more often than White people did. She found that:

Minority students are more likely to feel disenfranchised by the school. Minority students are more likely to participate in lower academic tracks in school. These students report that they are not connected to schools (relationships), that their coursework is not meaningful or connected to their interest of future aspirations (relevance) and that they are not intellectually challenged by their coursework. (p. 37).

**Overall student learning style and personality considerations.** Student learning styles and personality considerations have been found to play a significant role in the level of engagement demonstrated within the classroom. How the student perceives the classroom based on his own life experiences can impact engagement and learning. Student confidence level, especially related to those students who are of a younger age, will impact classroom engagement. As Papa (2015) uncovered, “student participation is affected by fear of judgment from their peers and the instructor” (p. v).

Being called on in the classroom or volunteering to answer a question draws attention to the individual student. This does play a role in the level of participation. “Previous studies show that students have personal feelings of inadequacy in front of others and thus choose not to participate” (Papa, 2015, p. 1).

It has been found that this understanding of confidence level and the reluctance to draw attention to the individual student is even more complicated when exploring how this relates to student devised roles within the classroom. There becomes a small group of students in classes who do most of the talking. The other students in the same class will determine early on in the course who those talkers are and whether or not the teacher is welcome to classroom teacher-to-student conversations. Karp and Yoels (1976) explained that, “in fact, we have often noticed in our own classes that when a question is raised on an issue raised, the ‘silent’ students will even begin to orient their bodies toward and look at this coterie of talkers with the expectation, presumably, that they will shortly be speaking” (p. 430).

This has been supported through research conducted by Weaver and Qi (2005), who noted that “with the consolidation of responsibility, a handful of students assume the role of active participants and discussants in the classroom, while a majority engage in ‘civil attention’ –

paying sufficient attention to know when to not, to laugh where appropriate, or otherwise to appear attentive without risking too much involvement” (p. 571).

The situation further deepens as we learn that teachers are supporting this structured participation in the classroom by their own reluctance to call attention to students and bring them out of their comfort levels. Karp and Yoels (1976) noted, “the majority of students play a relatively passive role in the classroom and see themselves as recorders of the teacher’s information. This expectation is mutually supported by the professor’s reluctance to directly call on specific students” (p. 430).

The instructor does, then, play a role in this classroom phenomenon. “Student engagement tends to increase or decrease depending on the instructors’ ability to incorporate student engagement in the classroom. A student then uses their perception of the instructors to judge whether or not they should engage in the material” (Papa, 2015, p. 3).

**Age Considerations.** One of the characteristics of a dual enrollment classroom is the span of student ages that can potentially be present in the classroom. When a college classroom features students who are enrolled as early college students along with traditional college students, there can be ages present that range between approximately 15 years old on up through later adults, or non-traditional students. So, the age of the students and the considerations connected with those ages as they relate to the dual enrollment graphic design classroom and how they impact levels of engagement should be considered in the examination.

In research conducted by Fritschner (2000) in undergraduate college classrooms, it was found that “students of all ages believed that nontraditional students took their education more seriously” (p. 353). This consideration of older students also found that students believed

“nontraditional students participated more because they had more experience to bring to the classroom” (p. 353).

Research conducted by Howard and Henney (1998) in a mixed age college classroom found that “the evidence presented suggests that in the mixed-age college classroom, nontraditional students are far more likely to initiate discussion than are their traditional (18 – to 24-year-old) counterparts” (p. 400).

In a study of students in two-year colleges which included early college aged students, Gibson and Slate (2010) revealed that “statistically significant differences were found in the self-reported student engagement of these first-year community college students among different age categories” (p. 371). The research found that students ages 24 and below, including early college students, were less engaged than non-traditional students over age 24.

When considering age as a factor connected with student engagement, my examination of the literature points to connection with age and engagement levels in a manner that reveals younger students, or young college students, may be less engaged than the older students in the classroom. This relationship of age to engagement can be based on the lack of classroom experience and the perceptions of other students in the classroom.

## **Category 2 – School Situation**

Considerations such as class size, connectivity with advisors, and availability of options for growth outside of the classroom will also affect student engagement, even in situations of dual enrollment classrooms focusing on graphic design. There is a connection between the entire college and the level of engagement within the classroom. Some of these aspects can be controlled by the instructor and others cannot, but to further understand the roots of engagement,

it is important to explore all of the aspects influencing students within a classroom. Especially considering “there is a long history of research to support that student engagement in academically purposeful activities is more critical to student success than personal characteristics or prior academic achievement” (McCaul, 2015, p. 20). As Flynn (2014) reports, “student outcomes may be in part a result of the social experiences of college rather than the activities within the classroom or coursework” (p. 15).

While some outside the classroom activities can include membership to fraternities, sports participation, clubs, and student government, there are connections which can be made that more directly adhere to the students within graphic design classrooms consisting of early college students, traditional college students, and the non-traditional students. Some examples included connection with academic advisors to help students realize how their graphic design class will fit into their future, participation in local art shows with work completed or skills gained from the class, and presentation of projects to family or friends outside of the classroom. Support on these endeavors from the instructor and from the school will enhance these options.

Arndt (2014) found that “the ability of an institution to provide support and engagement for their students will ultimately affect the ability of the student to not only successfully adjust to college life, but provide the foundation for continued success” (p. 20).

The involvement of students in these extracurricular activities is a very important aspect of ensuring engagement within the classroom. According to a study by McCaul (2015), “there is a connection between the academic and social experiences of college that these experiences influence each other. Simply, what students do during college has a higher impact in their persistence in college than any other characteristic” (p. 3). To the contrary, “students fail to complete college and ultimately drop out because of lack of membership, or integration into the

communities on campus which is shown to lead to higher levels of academic commitment” (Arndt, 2014, p. 20).

Class size is another important school-related consideration for the increase of engagement within the class. It has been found that smaller student numbers will provide greater engagement. Weaver and Qi (2005) found that “large classes permit greater anonymity, enable students to seat themselves at the periphery of the classroom and thereby facilitate the strategic withdrawal of the majority” (p. 572). Likewise, “smaller classes not only make general student participation feasible but also render passive withdrawal less tenable” (p. 573).

**Graphic design classroom considerations.** The aesthetics and content of study found within a graphic design classroom must be taken into consideration when considering student engagement within graphic art courses. Students enrolled in graphic art or design classes are expected to learn and master both the principals of art and design as well as the technology and skills required to obtain skill in design applications on computers. Instructors must prepare content that presents both the technical, how-to, information as well as the elements of design in order to guide students toward successful work.

Within the graphic design classroom, there is a necessity to use computer technology to create art. These computers are usually arranged on desks that are typically stationary to accommodate the need for electricity and wired connection to other devices such as scanners and printer. Students are often seated behind large monitors where they can easily disengage from the instructor, and chairs are usually positioned with more widely apart from one another than in a traditional classroom to accommodate the monitors.

Hayawi Al Atabi and Kamil Al Abboodi (2015) explained graphic design as “represented by the activity with vividly expressed practicability (convenience in usage and perception, laconism, information value, aesthetic reasonability) the functional graphic design orientation is seen in modelling, projecting and creating aesthetic-functional elements and objects of the artificial environment (postcards, business cards, book covers, city prototypes), visualization of information (readability, general accessibility, laconism) with the usage of traditional and modern technologies and tools” (p. 248). This description of graphic design touches on the uses and reasons for graphic design in our world and the methods that are used which span both the traditional tools as well as the more recent, computer developed design work.

There is a strong difference between hand-created art and those works of art created in technology alone. Peters (2010) who studied the role of technology in the art classroom, wrote that:

Our engagement is a powerful thing, it allows us to focus our energies on reaching a state of transcendence of ordinary experience. Superficial engagement renders the emergence of creativity unlikely. Creativity has fueled the human evolution of tools and technology, in many ways this is basic to what it means to be human. Without a doubt technology has a critical place in education however it does not have a paramount place. (p. 47).

Peters further explained that “computer-created methods may be fast and efficient but it is hand-created methods that give students the ‘making special’ experience that is fundamental to their nature and to their engagement and collaboration with others” (2010, p. 47). This hints at concern over the role of technology in our classroom and the very nature of graphic design being less engaging for students.

**Dual enrollment considerations.** In the dual enrollment classroom situation, students will possibly range from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade high school student, attending as an early college student,



on up to the older, nontraditional student. Age and experience levels of these students will make an impact on the engagement levels within the classroom.

Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) studied engagement within early college classrooms and found that “early college students had better attendance, lower suspensions, and higher levels of engagement than control students” (p. 2) when control students represented students of the same age attending a traditional high school. They elaborated that “compared to the control students, early college students also reported higher levels of all of the facilitators of engagement examined, including better relationships with teachers, more rigorous and relevant instruction, more academic and effective support, and higher expectations” (p. 2).

Similarly, when investigating performance of the older students that can be found within a dual enrollment situation, “evidence from most research suggests that older, ‘nontraditional’, students are more likely to assume responsibility for class discussion and participation and less likely to withdraw to ‘civil attention’ than their younger counterparts are” (Weaver & Qi, 2005, p. 577).

Classroom confidence does play a role when considering the ages and experiences of the students in these classroom situations. The younger, early college students will have less life experience than the other students in the class and that could potentially lead to less confidence. From studies conducted by Weaver and Qi (2005), it is demonstrated that “confidence enhances the belief that the instructor or classmates will favorably receive one’s remarks or questions and thus constitutes a minimum condition for any participation in the classroom. On the other hand, insufficient confidence likely generates passivity and withdrawal and undermines the solidarity cohesiveness, and energy of the group” (p. 579).

Hughes and Edwards (2012) also found experience to play a role in how students engage. In their study of a dual enrollment classroom, Hughes and Edwards found there can be difficulties when early college students simply don't have the level of knowledge required for a college course. "For many students, a gap exists between their academic skills and the academic level in an authentic college course. This disconnect is partly a result of structural, cultural and functional differences between high school and college institutions" (Hughes and Edwards, 2012, p. 31). They pointed out that "these gaps make it challenging for high school students to grasp the material and be successful in college courses" (p. 31).

### **Category 3 – Teacher Considerations**

While many of the aspects of classroom engagement explored in Categories 1 and 2 are beyond the control of the teacher, they are necessary to understand. In Category 3, we will explore teacher-related aspects of student engagement which are potentially controlled by the teacher. These aspects include teacher quality, authentic instruction, and method of instruction.

Teacher quality can include many aspects of what makes up the instructor. Beyond just who the teacher is, Park (2003) revealed her findings for positive engagement and that they were related to the teacher's contexts for presenting the information, equalizing effects, and student perception of the teacher. Park found that teaching quality touches on "efforts for creating a positive learning climate, selecting appropriate instructional goals and assessments, using curriculum effectively, and employing various instructional behaviors that help all students learn at higher levels" (p. 9).

The interactions between teachers and students make up the bulk of where the learning takes place. "The major influence of teachers is on student behavior and feeling in the classroom

because, as research suggests, students do not spend much time studying outside of class, and they seem to be spending even less time studying outside of class than in previous years and more time on activities such as ‘surfing the net’” (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005, p. 185).

Along with the quality of the teacher, the provision of authentic instruction within the classroom can affect engagement. “When authentic instruction is characterized as the meaningful, valuable, significant, and worthwhile work in a student’s everyday life, it is universally effective for all ability groups” (Park, 2003, p. 70).

Somewhat related to our previous, Category 1, discussion of student confidence, the level of expertise a teacher has can also affect engagement. More perceived teacher expertise can provide negative levels of engagement because “students who perceive faculty as having ‘expert’ authority and mastery over knowledge will likely see themselves as having little to contribute to classroom discussion and will readily withdraw into silence” (Weaver & Qi, 2005, p. 574).

Karp and Yoels (1976) explained this phenomenon when they wrote, “one of the reasons they find it difficult to respond in class involves the professor’s preparedness; that is, students have told us that because the professor’s ideas as presented in lectures are (in their view) so well formulated they could not add anything to those ideas” (p. 433). They added “the better prepared a professor is for his/her class, the less likely are students to respond to the elements of the lecture” (p. 433).

The technique introduced in the graphic design classroom can also play a role in engagement, especially when considering the necessity to teach both technical skills and design principals. Alhajri (2016) explored instructing in both the traditional art methods of hand drawing, cutting and placing items into a layout, as well as the technical or digital methods of

using computers and software to help students learn the foundations of art. He said that “traditional design education should take its place along with computerized learning, especially in the early years of any graphic design study plan. This would help students explore their skills, particularly those who do not have much background in art and design” (p. 424).

## ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION

While a person's characteristics in areas such as gender, race, income level, and other considerations do not guarantee a student will follow those findings presented above, it can be helpful to understand the possibilities of implications toward student engagement.

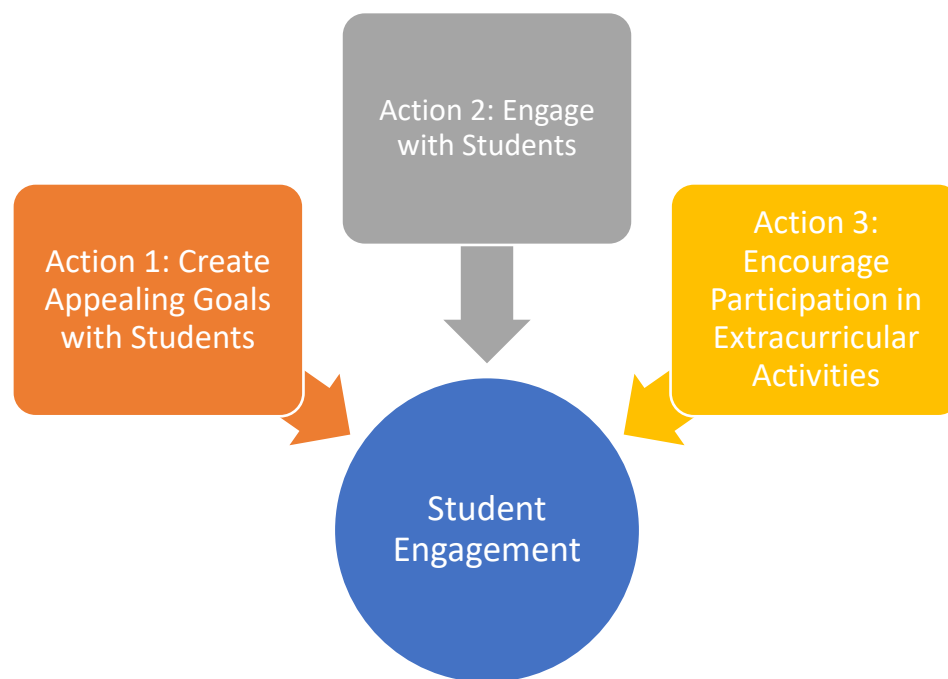
Teachers and students exist together in a physical classroom with a balance of expectations. Some factors in this balance, such as the cultural connections of the student or of the teacher, cannot be changed. However, some actions presented by the teacher in the classroom can help to increase levels of engagement. Incorporating recommendations into the classroom that are not limited to any one student characteristic, but can be open and appealing to all individuals in the dual enrolled graphic design classroom are important.

The scope of this examination requires a plan of action for instructors to create a classroom learning environment that is equally engaging to all students inclusive of differences in background related to gender, race, socio-economic status, and all other considerations. It is important to understand how these variables play a role in the engagement of the classroom, but the guidance to instructors for overall engagement should not be exclusive to any one category. It should provide methods that attract all students toward classroom engagement, specifically as it relates to dual enrollment situations within the graphic design classroom.

Throughout my exploration of literature regarding classroom engagement, especially in dual enrollment, graphic design classrooms with early college students, I was able to categorize

several recommendations into three action categories (Figure 3) that will be helpful to the instructor when preparing to teach. These three action categories are:

- Action 1: Create Appealing Goals for Students
- Action 2: Engage with Students
- Action 3: Encourage Participation in Extracurricular Activities



*Figure 3 – Actions to Take to Encourage Engagement.* This figure illustrates three actions an instructor should perform to encourage student engagement within the classroom.

### **Action 1: Create Appealing Goals with Students**

Many of the studies I explored indicated that when students had goals to achieve, they were more engaged in their classrooms. However, a word of caution should be issued that the goals should have purpose related to the desired classroom outcomes and they should be accepted by the students or they will not be successful. As Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran,

and Nichols (1996) discovered, “findings indicate that social responsibility goals, such as being dependable and getting things done on time, were positively related to achievement, while other social goals, such as having fun or making friends, were either unrelated or negatively related to achievement” (p. 389). Keeping goals for individual students connected with designed learning outcomes will lead to positive achievement.

In their report, Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, and Towler (2005) advised the following:

Set learning goals that are related to increased competence. Such a learning strategy leads to a mastery-oriented pattern in which students (a) are intrinsically motivated, (b) seek challenging tasks, and (c) maintain effective striving after they experience failure. Other students adopt performance goals that focus on their gaining favorable judgments of their competence. Students with performance goals are more concerned with proving their ability to others and are more extrinsically motivated than are those with a learning goal orientation. We expected that those students with a learning goal orientation would be more engaged than would those with a performance orientation. (p. 185).

Goals can be broken up into two frames of reference for evaluating competence, according to Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, and Nichols (1996) who described those two categories as “(a) learning goals (also called task-oriented goals and mastery goals) which use improvement of skill or knowledge as the evaluative criterion, and (b) performance goals (also called ego-oriented goals) which use relative standing among others as the evaluative criterion” (p. 389).

Goals within the graphic design classroom can include such things as completion of a portfolio, presentation of a series of works, or other end results that demonstrate learning and also provide the student with a finished project he can take pride in. Alhajri (2016) noted that “activating innovative and imaginative experiences whilst teaching graphic design” (p. 423) and developing “a deep understanding of the importance of creativity” (p. 423) are important elements to include within student goals.

Alhajri (2016) encouraged a mix of traditional design learning as well as digital design, expressing that the goal of experiencing hands-on creation is especially important in graphic art. He explained, “traditional design education should take its place along with computerized learning, especially in the early years of any graphic design study plan. This would help students explore their skills, particularly those who do not have much background in art and design” (p. 424). Goals could be set in the classroom, perhaps by the students themselves, for learning these traditional skills before moving into the computer aspects.

Some goals should be related to demonstrating graphic design technique, while others will be related to the finished product or final design concepts. “Mastering some graphic software does not make one a designer,” Alhajri (2016) explained. “The software is used to make the process easier, but it does not train the mind and hand” (p. 424).

In the graphic design classroom, where we have established the use of computer can diminish engagement due to its nature as a less engaging form of art than hand-created art, it is important, according to Peters (2010) to include open creativity and student-generated goals. “What does work, is giving enormous amount of freedom of choice, in an environment of optimal challenge with recognition and feedback” (p. 25). Peters added that “Open tasks, ones that allow the individual control over the situation have a more exploratory mode whereas actions motivated from intrinsic rewards have a task completion mode” (p. 25). Providing students with a way to self-direct their goals to achieve positive feedback may be beneficial in the graphic design classroom.

Some of the goals should be managed by the teacher, specifically oriented toward the success of the early college students. In their study of early college student engagement, Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) found that successful early colleges



“deliberately set out to create a set of expectations, structures, classroom instructional experiences, and relationships that required students to engage with different aspects of schooling” (p. 18).

Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, and Nichols (1996) found a direct correlation between engagement and goals, specifically among the high school aged students found in a dual enrollment classroom. They reported that:

Social responsibility goals, such as being dependable and getting things done on time, were positively related to achievement, while other social goals such as having fun or making friends, were either unrelated or negatively related to achievement. We view these positive social goals as potentially important factors in explaining student academic motivation. Among high school students, these goals might manifest themselves in at least two ways: (a) trying to please others, such as the teacher or one’s family, or (b) trying to be socially responsible. (p. 389).

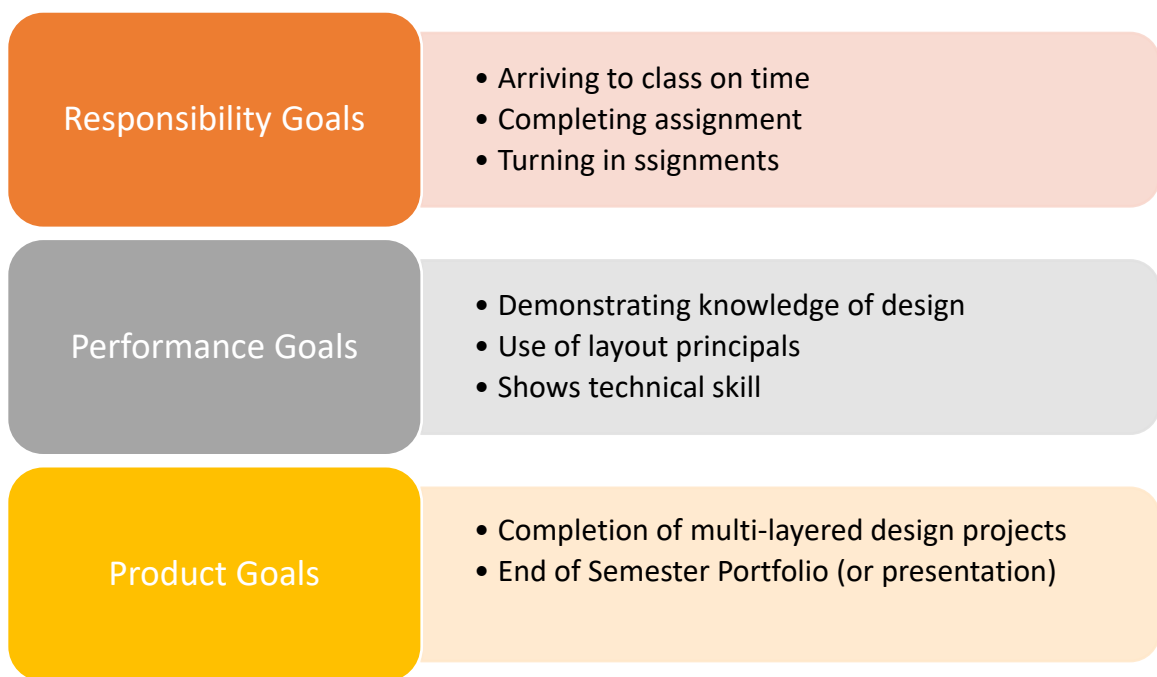
Miller, Greene, Montalvo, Ravindran, and Nichols (1996) also found that “goals other than learning (mastery) and performance (ego) were unique and important contributors to our understanding of student engagement in academic tasks” (p. 414).

Goals provide students of any background and with many characteristics with some level of motivation and reason to achieve. Orienting the course work and the students to include a level of goal attainment (Figure 4) will help increase student engagement.

The goals identified through research that will help students best connect with class are divided into four categories:

- **Responsibility Goals** – arriving to class on time, turning in homework, and completing assignments fit into this category. These goals can be set by and for anyone, regardless of identifiable student makeup, school situations, or teacher considerations.

- **Performance Goals** – demonstrating knowledge of design skills, use of layout principals, and ability to explain or demonstrate through finished work. These goals should be attainable by any student regardless of his gender, race or personality; can be set in any school situation; and will work with teachers of all backgrounds.
- **Product Goals** – the end of a semester of work will include completion of multi-layered design projects, end of semester classroom portfolios or presentation of final projects. This should be a goal of the class regardless of student makeup, school situations, or teacher considerations.



*Figure 4* – Types of Goals to Set. This figure illustrates the types of goals an instructor should set with students as part of Action 1 to encourage classroom engagement.

By setting and completing these goals, one action layer will have been accomplished toward the end result of encouraging engagement. While we as instructors can set up these goals, we must also obtain the students desire to achieve them. To optimize the level of engagement, we must go beyond Action 1 and add our Actions 2 and 3 which will provide deeper participation.

### **Action 2: Engage with Students**

In order to expect a student to engage in a classroom overseen by a teacher, the teacher should make strong efforts to engage with students. It is easier for a student to feel he can exist in a classroom unnoticed if the teacher makes little to no effort to bring him into the discussions or activities.

Engaging with students will increase student engagement in the classroom. In my review of literature, it was revealed that larger classrooms provided reduced student engagement because students were better able to blend into the room and remain more unknown to their instructors. This anonymity increases the likelihood that a student will not engage. Likewise, the smaller classroom allowed for the instructor to connect with the students and the students then demonstrated increased engagement.

Weaver and Qi (2005) found that “numerous studies report how faculty authority hinders student participation and learning and suggest various ways for faculty to distance themselves from their position of authority – e.g. by memorizing students’ names, requesting that students refer to them by their first name, arranging desks in circles, and otherwise creating an atmosphere of openness, respect, and equality” (p. 574). We know that within a typical graphic design classroom, desks are typically stationary and plugged into electrical outlets to support the

technology being used in the room. Often, students customize their desktops and prefer to stay at one workstation. However, discussions and activities can take place where students are encouraged to move together into smaller, more connected groups. Instructors should know the names of students and make effort right away to learn about the interests and hobbies of the students. Instructors will also make connections with students when providing their own interests and hobbies to the students.

In their study of early college classrooms, Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) found that “the small size of the schools meant that teachers could get to know their students better, which made it extremely hard for students not to be engaged in school” (p. 23).

What worked for the highly engaged early college classrooms was, in part, due to the relationships that developed between students and teachers. “In addition to the positive relationships and support the majority of students also reported strong relationships among peers that required students to become involved in school” (Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, & Dallas, 2013, p. 24).

Rutherford (2015), who examined engagement in art and design courses, suggested we must also develop these relationships in a way that helps the students understand how the college setting works. Rutherford wrote:

Without the ability to *understand* meaning and implications, they will be unable to make informed decisions in planning the production of media products and materials; and without the ability to *express* meaning, they will be unable to convey this information appropriately to an audience. Finally, without the ability to *make* meaning, our students will be limited in their ability to make informed decisions – either in the interests of their social and professional communities, or in matters that affect their lives. (p. 97).

The recommendations for Action 2 are to develop a sense of belonging or connection with each student. Welcoming each student by his or her first name, encouraging students to use

your first name, interacting with the students in small circles away from their computers, and getting to know their interests will help develop that connection. It is more difficult for a student to blend in when they feel the teacher knows who they are. I have provided four recommendations (Figure 5), of methods an instructor can implement to achieve Action 2.



*Figure 5 – How Teachers Can Connect with Students.* This figure illustrates a progression in actions a teacher should conduct in the classroom to facilitate Action 2 as a recommendation toward encouraging classroom engagement.

### **Action 3: Encourage Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

Perhaps the most important of the three recommended engagement Actions is Action 3. Encouraging student participation in college or teacher endorsed activities beyond the constraints of the classroom will help increase engagement. “In fact, faculty-student interaction has the largest direct, indirect, and total effects on self-reported participation” (Weaver & Qi, 2005, p.

586). Connecting as the teacher to the students in ways that attribute to the world outside the classroom is important to the success of engagement efforts.

There are many ways a teacher in a dual enrollment, graphic design classroom can encourage participation in activities related to the school and also connected to the design course. Some of these ways include encouraging after-hours emails for assistance, welcoming students to visit during teacher office hours, participation in graphic design clubs or groups, providing information and assistance with participating in art competitions, and arranging meetings with academic advisors.

Hughes and Edwards (2012) who examined the roles of teaching and learning in a dual enrollment setting also provided “academic supports beyond class time” (p. 33) as a strategy. “A crucial aspect of providing dual enrollment opportunities – particularly to struggling and underrepresented students – is the availability of a broad range of out-of-class supports that foster success” (Hughes & Edwards, 2012, p. 33).

As Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) pointed out, “academic support in early colleges is more accessible because the teachers are seen as willing to help students within their classroom and also outside of the school day” (p. 21). It is important for students to understand how their coursework can be applied toward their future. This understanding of the connectivity of the class with other classes and the path required to reach a goal of graduation, or of obtaining a job in the future can increase engagement. Encouragement toward meeting with academic advisors, then, will lead to that understanding of connection.

Many of the resources I investigated throughout this experience concretely stated that this encouragement of students and exterior connection was an important factor for increasing engagement. Weaver and Qi (2005) reported that “while class size and faculty authority might

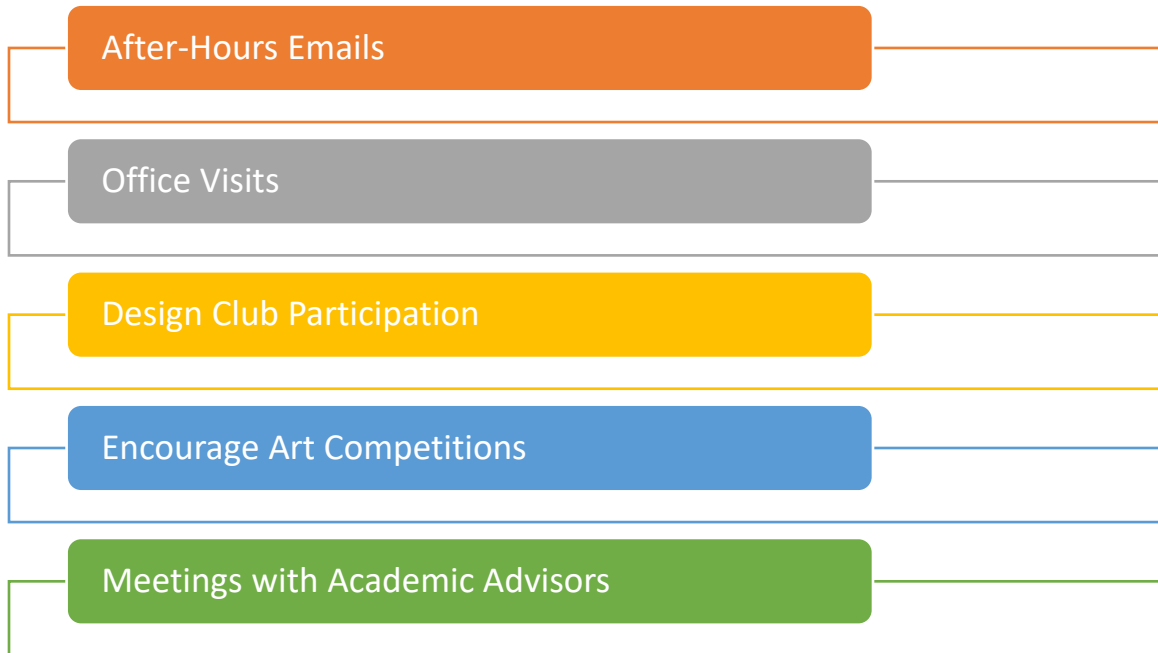
discourage participation, faculty interaction with students outside the classroom setting might diminish obstacles to communication and, in turn, encourage overall participation” (p. 574).

Alhajri (2016), who studied students within the graphic design classroom found that “if educators are interested in establishing a central role for creativity in universities and higher education institutions, they need to ensure that there are suitable opportunities, a supportive environment, and enthusiastic motivation for their students” (p. 423).

In studies related to early college classrooms, Edmunds, Willse, Arshavsky, and Dallas (2013) found that “academic support in early college is more accessible because the teachers are seen as willing to help students within their classroom and also outside of the school day” (p. 21).

Weaver and Qi (2005) offered another reason for this increased engagement when she reported “our findings support the argument that faculty-student interaction outside of the classroom helps students learn professionalism, view criticism in a constructive way, and enhance students’ confidence in the classroom. Faculty-student interaction is thus critical for exploring class participation” (p. 587).

Because of the importance of extra-curricular relationships with students toward the goal of increasing student engagement, it is recommended that teachers provide ways to accomplish this connectivity (Figure 6) throughout the length of their classes. Students will demonstrate increased engagement and, therefore, increased chances for success.



*Figure 6 – Ways to Connect Outside the Classroom.* This figure illustrates the methods an instructor can use in Action 3, the final stage of working to encourage student engagement within the classroom.

Regardless of the students’ race, gender or personality, these suggested after-hours can become part of the classroom experience and will bring about a connection to a bigger picture related to his participation in the class. Many of these can be accomplished in different school situations, though some may be more challenging in larger class sizes, in which case some of the suggestions that best fit within the school setting can be applied. The teacher consideration needing to be addressed is whether or not the teacher will employ these suggestions.



## FINDINGS SPECIFIC TO EARLY COLLEGE, GRAPHIC DESIGN STUDENTS

The methods I am recommending to help instructors teach an effective and engaging course in graphic design which includes early college students can be helpful in any classroom situation, but are especially important within the classroom that relies on technology for creativity and which consists of student potentially ranging in ages from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in high school to the non-traditional, older and more experienced student.

Earlier, I presented indicators of engagement that are actions which demonstrate connection between student and teacher. I identified these actions as attendance, the frequency of responding to teacher questions, the frequency of offering thoughts and critique in class, and the level of effort as measured through assignment and testing outcomes. The recommendations I have provided are to facilitate three actions. Action 1 is to create appealing goals for students, Action 2 is to engage with students, and Action 3 is to encourage participation in extracurricular activities.

My recommendations are achievable within the dual enrollment classroom, regardless of the student characteristics within the classroom, no matter the school situation, and can be implemented in light of various teacher considerations. While an understanding what these matters are is important for the sake of implementing the strategies, they can be done in a wide variety of situations inclusive of the school setting, student body, and teacher experience. So, they are methods that can be put into place by the new teacher with a wide range of diversity amongst students in many classrooms.

When considering who the early college students are, we know the student will embody all races, both genders and a vast variety of personalities. Some will be the student statistically described as less likely to engage. Some will take on the role of the classroom speaker, and others will try to blend into the background in a more anonymous way. Early college students are younger in age and have less years of life experience than the older, college aged or non-traditional students whom they will share the classroom with.

Graphic design students, according to Peters (2010), will have a more challenging time being engaged because of the nature of creating art in a technology-driven classroom. Peters found that “computer created imagery can easily show a veneer of competence but upon closer inspection reveal a shallow application of visual arts concepts” (p. 46).

By implementing Action 1: Create Appealing Goals with Students, especially for those early college students, we are giving the students the guidance and framework needed to engage and not feel less experienced than their older classroom counterparts. According to research conducted with high school youth, Sivaraman (2015) found that “setting and attaining goals appears to create and strengthen a positive feedback loop between goal-direction action, accomplishment, and feelings of personal effectiveness, which should lead to higher academic self-concept” (p. 32). Goal setting is specifically important within the graphic design classroom to help ensure students follow a path of learning, but it must also allow for individual cultures, ideas and self to manifest inside the works being created. As Hayawi Al Atabi and Kamil Al Abboodi (2015) wrote:

Graphic activity in the framework of the students’ art education is based on consecutive accomplishment of learning tasks by students with the purpose of acquiring the fundamental theoretical and practical knowledge and skills. It is represented as an integral didactic system based on creative approach in the process of working on the topic. Graphic activity creates conditions for

interaction, integration of artistic, psychological and technological disciplines, and secures the opportunity to accomplish tasks most skillfully. (p. 250).

Responsibility goals for the early college student will be the same for any student in the classroom and include arrival to the class when it begins, turning in homework on time, and completing assignments as required. Though there may need to be some communication with the students' originating high school if there are any issues related to transportation, school schedules, and other primary school considerations. "When high schools are located far from colleges, access is hindered for students who want to take dual enrollment on college campuses but have no means of transportation," (Cassidy, Keating, & Young, 2010, p. 15).

Responsibility goals will also provide opportunity for increased engagement specifically related to the field of study, graphic design. By providing the student with those responsibility goals necessary to encourage growth through art and learning the technology, in keeping each student on time and current with the classroom strategies, increased engagement will occur.

Performance goals of demonstrating knowledge of design skills, use of layout principals, and ability to explain or demonstrate through finished work can be set as a partnership between the young college students and the instructor. Self-setting these goals with teacher guidance can lead to ownership of the goals and greater connection from younger students. They will feel the goals are theirs and may feel less overwhelmed in an older student classroom. Goals that encourage students, especially those using technology to create art, to explore art and design concepts which will lead students to more interesting works of art will benefit the engagement levels of our graphic art students. As Rutherford who studied engagement in the graphic design classroom (2015) found, "while we have no control over the attitudes toward learning and the learning environment with which students arrive in our programmes, we can – and do – exert

considerable influence over our students' perception of its relevance through the ways in which we present core knowledge and the basis on which we advocate its importance" (p. 95). If work is done with our graphic design students to create meaningful goals, they will better connect students to the course.

Encouraging students who are involved in art coursework to provide a portfolio as a final, performance goal is beneficial to the students and demonstrative of the level of engagement of each student. Miller et al. (2011) presented this to be true when discussing electronic portfolios when they wrote, "as an electronic repository of personal artifacts the e-portfolio can provide evidence of student learning and reflection on their learning" (p. 6). They further explained the benefits when they wrote, "the course e-portfolio helps engage students in their learning of course content, creates learning resources that students can transport to other courses, and helps develop technical competence" (p. 6). This portfolio can be used in the future of the student as a tool to obtain potential employment and therefore has some promotable benefit to attract the students toward achieving.

When instructors engage with students, as recommended in Action 2, they will significantly increase the engagement of young college, graphic design students. Providing connection to these students who potentially have less experience than their older, graphic design student peers will help alleviate disconnecting. "The extent to which the teacher is engaged might be a strong predictor of student engagement, and subsequently, student learning. Previous research has reported that, not surprisingly, teacher behaviors influence student engagement" (Handelsman, Briggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005, p. 190).

Knowing the names of these early college design students and their interests will help the students feel better connected to the course and their design work outcomes.

Encouraging group activity within the classroom will create bonds between all students regardless of age. As I noted earlier, Weaver and Qi (2005) cited many studies that demonstrated tactics such as organizing classrooms into small groups or circles for closer communication helps connect instructors with their students and “creating an atmosphere of openness, respect, and equality” (p. 574). Group activity will create a team-like atmosphere that makes it more difficult for young college students to be anonymous. Not only the instructor, but the other classmates within the graphic design course, will know our early college students.

While students who connect with diverse characteristics may statistically fall into categories that signal less classroom engagement than other students, it will be difficult for these young designers to be anonymous when conversations and group discussions bring them into being mentally present in the classroom. This lack of anonymity inside the classroom will lead to more increased engagement. As Smith (1977) found, “student participation, faculty encouragement and use of student ideas, and peer-to-peer interaction emerged as positively related to change in critical thinking and critical thinking behaviors” (p. 188). Smith added, “efforts at student involvement, then, might be encouraged not only for the sake of student contentment, but for cognitive benefits as well” (p. 188).

It was found that Action 3: Encouraging Participation in Extracurricular Activities is a critical element for increasing engagement within classrooms, the methods for this action are broad and readily available to the graphic design classroom.

This action does require teacher buy-in and extra time outside of the classroom. For the instructor who is interested in increasing engagement to the point of considering applying these actions to their own classroom, it seems this added effort will be rewarding in ways that override that extra effort.

Efforts such as openness and welcoming of after-hours emails and correspondence through office visits lets students know they are important. While these aspects are not necessarily directly connected to the young college, graphic design student, there are several other methods of connecting outside the classroom that are readily available to the graphic design students. Design club participation and encouraging participation in art competitions are two options that are specific to graphic design students. Scheduled meetings with academic advisors is another option that can be inserted into the classroom but does rely on the college environment.

Extra time will be needed by the instructor to find those graphic design clubs that students can participate. Or, in some cases, the instructor may form its own club to promote the school or college activities and invite students from other classrooms so the club is an external aspect of the coursework, and not directly connected to the class. Making certain the young college students can also participate in the activities is also important. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (1992), “extracurricular activities provide a channel for reinforcing the lessons learned in the classroom, offering students the opportunity to apply academic skills in a real-world context, and are thus considered part of a well-rounded education” (para. 1).

Scheduling times for academic advisors to visit the classroom can also help show students how their course of study connects them with the larger picture. From this interaction, students can learn how the course and credits earned upon successful completion of the course will connect them with achieving a degree or with other colleges they can transfer to. This understanding of connection will help bring the students who want to progress beyond the classroom into more engaging behavior when the goal of achieving a bigger reward outside the

graphic design course is seen as achievable with success. Young college students will see this connection as well as traditional college students because they are likely enrolled in effort to move forward with a potential career from their efforts also as Karling (2008) said, “the outcomes available for secondary school students in dual enrollment programs include; an opportunity to gain marketable technical or vocational skills not offered by the secondary school; and an opportunity to earn college credit prior to high school graduation” (p. 2).

## CONCLUSIONS

When I first began my transition into becoming the best graphic design instructor I could be within a dual enrollment classroom, I had many questions about what tactics I could use to orchestrate a learning experience that would be engaging for students. The answers to those questions have become more clear following my research into how student engagement is connected with student makeup, school situations, and teacher considerations.

I wondered: What's going on in the graphic design, dual enrollment classroom and what does an instructor need to know to help ensure positive levels of engagement within the classroom? My examination of literature found that there are very diverse students who connect very differently within classroom settings. Some of these different connections are based on student perceptions and others are based on lack of ability or encouragement to grow within a classroom. I exposed the features of the graphic design classroom which are very different from other art classrooms or other general study courses because they involve mastery of both art and design principals and use of high-end technology applications. Students who are enrolled as young college students can fade into the background in not properly afforded opportunities to feel part of the college classroom. I uncovered ways to tell if students are actually engaged in the course.

I wondered: Why are some students disengaged in these classrooms? I exposed various reasons that lead to individual disengagement. These reasons for lack of engagement include



student characteristics, the school situation, and the teacher considerations. All three of these categories provide insight into why students are less likely to engage in the classroom.

I further wondered: How can an instructor teach in a way that addresses those disengaged students and to bolster the overall learning, especially considering the different age ranges learning graphic design skills in dual enrolment classroom? My research unveiled many suggestions for how students could be encouraged to engage in any type of classroom, as well as in the graphic art classroom, and specifically those classrooms consisting of young college aged students.

While not every student will feel compelled to participate in discourse within a classroom discussion and not every teacher will be able to successfully connect with every student, following the recommendations highlighted in this report will help achieve optimal levels of engagement.

Setting goals for students to meet, connecting personally with each student at some level, and presenting encouragement for activity outside the classroom will bring about a level of relationship with each student.

As Cremascoli (2011) said, “Measuring, monitoring and purposefully planning for the school engagement of all students may prove vital in reform efforts aimed at closing the achievement gaps and ensuring that all students experience success in school” (p. iii). This plan for engagement will bring classroom success to students through goal-setting, connection, and extra support outside of the classroom.

It is my hope this research will help both the new teacher and the more experienced instructor who is looking for some guidance on how to better increase the classroom experience for our young college students entering the graphic design course.

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