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About This Issue

By Kim Hales, Editor in Chief and Jason Olsen, Assistant Editor
Utah State University

Hello, and welcome to this very exciting Spring 2021 issue of the *Journal on Empowering Teaching Excellence*. We extend a warm welcome to our new assistant editor, Jason Olsen. Having two editors working together ensures the continued quality of the journal and solidifies its mission of ever-increasing academic rigor and integrity.

We welcome inquiries and encourage readers to consider becoming a reviewer! Please send requests to join our review team to our editorial staff at empowerteaching@usu.edu. Be sure to include your home university and area of content so we can closely match you with articles in your area of expertise. From the journal homepage, https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/jete, click the *follow* button to receive updates on calls for articles and notifications of new issues. Share this link with your colleagues to help us build the best journal possible!

It is encouraging to hear from authors who are being so mindful and intentional with the way they are approaching the "new normal" of teaching pedagogy, brought on by the ever-changing landscape of new technology and the challenges of teaching under the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic. The work we are reading is inspiring. Please keep it coming! The deadline for the Spring 2022 issue is Sept. 15, 2021.

The articles in this issue are unified in offering valuable insight and actionable ideas about how to engage students in their own learning. Instructors can implement these strategies across many content areas and delivery methods.

The article by Greg Lucas et al., "The Value of Instructor Interactivity in the Online Classroom" discusses three "value" themes that emerged from a large survey of students and faculty. These themes, "instructor interactivity, instructor feedback on participation, and asynchronous interaction in discussion forums" are presented with very compelling results, data, and conclusions. Lucas et al. found that the need for instructor presence in an online course, particularly in these three areas, has not decreased with advanced technology. Findings showed that students value interactivity with instructors over other survey features offered. They also showed that students rated the value of surveyed experiences differently than instructors did, emphasizing the importance of student feedback.

The article by Joanna Weaver et. al., "Through the Eyes of the Mentor: Understanding the Adolescent Developing Reader," deepens the discussion of involving students in their own learning. It provides an in-depth case study of pre-service teachers as they shift from "student" mode to "instructor/mentor" mode while mentoring developing readers. Shifting a student to the role of teacher takes strategic planning. By obtaining background training in specific mentoring tools and resources, pre-service teachers gain confidence and increase their perceived efficacy. By strengthening their skills in the area specifically targeting developing readers, pre-service teachers focus more on their student's learning and how they can motivate beginning readers. Weaver et al. explain that this motivation can lead to increased scores on competency and fluency for developing readers which, in turn, leads them to deeper learning.

Alexander Romney and Mitchell Pound drive home the conversation of engaging students in their learning with their article, "Pivoting at the Midpoint: How Midpoint Course Adjustments Influence Student Engagement." This article's central focus is on finding ways to keep students engaged and, like other authors in this issue have asserted, Romney and Pound emphasize that this engagement enriches the learning process and increases the achievement of learning outcomes. They explain that a pivot is a change in strategy without a change in objectives, or vision. This is best accomplished by involving students in the decision-making process. Involving students by soliciting mid-course feedback increases the likelihood that they will become active participants, thus improving their learning outcomes.

Finally, Karin deJonge-Kannan provides an insightful review of the book, *Educating about religious diversity and interfaith engagement: A handbook for student affairs* by Goodman, Giess, and Patel (2019). The value of this book, she notes, lies in its focus on holistic student development. To involve students in their learning, we must engage their whole personal identity. To this end, the book "is filled with practical example of how to broaden religious understanding and promote interfaith engagement." DeJonge-Kannan highlights the book's use of a framework of cultural competency that will help us understand out students, develop professionally, and grow personally.

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The Value of Instructor Interactivity in the Online Classroom

Greg Lucas, Gary Cao, Ph.D., Shaunna Waltemeyer, Ed.D.,
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Abstract

As the number of faculty teaching online continues to grow, so has the interest in and understanding of the role of instructor interaction in the online classroom. Online education provides a unique platform in which course design and teaching are independent factors. Understanding faculty and student perceptions about the shifting role of instructor interaction in the online classroom can provide insight on policies and procedures that can support student learning through student-instructor interaction. Participants included faculty and students responding to an anonymous online survey who indicated "online" as their primary mode of teaching. Three key "value" themes emerged as significantly valuable: instructor interactivity, instructor feedback on participation, and asynchronous interaction in discussion forums. These findings illuminate opportunities and areas of consideration for three stakeholders in the student-teacher interaction equation: faculty, faculty developers, and administrators that can be used to inform quality online teaching through instructor interactivity.

Keywords: Administrative considerations, faculty development, faculty training, higher education, instructor interaction, Online teaching, student learning.

The Value of Instructor Interactivity

As the number of faculty teaching online continues to grow, so has the interest in and understanding of the role of instructor interaction in the online classroom. Online learning is here to stay; in fact, it is more relevant than ever. It is therefore important to consider the implications to instructor interactivity and the evolution of the role of faculty to support student learning through student-instructor interaction.

Research has illuminated several areas influencing instructor interactivity in the online classroom, including active learning (Chen, Bastedo, & Howard 2018; Muir, Milthorpe, Stone, Dyment, Freeman, & Hopwood, 2019), instructor presence (Ma, Wang, Wang, Kong, Wu, &

Yang, 2017), technology (DeCosta, Bergquist, & Holbeck, 2015), class discussions and Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS) (DeCosta et al., 2015; Li & van Lieu, 2018), and instructor feedback (Bolldén, 2016) as the most prevalent topics related to the need and value of instructor interaction. Review of the literature highlights the importance of instructor interactivity in the online environment specifically in the areas of course design and online teaching, technology, Community of Inquiry (COI) framework, teaching in the online discussion forum, and the need for instructor interaction.

Distinction Between Online Course Design and Online Teaching

Instructional design strives to improve the process of instruction by providing optimal methods of instruction that result in desired improvements in students' knowledge and skills (Ko & Rossen, 2017). While learning objectives and expected outcomes will be the same, the methods and approaches to instruction will differ based on the delivery format (Chen, Jones, & Xu, 2018). Course design in the online modality strives to deliver a platform that allows for student-student interaction, student-instructor interaction, and student-content interaction (Ko & Rossen, 2017).

Active learning was identified in the review of the literature as a common theme related to course design. Research points to a well-designed online classroom as promoting engagement between students and faculty as well as course content (Aji & Khan, 2015; Chen, et al., 2018; Muir et al., 2019; Tanis, 2020). Active learning engages students in learning by doing and takes many forms including interactive multimedia, web 2.0 tools, pro-active study aids (Chen et al., 2018). These represent advances in technology, allowing curriculum to come to life in ways that were previously only available from and that were reliant upon an instructor. The ability to engage students through active learning has largely been enhanced through technology. Technology has advanced rapidly, and its applications have influenced every aspect of life, including teaching and learning (Hammond, Coplan, & Mandernach, 2018). Past research emphasized the need for instructor presence; however, it is possible that this need has changed with advancing technology thus illuminating the importance of examining the value of instructor interactivity.

Technology vs. Teaching

Technology has grown in importance and popularity as a means to engage students in learning and interaction (Cooper, Laster-Loftus, & Mandernach (2019); Duryee, 2020; Hughes, Bradford, & Likens, 2018; Nazuk, Khan, Munir, Anwar, Raza, Cheema, 2015; Waltemeyer & Cranmore, 2018; Young & Nichols, 2017). Nazuk et al. (2015) reported an increased learning and performance engagement among students through the use of

technology as a digital storytelling tool. Hughes, Bradford, and Likens (2018) used online technologies Kahoot! and Google Suite in instruction and demonstrated effectiveness for promoting high-order thinking and increased communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

Duryee (2020) used the web 2.0 tool, Loom, to initiate immediacy in student-instructor interaction using technology through a welcome video that provided a brief introduction as well as an overview of how to be successful in class. Waltemeyer and Cranmore (2018) also explained the benefits of screencasting technology, such as Loom, for interaction and engagement. This form of instructor interaction combined audio and video elements in the form of instructional content, feedback, and demonstration (Waltemeyer & Cranmore, 2018).

Cooper et al. (2019) discussed the growing workload for online faculty demands efficiencies with expectations that include integrating technology, professional development, and research. In exploring instructor efficiencies, Cooper et al. (2019) identified faculty desire to spend more time interacting with students and noted that in addition to interaction in discussion threads, faculty also desire interaction via email, video conference, and synchronous chat. Young and Nichols (2017) explored interaction with students through social media, polling, and web-conferencing software to create more inclusive and engaging learning environments for students and found that diversification of communication within teaching and learning practice allowed for greater student choice and opportunities to interact with both faculty and peers.

Technology has become part of everyday life. Online learning, in particular, is enabled with, enhanced by, and relies upon technology (Hammond et al., 2018). This prevailing trend challenges the role of faculty in online learning. As technology replaces some instructional tasks that have been traditionally dependent upon an instructor, it is important to consider the question: "Is the value of instructor-interactivity in the online classroom changing?"

Community of Inquiry (COI) Framework

As internet technology has advanced rapidly in the past three decades, online education has emerged and grown into an important and indispensable resource of learning. Based upon Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2000) developed the COI framework, theoretically defining a process of creating an effective and meaningful learning experience. This experience is comprised of the three elements of Teaching, Cognitive, and Social Presence. The COI framework has been used extensively in the research and practice of online and blended learning contexts (Garrison, 2009). The applications are

relevant today, as evidenced by recent publications (Kovanović, Gašević, Joksimović, Hatala, & Adesope, 2015; Ma et al., 2017; Martinez and Barnhill, 2017; Wu, Hsieh, and Yang, 2017).

Garrison (2009) developed a survey instrument based on the COI framework to explore and test the causal relationships among the three presences, with his results pointing to the key role of teaching presence in establishing and sustaining a community of inquiry. Ma et al. (2017) explored the causal relationships of the presences in a Chinese version of COI with an added learning presence and showed that teaching and social presence directly influenced the perceptions of learning presence, stating that the learning presence was a partial mediating variable of interactional relationship within COI constructs. Kovanović et al. (2015) studied the effects of different technology-use profiles on educational experience within COI. Study results indicated that there were multiple ways for students to succeed within COI, but at the same time, it was necessary to have different instructional support and pedagogical interventions for different technology-use profiles.

Martinez and Barnhill (2017) further outlined multiple strategies of social presence such as contributing to discussion boards, prompting responses to students, providing frequent feedback, sharing personal stories and experiences, and incorporating social media for directing future research of COI work to enhance online sport management education. Wu, Hsieh, and Yang (2017) reported their study results on their online learning community in a flipped classroom to enhance English as a foreign language learners' oral proficiency. Smartphones were the communication tool for their online learning community. Using this flipped instruction technique, significant differences in the teaching, social, and cognitive presences were realized. The publications cited above have shown that the validity of the teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence of the COI framework. The COI framework undoubtedly is successful in both blended and online teaching and learning environments where a live instructor is engaged. One may be led to consider the necessity of a live person to initiate and guide these interactions. In other words, "Can the three presences of COI model be fulfilled by using educational technologies without a live instructor being synchronously available to facilitate?"

Teaching in the Online Discussion Forum

Teaching in the online classroom has continued to evolve with the growth of online education. The view of the role has been traditionally defined as more facilitator rather than an active, present participant in the online classroom (DeCosta et al., 2015). Online instructors play a vital role in ensuring students do not feel isolated and create effective online environments (Bolldén, 2016). Teacher presence often looks into how online teachers plan, structure, and conduct teaching and student outreach. According to DeCosta et al. (2015),

signs of facilitator type roles included pre-built discussion questions, assignments, and resources. These materials provided the instructor little to no opportunity to modify the class based on student or class-wide trends.

From a student perspective, instructor presence was evident in the location where the feedback and learning took place. The instructor had the ability to not only provide a score as feedback but also combine the score with content specific teachable moments. This blending of point-based and general feedback improved student perceptions of social, emotional, and cognitive presence (Bolldén, 2016). Using these methods in the discussion forum, the online faculty can closely mimic that of a traditional classroom by providing real-time feedback and further the students' understanding and exploration of the provided content.

Just as traditional classrooms are changing, so are online classrooms. Students are engaging with technology and realizing greater computer self-efficacy; thus, positive learning outcomes are achieved through multiple learning processes (Loar, 2018). Students are not only interacting with faculty but also engaging in learning through automated learning environments such as unlimited attempt practice quizzes (Davis, Duryee, Schilling, Loar, & Hammond, 2020) and homework management systems such as Aplia (Archer & Olson, 2018). These learning resources are designed to guide and reinforce areas where students may be struggling.

Universities of today may consider a review of where and how their online instructors are interacting with the class. The online platform provides several areas for instructor-student interaction, including discussion forums and grading feedback for individual assignments. As technology continues to advance, new techniques emerge designed to increase faculty presence in the online classroom.

Need and Value of Instructor Interaction

Waltemeyer and Cranmore (2020) explained that interactive discussion and prompt instructor feedback were two potential ways that online education may exceed traditional classes in rigor and quality. Both provide opportunities for instructors to gather data in real-time related to student understanding. This information allows the instructor to further engage students within the discussion forum. Additionally, grading feedback can be used to reinforce assignment and course learning objectives.

Angelo and Cross (1993) determined that Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS) were low stakes activities embedded into a unit of study. According to DeCosta et al. (2015), CATS are often found in the discussion forums. Additionally, CATS are considered a form of teaching and learning and can be utilized throughout the classroom, including announcements,

phone calls, emails, and private messages. The key to understanding this phenomenon is to realize that teaching does not end at the conclusion of a discussion thread or assignment.

Creating learning environments that combine interaction through grading feedback, CAT's, and interactive discussions allows faculty to better understand the level of student content mastery. Additionally, web-enabled learning applications provide faculty the opportunity to understand student performance while informing and guiding students to revisit key concepts or ideas that may have been missed. As such, it is important to understand student preferences as it relates to who, or what, encourages them to engage with the learning objectives (Schilling & Hammond, 2019).

Purpose

In contrast to the face-to-face classroom in which teaching activities and course design are inextricably interwoven, online education provides a unique platform wherein course design (i.e., transmission of course content) and teaching (i.e., facilitation of learning experience) are independent factors. Advances in instructional technology, learning management systems, and open educational resources allow for the creation of dynamic, high-quality online course content. Such classrooms may include text-based resources, links, video, simulations, demonstrations, and a host of other automated opportunities for students to interact with course content. Within this context, it is important to understand the value of instructor-student interaction. The purpose of this study is to examine faculty and student perceptions about the shifting role of instructor interaction in the online classroom.

Methods

Participants

Participants included faculty and students responding to an anonymous online survey. All respondents are from a large university that has established online and campus programs; the university offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Only faculty and students who indicated "online" as their primary mode of teaching or learning were included in the current study. The online program is fully established and utilizes a faculty-created, centralized curriculum. Courses last eight weeks in duration and are organized into weekly, time-limited, asynchronous modules. All modules contain online lecture information (primarily text-based overviews with embedded multimedia supplements), discussion activities, and homework assignments. Course development is completed independently of course facilitation. During

an active term, faculty are responsible solely for teaching the established course. Faculty and students received parallel forms of the same survey adapted in language to be uniquely specific to their role at the institution.

Faculty

To prevent survey fatigue for faculty respondents, the original survey was divided into two parts (Form A and Form B) with a unique set of questions sent to each half of the online faculty population. Survey questions targeting the impact of course design and instructional supplements on the quality of online teaching were included in both forms of the survey. Complete demographic information of faculty receiving each form of the survey is in Table 1; the current analysis focuses exclusively on data obtained via Form B.

Table 1. *Faculty Demographics by Survey Form*

	Form A		Form B	
N	**223**		**195**	
Fulltime	30	13.5%	20	10.3%
Adjunct	193	86.5%	175	89.7%
Online Teaching Experience	6.77 years (SD=4.54)		6.98 years (SD=4.58)	
Campus Teaching Experience	6.98 years (SD=8.16)		8.19 years (SD=8.30)	
Academic Discipline				
Business	52	23.3%	42	21.5%
Education	39	17.5%	40	20.5%
Fine Arts	1	.4%	1	.5%
Humanities & Social Sciences	43	19.3%	43	22.1%
Nursing & Health Care	41	18.4%	46	23.6%
Science, Engineering & Technology	4	1.8%	1	.5%
Theology	29	13.0%	16	8.2%
Graduate Studies	14	6.2%	6	3.1%

Form A. Respondents to Form A included 227 faculty currently teaching online; 4 responses were eliminated as the individuals were online doctoral mentors and did not teach typical, asynchronous online courses. The resultant 223 faculty responses were included in the analysis; 30 (13.5%) are full-time faculty and 193 (86.5%) are adjunct. Faculty reported an average of 6.77 (SD=4.54) years of experience teaching online.

Form B. Two hundred faculty teaching online responded to Form B; 5 responses were eliminated as the faculty mentored online doctoral students rather than teaching a typical online course. Analysis of the remaining 195 faculty indicated that 20 (10.3%) are full-time and

175 (89.7%) are adjunct. Faculty reported an average of 6.98 (SD=4.58) years of online teaching experience.

Faculty Overall. Combining the participants from Form A and Form B, complete faculty survey responses include 418 respondents that currently teach online. While 50 respondents (12.0%) are full-time faculty, the majority (368; 88.0%) of respondents classify themselves as adjunct faculty. Faculty reported a wide range of online teaching experience (0 to 27 years) with a mean of 6.87 years (SD=4.56). In addition to their online teaching experience, respondents also indicated extensive campus-based teaching experience with a mean of 7.54 years (SD=8.24). Faculty represent a range of academic disciplines: 22.5% business; 18.9% education; .5% fine arts; 20.6% humanities and social sciences; 20.8% nursing and health care; 1.2% science, engineering and technology; 10.8% theology; and 4.5% graduate studies. No information was collected on faculty age, gender, or ethnicity.

Students

Student respondents included 2,386 individuals who indicated online learning as their primary mode of education. Degree breakdown indicated 1,067 (44.7%) undergraduates (205 freshmen, 211 sophomores, 284 juniors, 367 seniors), 927 (38.9%) masters, and 392 (16.4%) doctorate. Most students (48.3%) take 6 to 8 classes per year. Table 2 highlights typical course load by degree.

Table 2. *Typical Course Load by Degree*

Course Load	Undergraduate		Masters		Doctorate		Overall	
1 to 3	161	15.1%	84	9.1%	33	8.5%	278	11.7%
3 to 5	193	18.1%	245	26.5%	99	25.4%	537	22.6%
6 to 8	496	46.6%	423	45.8%	230	59.0%	1149	48.3%
9 to 11	133	12.5%	112	12.1%	15	3.8%	260	10.9%
12 to 14	53	5.0%	43	4.7%	2	.5%	98	4.1%
15 to 17	11	1.0%	3	.3%	1	.3%	15	.6%
18 or more	17	1.6%	14	1.5%	10	2.6%	41	1.7%

Most students are in their first two years at the institution (56.0% in first year; 19.0% in second year) with experience in the online program (53.6% have taken 1 to 8 online classes; 23.3% have taken 9 to 16 online classes). Most students (93.0%) have a grade point average above 3.0. Students tend to be nontraditional with an average age of 43.13 years (undergraduate = 40.67; masters = 43.24; doctorate = 49.56). No information was collected on gender, ethnicity, or program of study.

Materials

Faculty Survey

The complete online survey consisted of five demographic questions, one multiple-choice question, five open-ended essay questions, and nine rating questions (each containing 5 to 15 individual items requiring independent rating) exploring various aspects of online teaching and learning. Due to the length of the survey, it was divided into two forms (Form A and Form B) that each included approximately half of the questions. Demographic questions were included in both forms of the survey; demographic questions are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. *Faculty Survey Demographic Questions*

Question	Response Options
How would you describe your primary teaching role?	Adjunct Online Instructor; Fulltime Online Faculty; Traditional Campus Adjunct Instructor; Fulltime Campus Faculty; Dissertation Faculty; Other
With regard to your primary teaching role, in which discipline area do you primarily teach?	Business; Education; Fine Arts; Humanities & Social Sciences; Nursing & Health Care; Science, Engineering & Technology; Theology; Graduate Studies
In which of the following modalities do you currently (within the last year) teach? Select all that apply.	Campus; Online; Dual Enrollment
How many years have you taught face-to-face at the college level?	Open answer
How many years have you taught online at the college level?	Open answer

Different survey questions targeting the impact of course revisions and instructional supplements were included in each form of the faculty survey; data for this analysis was obtained exclusively from Form B. The target question for this study asked respondents to "Rate the value of each of the following for fostering interactivity and engagement in the online classroom." Respondents rated nine dimensions of interaction:

- synchronous office hours via videoconference
- synchronous office hours via phone
- synchronous office hours via chat
- instructor posting instructional resources and course content in the discussion threads
- instructor posting questions and prompting conversation in the discussion threads
- instructor's use of students' names when posting in discussion threads
- instructor proactively calling students on the telephone

- instructor providing detailed feedback on the initial reply to the weekly discussion questions
- instructor providing detailed feedback on students' participation in the weekly discussions

Participants responded to rating survey items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = no value; 2 = minor value; 3 = some value; 4 = significant value; 5 = extreme value; and 6 = not applicable).

Student Survey

The complete online survey consisted of eight demographic questions, three open-ended essay questions, and nine rating questions (each containing 1 to 15 individual items requiring independent rating) exploring various aspects of online teaching and learning. Demographic questions are listed in Table 4; the target question and response options on the student survey were identical to the faculty survey.

Table 4. *Student Survey Demographic Questions*

Question	Response Options
What year are you in school?	Freshman; Sophomore; Junior; Senior; Masters; Doctoral; Other
On average, how many courses do you take a year?	1 to 3; 3 to 5; 6 to 8; 9 to 11; 12 to 14; 15 to 17; 18 or more
How many years have you attended this institution? Please indicate to the nearest whole year.	1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10 or more
Approximately how many traditional CAMPUS classes have you taken at this institution?	0; 1 to 8; 9 to 16; 17 to 24; 25 to 31; 32 to 39; 40 or more
Approximately how many ONLINE classes have you taken at this institution?	0; 1 to 8; 9 to 16; 17 to 24; 25 to 31; 32 to 39; 40 or more
Approximately how many HYBRID/BLENDED classes have you taken at this institution?	0; 1 to 8; 9 to 16; 17 to 24; 25 to 31; 32 to 39; 40 or more
What is your approximate GPA at this institution?	0 to .9; 1.0 to 1.9; 2.0 to 2.9; 3.0 to 3.9; 4.0
What is your age? Please indicate your answer in numeric form rounding to the nearest whole year.	Open answer

Procedure

A request to complete the survey was emailed to all faculty and students. The email was sent out from the academic affairs office as a component of a larger institutional effectiveness

initiative. The initial email requesting faculty and student participation in the survey outlined the purpose and scope of the investigation. Faculty and students electing to complete the online survey accessed it via a link embedded in the email. There was no incentive for participation, nor were there any consequences for electing not to complete the survey. The survey was administered anonymously via an online survey tool; no personal identifiers or IP address information was collected. The survey access remained open and available for participants for 30 days; there were no reminders or follow-up emails to encourage participation in the survey. Per the survey design, participants could skip questions, move throughout the survey, and/or change answers to questions at any time. Survey answers were not finalized until respondents clicked the "submit" button. At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were provided a notification with contact information in the event they had questions, comments, or desired access to survey results.

Results

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences between faculty and student perceptions of the value of various instructional activities for fostering interactivity and engagement in the online classroom. Results indicated that students rated synchronous office hours via telephone [F (1, 2569) = 9.39, p = .002], synchronous office hours via chat [F (1, 2557) = 9.30, p = .002] and instructor providing detailed feedback on the initial reply to weekly discussion questions [F (1, 2565) = 4.65, p = .031] significantly higher (i.e., more value on fostering interactivity and engagement) than did faculty. In contrast, faculty gave significantly higher ratings than students to the value of the instructor posting questions and prompting conversations in the discussion threads [F (1, 2567) = 3.95, p = .047] and the instructor's use of students' names when posting in discussion threads [F (1, 2571) = 37.07, p = .000]. Table 5 provides the mean value ratings by faculty and students for all instructional activities.

Table 5: *Mean Ratings for Instructional Activities for Fostering Interactivity and Engagement*

Instructional Activities	Faculty			Student		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
synchronous office hours via videoconference	194	2.80	1.15	2386	2.98	1.45
synchronous office hours via phone	192	2.83	1.18	2379	3.15	1.40
synchronous office hours via chat	191	2.92	1.19	2368	3.25	1.44
instructor posting instructional resources and course content in the discussion threads	192	3.96	1.09	2379	4.00	1.12
instructor posting questions and prompting conversation in the discussion threads	194	4.28	.93	2375	4.13	1.08
instructor's use of students' names when posting in discussion threads	195	4.03	1.11	2378	3.41	1.38
instructor proactively calling students on the telephone	193	3.06	1.28	2374	3.05	1.45
instructor providing detailed feedback on the initial reply to the weekly discussion questions	193	3.68	1.17	2374	3.87	1.14
instructor providing detailed feedback on students' participation in the weekly discussions	195	3.66	1.22	2370	3.80	1.19

An examination of mean rating scores finds that an instructor's interactivity in the discussion forums (posting questions, instructional resources, etc.) and the feedback provided by instructors (to the initial discussion questions as well as students' participation) was rated as having significant value by both faculty and students. Using a rating of three (indicating "some value") as a cut-off point, students rated everything except videoconference office hours as offering varying levels of value for interactivity and engagement; in contrast, faculty rated all synchronous office hour opportunities (videoconference, phone, or chat) below this threshold.

While faculty and students provided different value weightings to the various instructional components, there was general agreement on the relative value. As indicated in Table 6, when instructional activities are ranked according to perceived value for fostering interactivity and engagement in the online classroom, both faculty and students agree that an instructor posting questions and prompting conversations is the most valuable instructional activity. Then, except for views on the value of instructors using students' names in the discussion threads, there is ranking agreement in the value of instructors posting instructional resources in the discussion threads and providing detailed feedback on discussion activities. There is also widespread agreement that synchronous instructional activities (phone, chat, and videoconference) are valued much lower than asynchronous interaction in the discussion forums. While students rated synchronous office hours via phone or chat higher than faculty, these were still ranked low in value compared to the other student ratings. Videoconference office hours were perceived to have particularly low interactivity value by both students and

faculty; students also provided low value ratings for phone calls (either proactive contact from the instructor or via office hours).

Interestingly, faculty perceived the use of students' names in the discussion forums as being particularly valuable (providing ratings to indicate "significant value"), whereas students gave lower value ratings only indicating "some value." While faculty rated the use of students' names second in interactivity value, this dimension was ranked fifth by students.

Table 6. *Comparative Ranking of Faculty and Student Perceptions of Value of Instructional Activities for Fostering Interactivity and Engagement*

Rank	Faculty	Students
1	instructor posting questions and prompting conversation in the discussion threads	instructor posting questions and prompting conversation in the discussion threads
2	instructor's use of students' names when posting in discussion threads	instructor posting instructional resources and course content in the discussion threads
3	instructor posting instructional resources and course content in the discussion threads	instructor providing detailed feedback on the initial reply to the weekly discussion questions
4	instructor providing detailed feedback on the initial reply to the weekly discussion questions	instructor providing detailed feedback on students' participation in the weekly discussions
5	instructor providing detailed feedback on students' participation in the weekly discussions	instructor's use of students' names when posting in discussion threads
6	instructor proactively calling students on the telephone	synchronous office hours via chat
7	synchronous office hours via chat	synchronous office hours via phone
8	synchronous office hours via phone	instructor proactively calling students on the telephone
9	synchronous office hours via videoconference	synchronous office hours via videoconference

Discussion

Research indicates that instructor interaction is important in the online classroom (Martin, Budhrani, Kumar, & Ritzhaupt, 2019). However, as technology has advanced and gotten better, it is important to consider how that value may have changed. Do students still value instructor interaction, or has the value decreased? The findings indicate that the diminishing value of instructor interaction is simply not the case. Faculty and students tend to agree on this point, which makes life easier for faculty, faculty developers, and administrators, particularly as efforts are made to identify what most benefits students and subsequently collaborate on best practices for interaction in the online classroom. Faculty and student perceptions of the value of instructor interaction in online courses revealed three key "value"

themes. First, both students and faculty identified instructor interactivity in the discussion forums as significantly valuable. For example, faculty identified posting additional questions and prompts in the discussion forum as well as the use of student names in the discussion threads as a way to provide more value in fostering interactivity and engagement.

Second, findings indicate both students and faculty find instructor feedback to student initial discussion question responses and feedback on student participation posts significantly valuable. For example, students identified detailed feedback on their initial discussion question responses as providing significantly high value in fostering instructional interactivity and engagement. Finally (Third), both faculty and students viewed synchronous instructional activities (video conference, chat, phone) as rating lower in value compared to asynchronous interaction in the discussion forums.

These findings illuminate opportunities and areas of consideration for three stakeholders in the student-teacher interaction equation: faculty, faculty developers, and administrators. As roles and teaching strategies have evolved, so has technology. Yet instructor interaction is still valuable to both faculty and students. As such, it is important to extend this discussion to explore ways in which technology and interaction can marry and ultimately support student learning and improve teaching effectiveness. Current research echoes the importance of creating best practices (Schilling & Hammond, 2019) and opportunities for faculty to augment interaction in the discussion forum (Hammond et al., 2018)

In short, faculty still matter, and so does interaction. Faculty, faculty developers, and administrators each play an important role in creating an environment that supports instructor interaction in the online classroom. Best practices still hold, but best practices can be further explored to ensure maximum impact of instructor interaction efforts and at the same time foster a culture of collaboration and sharing of best practices. Pivoting from here is an opportunity to get creative as we consider the three "value" messages from faculty and students (instructor interactivity in the discussion forum, instructor feedback on discussion questions and participation posts, and asynchronous interaction) in the context of each of three stakeholders: faculty, faculty developers, and administrators.

Recommendations

Faculty

Student engagement is an essential component of online learning. This is how students feel connected to their classmates and faculty, as well as the university. Due to the nature of online learning, faculty are faced with the challenge of not having face-to-face interaction with

their students. As such, faculty members have a great responsibility to create a learning environment that is engaging, personal, and welcoming. The following section includes a discussion on three recommendations for faculty:

1. Personal communication
2. Model the behavior you want to see in the classroom
3. Set clear expectations at the beginning of class (feedback, DQ participation from faculty, grades, etc.)

Personal communication

One way that faculty can connect with and interact with online learners is through welcome calls. Welcome calls provide the opportunity for faculty to introduce themselves to their students on a personal level, answer any questions, and provide an overview of expectations and resources. Students benefit from this type of interaction as it puts a voice with a name and further connects the student to their online learning experience.

Another way that faculty can connect with learners is through the use of a welcome video. The purpose of a welcome video is to introduce the student to the faculty member and generate excitement about the start of the course. Faculty may choose to post the welcome video in the announcements, in the discussion forum, or in the private forum. Another option is to use a text messaging app such as Remind to send the welcome video to the students. The video shows the student that their instructor is a real person, just like them, and that they are there to help.

Finally, faculty can use personal email as a means to interact with students throughout the term. Many faculty use email quite regularly for interaction with adult students, as it allows for quicker receipt and response. Many adult students also work full-time and are not always logged into the online classroom. However, oftentimes they do have their cell phone at arm's reach. Faculty may use email interaction to reach out to students about missing assignments, to answer questions, and to just check in.

Several faculty report using several or all of these interaction approaches to reach students. One approach to using all three of these in tandem may involve sending the welcome video via Remind before the class starts. Then follow up with the welcome video during week one in the private forum for those students who did not sign up for Remind. In week two, faculty can make a personal phone call to students to check in, see how things are going, answer questions, and discuss expectations. Then, in week four, faculty can follow up via email with any students who are struggling. Another nice touch is to email all students who are getting a

90% or higher in the course at the midpoint of the course to congratulate the student on their academic performance to date.

Model the behavior you want to see

An important aspect of faculty interaction in the online classroom occurs in the discussion thread. Faculty play an important role in guiding discussion to lead students to deeper learning. One way to accomplish this is to model the behavior that you want to see. For example, if a faculty member expects a certain level of quality and content, they can model the expectation.

Modeling the behavior that you want to see can take many forms. For example, faculty can provide an example of an acceptable participation post. This can be accomplished by posting an example of a sample discussion question response with the course policies. In addition, faculty can use this same approach by providing examples of appropriate participation posts and placing these in the course policies section of the classroom. Examples of acceptable participation posts may include professional examples, citing content from the textbook and peer-reviewed journals, providing opinions, and asking questions.

Faculty can also model the behavior that they want to see by posting responses in the discussion forum in response to the initial discussion responses made by students. These posts can include specific examples, supporting citations, and questions to help advance the class discussion. Students can glean a lot related with regard to how they should interact in the classroom through modeled behavior of faculty. Additionally, faculty can guide the interaction through their modeled behavior to ultimately enhance student learning.

Set clear expectations at the beginning of class

Finally, faculty can set clear expectations at the beginning of class to set the tone for interaction and expectation for the duration of the course. The beginning of a class is one of uncertainty for a student. Online classes include a diverse mix of students who have a diverse background in online learning. Some students may have just transferred to the institution, others may not have been in school for years, and others may have already completed several courses at the institution. Setting clear expectations results in everyone on the same page.

There are several ways that faculty can set expectations at the beginning of class. Faculty may consider posting a "course policies section" in the announcements or create a separate discussion thread to post policies. Regardless of the location, students can benefit from this added level of interaction that will ultimately set them up for success.

There are several types of policies that an instructor may want to include in the course policies. To ensure that all students have read and agree to the policies, faculty can include a "read and reply with acknowledgment" notice within the subject line of each policy thread. Examples of policies that faculty may consider including in the course policies that can set the tone for classroom interaction and expectation include: grading expectations, initial discussion response expectations, participation requirements, how to reach me, tips for success, publisher resources, exam policy, instructor created resources, late policy, assignment submission policy, instructor grading expectation, and originality expectations.

Faculty Training and Development

1. Expectations and guidance on appropriate interaction, communication, and feedback
2. Training on web 2.0 tools for asynchronous learning
3. Best practices for time on task

Expectations and guidance on appropriate interaction, communication, and feedback

To ensure consistency in the online classroom, faculty training and development can provide tremendous support by providing guidance on how to interact with students through communication techniques, as well as through training on the role of feedback in interaction to further engage students in the content and further learning. When expectations and guidance are provided, faculty know how they should interact.

There are many ways that this can be accomplished. For example, faculty training and development can provide examples of appropriate interaction with sample announcements, sample phone call scripts, sample course policies, and sample discussion and participation posts. Similar to students, faculty benefit from this type of guidance and the opportunity to see appropriate interaction behavior modeled.

Faculty training and development can also provide direction to faculty on the appropriate way to give students feedback. For example, training and development can partner with the lead faculty for each course to develop grading expectations and identify the appropriate level of feedback to provide. Resource guides can then be provided to faculty to ensure that faculty understand and are able to grade to the learning objectives; and provide the level and depth of feedback expected.

Web 2.0 training

Another way that faculty training and development can support faculty interaction is by providing training to faculty on web 2.0 delivery for asynchronous learning. In a synchronous learning environment, students are able to experience faculty live and in person. Discussions happen in real time, and instructors are able to gauge student learning in real time through verbal and non-verbal cues. In addition, synchronous learners benefit from the physical nature of the face-to-face learning environment. It is easy for the instructor to divide the class up into small groups and instruct each group to engage in discussion while the instructor walks the room and monitors the collaborative learning. Instructors can put a problem in front of students and oversee them while they solve the problem together or individually. The real-time attribute of synchronous learning is hard to duplicate in an asynchronous environment. Yet that environment is still necessary for individuals like the adult learner who works full-time and has a family.

Web 2.0 tools provide faculty with the opportunity to 'fill in the gap' between the asynchronous and synchronous environments. To bridge that gap, faculty should understand what web-enabled tools are available, and how to use them. This is where faculty training and development can truly shine and support faculty.

Faculty training and development have the understanding of the latest and greatest tools and resources that can be used in the online modality including Padlet, Basecamp, Remind, Zoom, Loom, YouTube, Prezi, Slideshare, and Flipgrid, to name a few. Faculty training and development can support faculty interaction in the online classroom by providing workshops, job aids, training seminars, and discussion forums focused on the use of these resources. Many web 2.0 tools provide free access for educator use. Faculty training and development can assist faculty in account setup and training of use. Faculty benefit from the support and students benefit from the added level of engagement.

Time on task

Finally, faculty training and development can support instructor interaction in the online classroom through targeted training on time on task. Faculty face many demands on a daily basis. They are grading papers, they are planning lessons, and they are serving their college by serving as faculty advisors for student clubs, and by serving on committees for the college and the university. In short, they are short on time. To juggle these demands, faculty can benefit from time on task training. Faculty training and development can support faculty in this area by providing resources and tools related to time management and best practices. For example,

training and development can provide resources for mapping the day. Setting priorities can also benefit faculty in time management strategy.

Another way that faculty training and development can assist faculty in time on task is through the development of best practices. For example, training and development can train faculty about tools such as TypeItIn, a repository of sorts that holds a bank of feedback responses that faculty can use to store frequently used responses to students. Another best practice opportunity for time on task is that of pre-written discussion responses. Faculty training and development can assist faculty in discussion interaction through teaching the development of content related discussion resources. These resources can be pre-written and stored in a bank for faculty to use as specific content is brought up in the discussion forums. Faculty can access the content from the bank, and personalize the interaction with a bridge to engage the student further in discussion.

Administrators

Recent research on administrative considerations related to effective teaching practice supports the role of administrators in encouraging faculty teaching effectiveness (Hammond et al., 2018; Hammond & Waltemeyer, 2020) that can be applied to best practices related to faculty interaction in online classes. Three key areas have been identified that may be helpful to administrators in encouraging instructor interaction in the online classroom:

1. Set policies that ensure positive interaction
2. Maintain a level of accountability
3. Create a culture of collaboration and consistency

Set policies that ensure positive interaction

Policies that support faculty interaction create a climate in which clear and realistic expectations guide a positive interaction experience. Policies can be developed related to response times, level of expected interaction in discussion forums, types of contact, and assignment feedback. For example, administrators can set expectations for faculty to be reached via multiple methods (phone, email, LMS, text messaging) and within a specific time period, such as 24-hour turnaround (Hammond & Waltemeyer, 2020). Administrators can also set policy related to frequency of instructor participation in the discussion forum, such as two posts per day on five days each week. Finally, administrators can also support online faculty feedback interaction by creating policies and expectations related to assignment feedback turn-a-round, such as four workdays for FTF and seven calendar days for adjunct (Hammond & Waltemeyer, 2020). In addition, administrators can set expectations for personalized feedback.

Students in this study indicated appreciation for personalized feedback as a form of instructor interaction. Planar and Moya (2016) also boasts the importance of feedback that is personalized.

Maintain a level of accountability

Setting policy and expectation is only as good as the level of accountability maintained. In other words, what gets inspected, gets done. Administrators can hold faculty accountable to quality and quantity interaction standards in the online classroom through ongoing performance management. This can be accomplished through weekly spot checks, office training visits, monthly one on ones, goal setting, and Management by Objectives (MBOs). Administrators can also utilize scholarly engagement as an area for goal setting within the performance management process. Both traditional and adjunct faculty want to expand their skills by conducting research, pursuing certification through additional coursework and degrees (Luongo, 2018). This can aid in faculty confidence as they approach content interactions with their students. Finally, as part of the performance management process, administrators can utilize seasoned faculty to mentor less seasoned faculty on best practices related to classroom interaction. Faculty want to interact with their peers (Cross & Polk, 2018). Peer interaction can be an excellent means by which observation and mentorship can lead to improved faculty-student interaction in the online classroom.

Create a culture of collaboration and consistency

Finally, administrators can influence instructor interaction with students by creating a faculty culture of collaboration and consistency. Collaboration for content consistency can occur between instructors who teach the course both prior and following their course, and instructors teaching the same course. For example, administrators can ask and encourage collaboration on classroom expectation, including student and faculty participation (days and posts) as well as assignment grading turn-around. Students coming from a class with an instructor who has significantly different practices related to interaction and feedback may be disappointed in the next course (or pleasantly surprised).

When administrators set a culture for collaboration centered on instructor interaction, students benefit through consistency (Waltemeyer & Cranmore, 2020). Administrators can also support same-course collaboration for the development of class discussion content. Administrators can facilitate collaboration on content for student-faculty interaction during scheduled retreats, faculty meeting breakout sessions, conference calls, or web-enabled meetings. Additionally, administrators may present the collaboration efforts aimed at student-faculty interaction as a team-building activity or work sessions in which faculty teaching the

same course review the entire syllabus and map content needs for discussions. Then administrators can divide out the work, and post it in a shared access web 2.0 location for all course-specific content, such as Basecamp or Padlet.

In addition to using web 2.0 tools to store and organize instructor interaction content, administrators can also encourage collaboration using web 2.0 tools as part of efforts to encourage faculty-student interaction in the online classroom. For example, faculty can be divided up based on course content to create video lecture highlights. The faculty would each record their assigned lectures and create content for the discussion forums for faculty to post to engage students deeper in content and discussion. Another option is to create course content using a web 2.0 tool such as Flipgrid. Flipgrid is a video-enabled tool that allows student-faculty and student-student interaction through short video clips. Administrators can encourage faculty to collaborate together to create video content for each week of the course, allowing for greater interaction in the classroom using video.

Conclusion

The current study identified three themes as significantly valuable in fostering interactivity and engagement in the online classroom. These included instructor interactivity, instructor feedback on participation, and asynchronous interaction in discussion forums. Recommendations for three key stakeholder groups including administrators, faculty developers, and faculty were provided. These recommendations combined technology and instructor interaction to ultimately support student learning and teaching effectiveness. As such, opportunities exist for stakeholders to consider the needs of their institutions and identify and integrate these recommendations as appropriate.

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Through the Eyes of the Mentor: Understanding the Adolescent Developing Reader

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Abstract

While some teacher candidates may believe reading instruction is the responsibility of English teachers, providing teacher candidates across all content areas with opportunities to develop skills working with developing readers may impact this misconception. Since some teacher candidates have limited experience, confidence, and/or reading strategies to instruct developing readers, this study examines the individual experiences of reading mentors at a midwestern university and the effect of their experience on developing readers. This mentoring experience revealed an impact both for the teacher candidates and developing readers. This opportunity proved to be rewarding while providing a glimpse of the reality of working with developing readers in teacher candidates' future classrooms.

Keywords: adolescent literacy, mentors, mentoring, reading mentoring, teacher preparation, developing readers, reading strategies, reading motivation, high interest reading materials, reflection

Introduction

"The kid just can't read. I don't know what to do with him. When does the resource room open so he can come to you?" (Moreau, 2014, p. 1). For many resource teachers and intervention specialists, this may sound all too familiar. Working with developing readers is often overlooked by content teachers outside of the language arts classroom but is necessary for all teachers. Without an advocate, these students are left to fend for themselves, falling behind their peers. Therefore, educational mentoring and mentoring programs may provide teacher candidates with opportunities to learn and implement effective strategies for developing readers in all content areas.

One of the goals of a teacher education program is to give teacher candidates opportunities to work with students from diverse populations in their field experiences. However, one area often overlooked is working with developing readers, primarily because teacher candidates need particular knowledge and skills to be helpful to these students. Providing teachers with reading strategies that they can use in their classrooms helps build their instructional self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994; Massey & Lewis, 2011; Murnen et al., 2018; Ness, 2008; Plucker, 2010). In addition, strengthening the foundational reading skills of all students helps them to read and write more successfully in all content areas (Draper et al., 2005; Moje, 2008). Therefore, providing teacher candidates with opportunities to mentor adolescent developing readers can be integral to both the mentor and to developing reader's growth and development.

First and second year teacher candidates may have limited experience, confidence, and/or reading strategies to work with developing readers. One teacher candidate from our study said, "I haven't exactly mentored someone who is struggling before. This will be my first time, so I am not so confident…I don't know what strategies to use." This teacher candidate, along with other candidates, are transitioning from "students of teaching" to "teachers of students" (Dewey, 1986), and their first inclination is to focus on what they are doing as teachers. The mentoring experience encourages teacher candidates to shift their focus to their learners rather than on themselves (Paterson & Elliott, 2011).

Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to explore the individual experiences of six reading mentors at a Midwest university and the impact of their experiences after shifting their focus to their learners. More specifically, the researchers expanded on a prior study that examined how high-interest literacy plans, developed by the teacher mentors, influenced the engagement of developing readers at a nearby high school (Murnen et al., 2018). This study is significant to teacher education and literacy preparation for all teachers. It provides teacher candidates with a purposeful, hands-on learning experience with adolescent developing readers. To respond to the literacy issues articulated, this study asks the following research questions: How did the teacher candidates' mentoring experiences impact the candidates' understanding of the needs of adolescent developing readers? How did candidates interpret developing readers' engagement using high interest literacy materials?

Review of Literature

Some adolescent students struggle in reading across content areas in part because they may not have developed the reading skills necessary to successfully engage the complex reading tasks required of them (Lupo et al., 2018). This reading struggle may not solely be a matter of

skills but could be attributed to student engagement. Students may engage more frequently in reading when they find the material of strong interest and relevance to their lives (Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Cockroft & Atkinson, 2017). When teachers: (a) find more time to engage students' interests, (b) leverage this interest back into the content, and (c) devote time to the specific strategies to develop life-long literacy skills, students find success in reading (Ivey & Johnston, 2013; Lupo et al., 2018).

Faculty members are being strongly encouraged to incorporate reading strategies within their disciplines (Ness, 2009); therefore, teacher candidates would benefit from implementing and creating high interest literacy plans to evaluate their effectiveness with developing readers (Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Cockroft & Atkinson, 2017). Reaching all learners through reading instruction encompasses a greater number of instructional skills and strategies and may require additional professional development to promote reading instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In this review of literature, three areas are delineated that help support this research: students' reading motivation, students' interests, and students' selection of reading materials. This connection establishes their roles in student engagement with reading.

Students' Reading Motivation

Motivation is often used as an all-encompassing word to pay tribute to the complexities of the human aspects of reading. Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) describe reading motivation as "the individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs, with regard to the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading" (p. 405). Although students are often labeled as motivated or not motivated, motivation is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. Reading motivation is both a multi-faceted and dynamic component of adolescent literacy achievement.

Maslow (1943), for example, argues that an action occurs from a culmination of multiple points of motivation. Before students can cultivate the need to know and understand, their physiological, safety, acceptance, and esteem needs must first be fulfilled. Students need to feel physically and emotionally safe before they are motivated to engage in higher-level thinking. Contrast this with the fact that in the school year of 2015-2016, 52.1% of public school students in the United States were eligible for free and reduced lunches, indicating food scarcity at home. Likewise, 2.6% of public school students were homeless that year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Whereas, in contrast to the national statistics, 23% of Ohio public school students were eligible for free lunches, and 5% were eligible for reduced lunches (Ohio Department of Education, 2019).

Atmosphere is another critical aspect guiding motivation. Some students need movement opportunities throughout the day, so a proper reading area would have space for movement

as well as time for personal writing. According to Hurst (2009), a room should be structured so that "everybody'd want to come" (p. 64). The structure should include socialization opportunities and acknowledgement of student strengths (Fraser, 1998; Mazlum et al., 2015; Pennington, 2017). In addition, opportunities for oral discussion are particularly integral to motivation in English Language Learners (Veruzzaa et al., 2014).

Teachers must maintain an expectation to physically see students reading and bringing books or other literature materials home (Stewart et al., 2018). Daily time devoted to personal preference, not academic reading, may also stimulate interest (Varuzza et al., 2014; Willingham, 2015; Pennington, 2017). These types of accommodations or others creatively developed by teachers may motivate developing readers.

The motivational level of developing students is highly situational. Developing learners often convince themselves that reading is not overly important (Varuzza et al., 2014; Willingham, 2015). If students enjoy the material or activity, they will reflect the behaviors of avid readers. Avid readers have high intrinsic motivation and low avoidance (Wigfield et al., 2012). In contrast, if students do not feel connected to the material or activity, they may demonstrate behaviors of adverse students (Wigfield et al., 2012). Reading expectancy values dictate what a reader believes he or she will gain from the reading experience (Guthrie et al., 2012). This discrepancy between avid and developing readers is integral when examining student motivation.

It is well established that as students enter their teenage years, they demonstrate less interest in reading (Varuzza et al., 2014). Within the adolescent age range of eight to eighteen years old, populations of students aged 14-16 are at greatest risk for lack of reading outside of school (Clark & Teravainen, 2017). Furthermore, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (as cited in Willingham, 2015) reported that on average, students read only six minutes outside of school per day, but adults estimate that students read an hour and 15 minutes. Finally, Guthrie et al., (2012) assert that motivated students score higher than any other group on comprehension and fluency tests. Thus, it can be inferred that increasing student motivation may lead to an increase in achievement.

Educators believe that motivation leads to deeper learning. In fact, "literacy...promote(s) the depth of thought required for success in college, careers, and civic life" (Patterson et al., 2018, p. 524). Research has linked motivation with reading achievement (Bozack, 2011; Bozack & Salvaggio, 2013; Guthrie et al., 2012). Motivated students have higher comprehension and application of reading skills than non-motivated students (Wigfield et al., 2012). Lack of reading motivation and achievement fails to support a student's success in life; thus, these populations deserve both dynamic instruction and engaging materials that will cultivate their love of reading.

Students' Interests

According to Dewey (1934), "experience is rendered conscious by means of that fusion of old meanings and new situations…" (p. 275). An educator's charge is to look at the learner and consider previous experiences and current interests to create continuity and a curriculum that promotes growth and a restructuring of students' belief systems. The research emphasizes the importance of student engagement using high interest reading materials (Belzer, 2004; Murnen et al., 2018; Taylor, 2006). According to Gleason (2011), high-low books that are high interest books written at a low reading level may be motivating to adolescent readers.

One component of students' motivation is their interest in the reading material. Common novel or picture book themes that appear to attract students include love, teen suicide, drama, biographies, humorous events, and other cultural perspectives (Stewart et al., 2018). Moreover, Wright and Sherman (1999) argued that other students may find motivation and comprehension success in comics and graphic novels. Furthermore, Williams' (2008) asserts that comics can bridge the gap between the classes of art, philosophy, history, and literature. Of the various types of reading materials, a higher percentage of adolescents aged eight to 18 years spend more time on electronic reading than imprinted books (Clark & Teravainen, 2017). As of 2016, text messages, websites, song lyrics, and social networking sites all ranked above fiction reading (Clark & Teravainen, 2017; Varuzza et al., 2014) with respect to the medium of reading materials.

To illustrate the disparity in reading content between reading in school and reading outside of school, Guthrie et al., (2012) state that "only 5% of students say they read information texts out of school daily… but in school only 1% report never reading a textbook" (p.12). Alvermann et al., (2007) found that over half of the sixty 7th through 9th grade students read something from the public library every day. When students want to read for pleasure, many of them are discouraged because the books they are interested in are too difficult for them to read (Lupo et al., 2018). Willingham (2015) cautions, "Remember that your goal is that they enjoy reading, not that they enjoy reading as you do" (p.13).

The Study

The study extends the work discussed in Murnen et al., (2018) regarding teacher candidates' literacy training and mentoring program. In this study, the researchers examined teacher candidates' perceptions of developing readers' engagement using high interest literacy materials to guide instructional planning for mentoring sessions. In addition, the following two research questions were examined: (a) How did teacher candidates' mentoring experiences

impact their understanding of adolescent developing readers' needs? and (b) How did candidates interpret developing readers' engagement using high interest literacy materials?

Participants

Participants included six teacher candidates from a Midwest university serving as reading mentors to six-10th grade developing readers over two semesters at a local high school. Seven percent of this school's student population are eligible for free lunch, and three percent are eligible for reduced lunch. The 10th graders were selected for participation based on the results of a reading assessment administered by their school. The research team selected developing readers whose scores fell between two and four years below grade level. The developing readers invited to participate could choose whether to be involved.

At the time of the study, teacher candidates, serving as mentors, were education majors; three were freshmen (one ILA, one integrated social studies (ISS), and one math), two were sophomores (one ILA, one ISS), and one junior ILA (see Table 1). The mentors were enrolled in pre-methods courses and field experiences. In addition, one full-time graduate student in the Masters of Education in Reading served as the teacher candidates' mentor.

Table 1. *Participants and demographic information*

Mentor*	Content Area	Year	Developing Reader*
Jenny	Graduate Mentor	Graduate	All Mentors
Lani	ILA	Freshman	Sara
Aaliyah	ILA	Junior	Carlos
Lauren	ILA	Sophomore	Cameron
Johnston	ISS	Sophomore	Eric
Hannah	ISS	Freshman	Raven
Isaiah	Math	Freshman	Gia

* Note: Pseudonym

Methodology

To prepare for mentoring, teacher candidates spent approximately eight hours in training during the first two weeks of the semester. To ascertain their instructional knowledge, comfort levels, and understanding of the role of mentoring developing readers, a written pre-survey was distributed to teacher candidates at the beginning of the first workshop. These professional development workshops were led by two faculty researchers and their graduate assistant. Six teacher candidates who chose to mentor then attended an additional three-hour

Saturday session, where they practiced giving the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) to high school students.

The professional development workshops focused on administering and interpreting the IRI, using Fry readability assessment, implementing reading strategies, and building rapport. The structure of each two-hour workshop consisted of activating prior knowledge, introducing content, providing guided practice as well as independent practice, and assessing through self-reflection.

The initial activities in the workshop enabled candidates to define a skilled and developing reader followed by an in-depth explanation of the Scarborough (2001) Model of Skilled Reading. Presenters discussed how the strands can be broken into two categories and how the strands merge as readers become increasingly fluent. Also introduced was an assessment tool, the IRI, that teachers can use to measure students' reading strengths and areas of need. Time was allocated to identify a student's independent, instructional, or frustration level when analyzing and interpreting results from the word lists, reading passages, and comprehension questions. The second workshop focused on readability and matching text to students as well as practicing reading strategies. For those interested in mentoring, candidates remained after the second workshop for additional instruction related to their responsibilities as a mentor.

Following each mentoring session, 15-minute individual conferences were scheduled with a graduate student mentor. During the conferences, the pair reflected on mentoring plans and the session from the previous week. The data collected during these individualized debriefing sessions included teacher candidates' and graduate mentor's reflective notes that highlighted their developing readers' engagement, interest, growth, and perceived impact on reading growth.

To effectively gauge teacher candidates' perceptions of working with developing readers and utilizing reading assessment materials, data were collected over the course of two semesters using teacher candidate and developing reader pre-and post-written surveys. Two other data sources included the debriefing reflective notes of both the candidates and the graduate mentor.

The teacher candidate and developing reader surveys had both open-ended responses as well as Likert-type scale responses. Researchers analyzed the Likert-type scale responses using frequency counts. The open-ended survey questions and reflective notes were analyzed using Hatch's (2002) inductive analysis, and then Erickson's (1986) coding process to interpret survey responses. Team members read each question independently and assigned a code. They then met to discuss the individual codes and arrived at a consensus for the coding system. Miles and Huberman's (1994) content analysis was utilized to interpret and identify themes.

Findings

The findings are organized by the themes that emerged. These include: (a) teacher candidates' perceptions of mentoring developing readers, (b) reading instruction, responsibility, and beliefs, (c) teacher candidates' perceptions of developing readers' growth, and (d) teacher candidates' perceptions of mentoring experiences.

Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Mentoring Developing Readers

The mentoring experience impacted all six teacher candidates and their developing readers. All of the candidates agreed that the meetings with Jenny were helpful because they helped guide their lesson planning. The discussions were effective when they were perplexed because Jenny provided them both with ideas for strategies to use and with additional materials. Teacher candidates were concerned about their efficiency as mentors and how well they engaged their developing readers. They revealed some uncertainty but were grateful for the experience because they learned new skills they could apply in the classroom.

Prior to the initial mentoring sessions, teacher candidates completed a written survey regarding administering reading-based assessments such as the IRI and Fry (1977) readability assessment. According to the interest survey of teacher candidates, they had limited experience working with developing readers. One common thread gathered from this study was the increased comfort levels and education of teacher candidates regarding the content of the developing readers' workshop. One of the questions on the written pre-survey asked respondents to rate their comfort levels utilizing assessment tools with developing readers. The results ranged from 1 (little to no comfort administering the informal assessment) to an 8 (a standard comfort administering the informal assessment) with a 38% comfort level.

The majority of teacher candidates had not heard of the assessments before the workshop, thus indicating low comfort levels upon administering it. Aaliyah had heard of the assessments before but had no experience administering the test. After receiving proper instruction, the average comfort level increased to 80% with ranges from 60-100%. Although teacher candidates indicated they had little to no experience administering an interest inventory, the results of 52% revealed they had higher comfort levels administering this formative assessment. On the post survey, teacher candidates noted comfort levels ranging from 80-97%. After implementing intervention, mentors appeared to have a greater comfort level in administering the formative reading assessments. Initially, Lauren, Isaiah, Hannah, Johnston, and Lani did not know how to use the assessment and were unsure of what it measured.

Reading Instruction, Responsibility, and Beliefs

Understanding teacher candidates' beliefs regarding reading instruction was vital in discovering their perceptions of working with developing readers. Lani responded: "It could help relate students' career interests to reading to help them learn." Additionally, Aaliyah indicated that the interest survey could "gauge reading interests." In the pre-survey, mentors were asked to indicate what content reading instruction should be implemented and who is responsible for its delivery. Isaiah expressed, "Everywhere because reading is a basic component of learning in any classroom, and students need to have good reading instruction to ultimately ensure their success in class." Likewise, Aaliyah mentioned, "Anywhere. Students should learn how to read properly in each subject or type of reading they experience." Three other teacher candidates noted that all teachers are responsible for teaching reading, not just English teachers. In agreement, Isaiah responded, "Each teacher is responsible for teaching reading strategies to their students that will be most beneficial to them in the class they are taking."

On the pre-survey, five mentors indicated that they had no experience utilizing reading strategies with developing readers and could not specify any reading strategies in general. One mentor shared she would use a read aloud reading strategy to help developing readers; however, she did not indicate specific read aloud strategies. The written post-survey responses demonstrated growth in all of the mentors' knowledge of reading strategies. All mentors identified specific reading strategies such as fluency pyramids and read alouds. Three of the six mentioned they developed and asked comprehension questions to ascertain developing readers' understanding of the text.

After analyzing teacher candidates' beliefs regarding the responsibility and implementation of reading instruction in the classroom, it was necessary to investigate their personal experiences of working with developing readers. Unlike many skilled readers, developing readers need additional support to ensure individual success. This support is often interwoven in the research-based pedagogy and strategies meant to aid developing readers, allowing them to receive effective instruction in a general education classroom. Based on the findings, two teacher candidates had previous experience mentoring developing readers. Lani worked with 5th grade developing readers during her high school years but had no experience during college. As mentioned before, Aaliyah also worked with developing readers in this program. However, the other teacher candidates did not have any experience implementing reading-based strategies in previous endeavors.

Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Developing Readers' Growth

Prior to mentoring, teacher candidates' perception of developing readers' confidence levels was on average 65%. After intervention, the developing readers' confidence improved to 69%. Three students, Sara, Carlos, and Eric, increased their confidence levels, while Raven and Gia remained the same from the pre- to post-survey. Although the change in confidence appears to be seemingly small, all of the participating students did either improve or stay the same over the semesters. No students felt that they were less confident after the reading interventions.

On their reading interest surveys, the developing readers rated their reading proficiency levels at a 66%. Although these developing readers perceived reading as difficult, many of them still felt that they were proficient at reading. On the post-survey, they rated themselves at 73%. Of the participating students, no students felt that their reading proficiency decreased with intervention. Sara felt that her reading proficiency did not change prior to nor after intervention. However, the other students Carlos, Raven, and Gia indicated that their reading proficiency increased after intervention.

For most students, the reading interest scores increased or stayed the same from pre-survey to post-survey. Raven's interest in reading showed the most growth from the beginning to the end of the semester. Cameron's perception of her reading interest decreased over the semester. Although participating in the mentoring program provided an opportunity to participate in reading based on her interest, the mentor inferred that Cameron still sees reading as an academic activity verses reading for pleasure.

Following the mentoring sessions, teacher candidates administered the post-reading surveys to analyze growth the developing reader perceived throughout their experience. Below is a synthesis of the findings from each mentor's reflection notes interpreted from the debriefing sessions.

Mentor: Johnston

Johnston recognized Eric's interest in reading increased from 70 to 75%. In Johnston's early reflections, he noted that Eric was "worried he would mispronounce longer words." While Eric's overall interest in reading remained low, he expressed that military books increased his interest level. Johnston also mentioned that Eric "doesn't read very much," but his reading frequency outside of school increased substantially. In both pre- and post-surveys, Eric mentioned that he "wished he enjoyed reading more and that vocabulary instruction helps him the most." When asked what characteristics make up a 'good' reader, Eric said, "Knowing vocabulary."

Mentor: Hannah

Hannah noticed that her developing reader, Raven, had consistent responses about reading: "Reading is boring/I do not like it." However, Raven's interest in reading increased over the duration of the semesters. In both the pre- and post-surveys, Raven's desire to read was consistent and indicated she rarely read outside of school. However, Raven mentioned, "I wish I liked to read more." She said that she was "forced to read boring books." According to Hannah, Raven preferred reading out loud as a class because it helped to keep her interest. When reflecting on the overall mentoring experience, Raven felt that Hannah helped her with comprehension.

Mentor: Lauren

Lauren's developing reader, Cameron, showed a decrease in her interest in reading. She responded to the pre-survey prompt: "Tell me about yourself as a reader" indicating that she was "not much" of a reader. On the post-survey, she responded, "I'm a fast reader [who] doesn't mind reading at school but dislikes it at home." Cameron typically enjoyed books assigned in class such as *The Catcher in the Rye*. Usually, she chose books based on her personal interest. Although Cameron's interest in reading decreased, her confidence in reading increased. When asked if Cameron would change anything about herself as a reader, she mentioned, "I would like to slow down, so that I can understand the story." When reflecting on the semesters, Cameron noted: "Looking at context clues helped me the most with reading."

Mentor: Isaiah

Isaiah noted that Gia's interest in reading remained the same from the pre- to post-survey. Isaiah discovered that Gia continued to read outside of school one to two days per week. When given the prompt, "Tell me about yourself as a reader," she gave two different responses between the pre- and post-survey. On the pre-survey, she mentioned that she "likes to read aloud in a quiet room." On the post-survey, she expressed that she "only likes to read books in mystery and horror genres." In her response to "If you could change anything as a reader what would it be?" Gia responded, "To read more kinds of books and to read more." Then, when asked, "What advice would you give to someone who doesn't like to read?" she expressed, "The more you read, the more you like it." When reflecting on her experience throughout the semesters, Gia responded, "The mentor and reading a good book helped the most with reading."

Mentor: Aaliyah

Aaliyah discovered that Carlos' interest in reading increased over the course of the mentoring sessions. His interest typically guided what books he selected. When asked the question on the pre-survey, "What makes a 'good' reader?" Carlos responded, "Understanding." When asked, "If you could change anything as a reader, what would it be?" his response was, "Read more for fun." By the end of the sessions, Carlos' frequency of reading outside of school increased from "not a lot" as indicated in the pre-survey, to one to two days per week noted in the post-survey. Reflecting on his experience, Carlos felt that "looking at context clues was helpful."

Teacher Candidates' Perceptions of Mentoring Experiences

Before the mentoring sessions began, the teacher candidates expressed conflicting feelings about the mentoring process. Aaliyah stated, "I expected my experience to be challenging, but definitely rewarding. I assumed that the developing reader and I would work together to find a strategy that would work the best. It might include a lot of trial and error." Similarly, Isaiah projected, "I expected the mentor to struggle with reading, but I was not sure to what extent. I expected the student to get frustrated at some point, but I hoped to keep them motivated." The mentors showed moderate levels of confidence. They entered the experience expecting it to be rewarding but with prickles of doubt.

Throughout the semester of mentoring, teacher candidates experienced working with developing readers first-hand. Mentors learned and implemented a variety of reading strategies and graphic organizers (e.g., verbal questioning, fluency phrases, graphic organizers, explicit vocabulary instruction, explicit teaching of affixes, and reader's theater scripts, t-charts, inference guides, and character studies).

The support system of weekly conferences with the graduate mentor proved necessary for the teacher candidates. Nearly every teacher candidate asked for assistance from the graduate mentor. This uncertainty typically occurred after the developing reader had shown progress in the reading skill that was being taught, and the reading mentor did not know how to take the skill to the next level. The graduate student directed the mentors to informally assess the developing reader's fluency or aspects of comprehension that were not specifically addressed at the grade level where they had been working. If they showed progress, mentors were asked to extend and challenge their reading.

Teacher candidates reflected upon their lesson plans and delivery during weekly conferences, looking to improve their performance. They mentioned that they would have liked to have used progress monitoring to track students' growth, and they seemed unsure if

their interventions were engaging and helpful. Johnston stated the following during his final conference,

> I hope it was useful for him. Just to be able to like… if there is a word he comes across, to use context clues or look up the definition or both. If I were to do it differently, I would make it more interactive between us. I gave him a worksheet, which was good, but we didn't interact until after he came up with the sentences. *(November debriefing conference, 2017)*

Teacher candidates perceived the mentoring of Jenny, the graduate intern, beneficial to their instructional practice. Lani, a teacher candidate, described her experience collaborating with Jenny that happened to reflect the opinions of the entire group of mentors. The following was described on her post survey:

> I met with Jenny on Mondays and Fridays for 10 minutes each. She asked what my lesson was and how the student was engaged and responded to it. Then, she gave some suggestions of what I would've done differently and what were the next steps. Toward the beginning, she gave me poems, and I used graphic organizers, and they worked well. My Thursday student loved poetry, and it was amazing. For a developing reader—she hadn't been exposed to poetry, amazing to see how she was engaged for the ½ hour and how she improved. Poetry is short. She grasped poetry terms and improved in fluency. I know when I first started, she was choppy when she read. It was mostly confidence. She didn't have confidence. The more we got to know each other, she was more comfortable, so her fluency improved and wasn't so choppy. She's also improved with comprehending words and vocabulary. I've had experience doing this when I mentored 3rd graders who had to pass the state test to go onto 4th grade, but it wasn't as eye-opening, and I saw how much they were developing and saw the improvement over the course and realized that I actually did something. As a teacher, some things I guess I gained from this experience were the reading strategies that Jenny has helped me with and patience as a teacher when working with students with learning disabilities. You don't know what you are walking into. Actually sitting down with developing readers and seeing them developing to comprehend a simple word and taking baby steps to help them be successful in the end was eye-opening…I have to meet them where they are. *(Lani, post-survey)*

Discussion

When answering the first research question: How did teacher candidates' experiences mentoring developing readers impact the candidates' understanding of the needs of adolescent developing readers? Teacher candidates were affected by the hands-on mentoring experience.

Lani noted that it was an "eye-opening" experience as she worked with developing readers. She realized that she needs to "meet them where they are." She was alluding to the fact that it was important to provide materials that match students' reading levels and interests.

Equipping teacher candidates with the skills to know their learners, and using the debriefing sessions to help plan lessons, strengthened teacher candidates' skills as future professionals (Hammond, 2006). The debriefing sessions with the graduate mentor also answered the first question.

Focusing on the second research question: How did candidates interpret developing readers' engagement using high interest literacy materials? Three themes emerged from the mentee's responses: *confidence, choice,* and *engagement*. Similarities emerged across the mentees' confidence, interest, and reading proficiency. For example, there was a slight increase in comfort level, and it was evident that the developing readers *wanted* to enjoy reading. They preferred having choice in reading books that they were interested in rather than being required to read material selected by their teachers or other adults.

In addition, the findings from this study revealed that teacher candidates benefited from the mentoring experience by using high interest mentoring plans, paralleling the results from both Clark and Teravainen (2017) and Cockroft and Atkinson (2017). Through this mentoring experience, teacher candidates' comfort levels were impacted as they considered working with developing readers. An awareness of strategies and assessments will only continue to enhance the skill set of teacher candidates. Building the network of teacher candidates who participated in the reading program is projected to have positive results that help provide additional credibility and reliability to this study.

Implications and Conclusion

While most mentors had limited experience mentoring developing readers, this opportunity appeared to be rewarding for teacher candidates because of the reflective feedback and one-on-one debriefing. Although this is a small sample size, the research team developed a framework for teacher candidate professional development (PD) workshops that emphasize instructional strategies and formative assessments. This PD will be available to all teacher candidates across grade bands and content areas. A larger sample size for future studies is anticipated due to the introduction and implementation of this opportunity for all undergraduate students in the teacher education programs at our institution. Furthermore, the social motivation relationship could be examined that may influence the developing readers' desire to read by including questions regarding social motivation on the written survey and adding it to the reflective form.

This experience allowed candidates to put the reading strategies and assessments directly to use when mentoring developing readers with high-interest reading materials. Providing teacher candidates across all content areas with opportunities to work with developing readers is essential to their growth and professional skill-set as they pursue their goals of teaching.

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Pivoting at the Midpoint: How Midpoint Course Adjustments Influence Student Engagement

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Abstract

In higher education, instructors must often pivot to new methods, approaches, and exercises to help students achieve learning objectives in a particular course. These course pivots can be challenging to navigate; however, they are often the difference between a successful course and an unsuccessful one. Research on the punctuated equilibrium model of group development provides important insights for instructors on managing and navigating course pivots. This article reviews research on midpoint transitions and discusses the benefits of implementing midpoint pivots. It then introduces an example of a midpoint course pivot: The Stop-Start-Continue exercise. It concludes with a discussion of the implications this exercise has for instructors and students alike.

Keywords: student engagement, course pivots, midpoint transitions

Introduction

One of the biggest challenges instructors face in higher education is how to keep students engaged in the classroom (Crane, 2017). When students are engaged in the classroom, the learning process is enriched, and learning outcomes are more likely to be achieved (Burke & Moore, 2003). Conversely, successful student learning is hindered when student engagement is low. Therefore, how instructors respond to low engagement is an important aspect of teaching that educators must consider to create a successful learning environment. In moments of low student engagement, instructors can pivot to new methods, approaches, and exercises to better engage students and achieve learning objectives (Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002). A course pivot can be defined as a shift or change in an instructor's particular strategy to help students learn. Such pivots inevitably involve change, but such changes lie in an instructor's strategies to engage students and not a change in the ultimate course objectives or

purpose. As Eric Ries wrote, "A pivot is a change in strategy without a change in vision" (Ries, 2017, p. 108). While instructors often have opportunities to make course pivots, they can still be challenging to navigate. Effectively carrying out course pivots can be the difference between a successful course and an unsuccessful one.

In this paper, research on midpoint transitions is reviewed, and the benefits of implementing them in courses are discussed. The Stop-Start-Continue exercise is also introduced as an example of a midpoint course pivot. The paper concludes with a summary of the positive effect midpoint course pivots can have on student engagement and learning.

Scholarly Research on Midpoint Transitions

A robust body of research in the business management literature explains how the temporal midpoint presents an important opportunity for group change and growth. This line of research grew out of the punctuated equilibrium model of group performance, which describes how group lifespans include extended periods of stability or equilibrium followed by dramatic periods of change (Gersick, 1988). Gersick and others found that groups often use a temporal mid-point in their life span or the lifespan of a project to recalibrate and ensure success for the rest of the group's or project's life (Gersick, 1991; Okhuysen & Waller, 2002; Waller, 2002; Waller, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Giambatista, 2002). Gersick specifically noted that groups "paid special attention to time at the midpoint of their time spans, made abrupt shifts in the focus of their work activities, and depended on midpoint agreements to provide a basis for work in the second half of their time" (Gersick, 1989, p. 305).

These midpoint transitions have been documented in groups with both stable and unstable deadlines (Waller, 2002) and have been shown to help groups to "stop and think," allowing them to pivot or make changes in their strategies to carry out their work (Okhuysen & Waller, 2002). Furthermore, efforts in attempting change at the midpoint provide a group with enough experience to know what needs to be changed while also granting enough time to successfully make the changes (Louro, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2007). This was demonstrated in one study, which found that providing MBA students feedback on their performance and dynamics at the midpoint increased teams' efficacy beliefs and subsequent performance (Quigley, 2013).

While midpoint transitions have been well studied in workgroups and goal-setting contexts in particular (Okhuysen & Waller, 2002), relatively little is known about how mid-point transitions might be implemented in courses or classrooms. Yet, implementing midpoint transitions in courses—or what can be labeled as midpoint course pivots—can pave the way for greater student engagement and learning. In what follows, the benefits of implementing a midpoint course pivot are discussed. In doing so, rather than focusing on the midpoint of a

single class session or the midpoint of a project, this paper's focus is on pivoting at the midpoint of a course.

Benefits of Midpoint Course Pivots

By employing a midpoint course pivot, instructors will be able to effectively engage students and improve learning outcomes in three primary ways: namely, by increasing student (1) trust, (2) psychological safety, and (3) commitment (See *Figure 1*). First, midpoint course pivots can increase student engagement through greater trust because such pivots allow instructors to demonstrate vulnerability. At its core, trust is reflected in the willingness of one party to be vulnerable to another's actions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Romero, 2015). For example, an instructor who recognizes that a specific delivery method of instruction is hindering student learning in some way can involve students in a decision-making process to determine what methods might better suit a particular learning objective and pivot methods of delivery based on student feedback. When this happens, instructors demonstrate vulnerability in that they admit they do not have a monopoly of authority on what methods are best. Previous research has found that when instructors demonstrate vulnerability by involving students in decisions about the learning process (Tarchi & Pinto, 2016), students are more likely to become active participants, and learning outcomes can be improved. (Whipp, Jackson, Dimmock, & Soh, 2015). When instructors demonstrate vulnerability by reflecting with students at the midpoint of a course about what changes in strategies would enable significant progress on course objectives, student trust will grow. In turn, students will have increased motivation to learn and a greater willingness to take risks necessary to be taught in the course (Yair, 2008).

Figure 1: *Model of Midpoint Course Pivots and Student Learning*
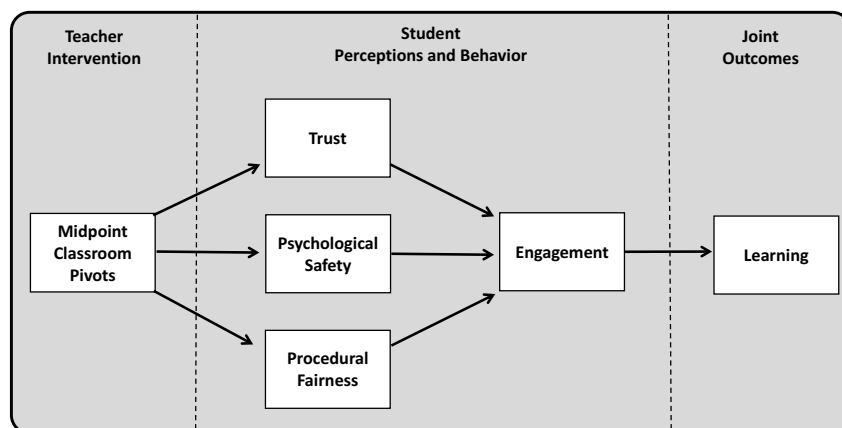
Second, midpoint course pivots can better engage students by increasing psychological safety in a class. Psychological safety is characterized by an individual's perception that it is safe to take interpersonal risks such as speaking up or asking questions (Edmondson, 1999). Research has convincingly shown that when individuals feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to take intelligent risks, ask questions, speak up about mistakes, and overall are more likely to learn (Edmondson, 2003). When instructors solicit student input during a midpoint course pivot, student's feelings of psychological safety are likely to increase (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). In turn, student willingness to ask questions, seek feedback and contribute to class discussions increases (Detert & Burris, 2007; Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012).

Lastly, midpoint course pivots can increase student engagement by involving students in course design and increasing perceptions of fairness (Brockner, Wiesenefld, Diekmann, 2009). When instructors seek the input and suggestions of their students, they involve students in decision-making, thereby tailoring methods and strategies to the needs of the students and incorporating student feedback into the course design. Previous research has demonstrated that when individuals perceive fairness in the process in which decisions are made, their identification with their group increases and they are more committed and engaged (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Often, having a fair process is more critical to commitment and satisfaction than the fairness of the outcome itself (Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996). Similarly, when students are involved in the course's decision-making process, student engagement increases, and commitment to course objectives grows. As these results take effect, students will likely be more committed to ensuring the changes are successful.

Taken together, midpoint course pivots can promote student engagement by increasing student trust, psychological safety, and procedural fairness. These characteristics provide ample motivation for educators to utilize midpoint course pivots. One example of such a pivot is the Stop-Start-Continue Exercise. Described below, instructors' use of the Stop-Start-Continue exercise can improve students' engagement in the course and increase student satisfaction within a given course.

Stop-Start-Continue Exercise

Business consultants have used the Stop-Start-Continue exercise and its variations as an effective tool for leading change (see https://www.scienceofpeople.com/start-stop-continue/ and https://www.retrium.com/retrospective-techniques/start-stop-continue as examples). However, to our knowledge, the exercise has not been documented in higher education research. This article's first author has used the exercise in each of his full semester classes and

found it helpful to solicit student feedback and make effective mid-course course pivots. The exercise is simple and straightforward to carry out.

A week before the midpoint of a course, instructors provide students with an anonymous survey, either electronically or using a paper-based format. In the survey, instructors ask students to consider three basic questions: (1) What have we been doing in class that we should stop? (2) What have we not been doing in class that we should start? And (3) What have we been doing in class that we should continue to do? Students respond to each question with as many items as they choose, though typically, students provide two to three responses per question. After the surveys are complete, instructors analyze the responses in aggregate, looking for connections, patterns, and themes, and points of disagreement in student responses. Approximately a week after the survey is sent to students, instructors use a portion of a class session to present the connections, patterns, and themes identified in the surveys to students (see *Table 1* for some examples of common feedback categories). This can be done orally or with accompanying visual aids demonstrating the common themes visually. As instructors present the themes identified in the surveys to students, they can elicit discussion regarding possible ways to address the themes that were identified. Such discussions allow the class to make an active contribution to the future direction of their learning within the course and increases student engagement in subsequent course objectives, projects, and activities.

Once the discussion is concluded and the students who wished to make comments have had the opportunity to do so, instructors can identify ways to address the issues raised. Also, instructors can address with students why specific issues raised may not be able to be addressed. After the exercise, instructors can implement the changes they identified with students throughout the remainder of the course. As a result, student engagement and learning seem to increase; however, empirical evidence is still needed to verify the exercise's efficacy. This is an area for future research that scholars should consider.

Table 1: *Feedback Examples from Stop-Start-Continue Exercise*

Categories of Comments	Examples of Student Comments	Possible Solution
Course Content	"I do not like our book. The chapters and passages inside are weird and old stories. It is hard to understand."	Use more current readings that teach the same principles
Content Delivery Methods	"I'd like the way participation in class to be 'stopped'/modified. I think it's a good idea to motivate everyone to participate and get more out of the class, but it's difficult to get full participation points every class even if you try raising your hand."	Provide participation points for trying to make a comment and raising a hand even if not called upon

Grading	"I honestly enjoy this class very much. The only thing that concerns me is the fact that an A is a 94% instead of the more standard 93%. However, this offers me additional incentive to study hard, and work for the grade I want."	Explain the purpose of the grade breakdowns, that may be idiosyncratic to the particular class.
Course Requirements	"So much writing. I write more papers for this class than I did for some of my English classes."	Provide writing support and resources to students
Student Interactions	"Spend less time on team-based collaboration of the readings. Those who read are already prepared and benefit more from a deeper class discussion than explaining what the reading was about to those who aren't as familiar with it."	Adjust time allotments to different class activities
Physical Class Environment	"It would be nice to mix up seating or small discussion groups every so often. I feel like I hear the same opinions pretty frequently from my project group, and it would be nice to listen to others in a smaller setting more frequently so we can build on each other's ideas."	Change team membership throughout the semester

Common Challenges

While the Stop-Start-Continue exercise can yield significant benefits for student engagement, it can also be challenging to implement. From the first author's experience using the exercise, the most common challenges include discrepant student feedback, insufficient resources to enact change, and unflattering feedback. For example, some students may see an aspect of the class as a strength, while other students see it as a weakness. This can be challenging to navigate and, at times, impedes the opportunity for complete consensus. However, in the original survey, a majority of the class will usually express a desire for a similar change in direction. In addition, some students may be unaccustomed to providing feedback in this manner and may feel a lack of authority to have a voice in enacting course changes. Some preparation for the survey to explain the reasons for the exercise, reassuring that students' voices will be heard, and ensuring anonymity of the results may be necessary to promote student responses.

Furthermore, student feedback may address issues that instructors do not have the time or resources to address within the course's time frame. For example, certain aspects of the curriculum and the course's designation are out of an instructor's purview of authority to change, such as grading procedures or thresholds that are part of standardized departmental

requirements. Moreover, student feedback may focus primarily on instructor performance rather than course objectives, which may reveal ways in which students feel the instructor has fallen short. This can be difficult to process, especially when feedback lacks a constructive tone. However, difficulties aside, this process can be an important opportunity to learn for students and instructors alike.

Conclusion

Student engagement and satisfaction are essential to improve learning outcomes (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). Drawing upon research on midpoint transitions, we have argued for using midpoint pivots within higher education courses. By increasing student trust, psychological safety, and fairness, midpoint course pivots can effectively promote student engagement and satisfaction. In turn, learning objectives are more likely to be achieved. One effective way to carry out midpoint course pivots is by using the Stop-Start-Continue exercise. This exercise can help instructors recalibrate and alter their strategies to better achieve course objectives. Through this process, both instructors and students will be better positioned to contribute to a course's effectiveness. In this way, midpoint course pivots can be an effective means to improve the course experience.

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Religious, Secular, and Spiritual Diversity on Campus: Book Review of Goodman, Giess and Patel (2019) *Educating about religious diversity and interfaith engagement*

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Book Review

Students come to college as individuals with multi-faceted identities, making each college campus a unique mosaic of many types of diversity. At the same time, "who is a minority and what is diversity can be different for every college" (Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016, p. 54). In efforts to make their campus more welcoming to students of all backgrounds, university faculty, staff, and administrators may read books and participate in trainings designed to help them better meet the academic, social, and psychological needs of all students. However, it has been my experience that some identity topics, such as race and ethnic background, tend to be more widely discussed than others. One of the areas often overlooked in staff and faculty trainings on college campuses is diversity in religious and philosophical worldviews (Patel, 2007). It is this topic that Goodman, Giess, and Patel aim to address with their book *Educating about religious diversity and interfaith engagement: A handbook for student affairs*. While the subtitle targets a specific segment of university personnel, this book offers much to ponder for faculty and administration as well as staff.

One of the book's notable strengths is its highly qualified team of editors. Goodman holds a doctorate in education and has served in a faculty position in the field of educational leadership and student affairs. Giess, with a master's degree in theological studies, has served in leadership roles in several organizations and initiatives promoting interfaith engagement and collaboration. Patel earned a doctorate in the sociology of religion, founded Interfaith Youth Core (www.ifyc.org), and served on the Faith Council in the Obama administration. He has written multiple books on interfaith topics.

These three editors collaborated with a group of contributors representing a wide range of professional roles in higher education, including student affairs staff, faculty members, administrators, chaplains, and leaders of student-focused local and national organizations. The result is a book filled with practical examples of how to broaden religious understanding and promote interfaith engagement on university campuses in various contexts, including academic courses, residence life, student programming, and more.

An important shortcoming of the book is its lack of stated theoretical orientation. While its subtitle of handbook supports its focus on practical application, the work is rooted in certain theories of learning, even if unacknowledged. In the foreword, the term "holistic student development" is mentioned, while the introduction features the expression "the whole identity of the person". These concepts have been featured in the higher education literature since the 1960s, for example by Sanford (1962) and Checkering (1969), and countless others since. As a component of holistic student development, cultural competence is a key concept mentioned or implied in many of the chapters, with interreligious engagement variously cast as a vehicle for the development of cultural competence (for example, in chapters 8 and 9) and other times as a hallmark of cultural competence (for example, in chapters 3 and 14).

The book starts out with an overview chapter and a general section (Part 1: Context), in which readers are introduced to terminology and key findings in the area of religious, secular, and spiritual (RSS) diversity among college students. In this section, chapter 2 introduces two key instruments that have been used in recent years for assessing RSS diversity on university campuses in the US. The Campus Religious and Spiritual Climate Survey was administered in 2011-2015 on many campuses around the country to more than 16,450 students total (Interfaith Youth Core, n.d.), while the Interfaith Diversity and Experiences and Attitudes Longitudinal Survey (IDEALS) is a multi-part survey that was administered at 122 colleges and universities to thousands of students in their first year (Fall 2015) and again in their fourth year (Spring 2019) in college. Two of the chapter's authors, Rockenbach and Mayhew, have co-published multiple scholarly reports on the findings of these surveys.

Following the establishment of a general framework for thinking about RSS diversity on campus in Part 1, the next three sections contain examples of ideas, programs, and outcomes

on specific college campuses, written by authors who focus on lessons learned from engagement with RSS diversity in their respective settings. Part 2 (Teaching Ideas) and Part 3 (Strategies and Activities) are directed at instructors who teach academic courses as well as those who facilitate non-credit workshops. Part 4 offers recommendations for using case studies to engage students with problem-solving around issues related to RSS diversity. The last section of the book, Part 5, summarizes foundational knowledge and perspectives pertaining to specific RSS worldviews. Written by insiders of various traditions for the benefit of outsiders, this part of the book contains relevant insights from personal experience. The Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions each have their own chapter. In addition to a brief description of the basic tenets of the tradition, each chapter offers readers a nuanced view of the internal diversity within the tradition, highlighting areas of tension and debate on such matters as ethics, scriptural authority, views on family and gender, and so forth. These three chapters are followed by a section titled "Understanding secular students on campus" (chapter 18), in which the discussion of stereotypes was especially helpful to me. My greatest disappointment with the book is its final chapter, "Understanding Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu students on campus" (chapter 19), which lumps together multiple uniquely rich and important traditions yet takes up barely 14 pages. The authors state in the first paragraph that "Eastern religions can often look quite different from Western traditions. Concepts and practices do not always adhere to culturally Western assumptions about religion" (p. 275). This is precisely why it is inexcusable that the editors devoted so little space to traditions that can be particularly challenging to understand and appreciate by people whose experience with RSS diversity has been limited to Abrahamic traditions. The experience of Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu students on campuses in the USA is fundamentally shaped by the ignorance they encounter routinely in academic, social, and public settings. At least the chapter's authors offer a list of websites and references that readers can use to educate themselves further. I look forward to the publication of detailed studies on the university experiences of Buddhists, Sikhs, Hindus and other lesser-known groups.

In all, *Educating about religious diversity and interfaith engagement* makes a valuable contribution to the professional development of higher education personnel. Authors who wrote from their own experiences make this an authentic read with valuable lessons and actionable ideas. Whether we consider ourselves staff, faculty, or administration, the perspectives on RSS diversity offered by Goodman, Giess, and Patel are likely to help us see our students and ourselves in new ways. As such, this book helps us not only in professional development but also in personal growth.

Irrespective of a college's foundation as religiously affiliated or public, its students will certainly represent RSS diversity. If we ignore this diversity and the opportunities it affords for encounter and exploration, we do not equip ourselves or our students for professional

collaboration and civic engagement (Clingerman & Locklin, 2016). Just as students do not shed other aspects of their identities, such as ethnic background, first language, gender identity, or sexual orientation, when they come to campus, they do not discard their RSS worldviews when they join our campus community. An important first step in preparing ourselves to better encounter RSS diversity is to acknowledge that we can do better and need to learn how. As Giess states, "it is incumbent on educators to start with themselves in gaining foundational knowledge about the religious diversity present on our campuses" (p. 201). This book offers many ideas for getting started individually and collectively. Rather than remaining stuck in ignorance and avoidance, we can move in the direction of awareness, appreciation, and advocacy.

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Taking into Account Interpersonal Aspects of Teacher Feedback: Principles of Responding to Student Writing

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Abstract

Providing feedback on student work is a fundamental aspect of instruction and an important part of the learning process. A considerable amount of literature describes the pedagogical value of different types of feedback—explicit vs. implicit, comprehensive vs. selective, direct vs. indirect, and feedback on content vs. feedback on form—thus treating feedback primarily as an instructional/informational phenomenon. It must be remembered, however, that there is a real person behind each paper; therefore, interpersonal aspects of teacher feedback should not be disregarded. This article discusses five principles of responding to student writing that take into account this interpersonal nature of feedback: providing positive comments, avoiding appropriating student writing, responding as a reader, involving students in the revision process, and minimizing student frustration. The author suggests that these principles can help instructors deliver supporting and encouraging feedback that will be able to demonstrate their genuine interest in students' ideas, acknowledge students' efforts and writing progress, respect their voice and agency, and foster their growing motivation and self-confidence as writers.

Keywords: feedback, response to student writing, interpersonal aspects of teaching

> "[R]esponding to student writing entails more than deciding whether to comment on form or content; it involves delicate social interactions that can enhance or undermine the effectiveness of the comment and the value of the teaching itself" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 194).

Responding to student performance is an essential aspect of instruction and a vital part of the learning process (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As Laurillard (1993) rightly noticed, "action without feedback is completely unproductive for the learner" (p. 61). Similarly, response to

student writing is an indispensable element of their writing development as well as their ability to produce independent written work. A considerable amount of literature is devoted to describing the pedagogical value of different types of feedback--explicit vs. implicit, comprehensive vs. selective, direct vs. indirect, and feedback on content vs. feedback on form. However, regardless of the significance of these "best practices" (Ferris, 2014, p. 7) for pedagogy, feedback is primarily treated as an instructional phenomenon, or, as Hyland and Hyland (2006) put it, "as *purely* informational, a means of channeling reactions and advice to facilitate improvements" (p. 206, emphasis in original).

As instructors[1], we need to remember, however, that each written paper has an author--i.e., a real human being who produced it. As such, the way feedback is received and processed may be influenced by interpersonal factors (Shvidko, 2018; Tobin, 1993; Värlander, 2008). According to Hyland and Hyland (2001), "Evaluation always carries with it the seeds of potential friction" (p. 194). Thus, the instructional value and purpose of feedback can be severely undermined, or, as Race (1995) put it, "eclipsed" (p. 67), by adverse reactions on the student part. I fully agree with Sommers (2013), who said, "The same comment can be phrased in different tones and often makes the difference between students feeling dismissed and insulted and students feeling respected and taken seriously" (p. 6). Therefore, teacher feedback--both *what* is said and *how* it is said--may have important implications both for students' writing development and their self-esteem, confidence, and motivation (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011).

According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), response to student written work "not only communicates beliefs about writing, language, or content but also expresses and negotiates human relationships" (p. 222). Taking this interpersonal aspect of feedback into consideration, teachers need to provide encouraging, supporting, and motivational comments, which are not only useful from an informational point of view, but also beneficial for students from an affective standpoint. To this end, this article discusses five principles of providing feedback on student work that may not only promote student writing development but positively affect their agency, self-confidence, and motivation. These principles include providing positive comments, avoiding appropriating student writing, responding as a reader, involving students in the revision process, and minimizing student frustration.

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[1] For the purpose of this article, the terms "instructor" and "teacher" are used to refer to those who perform instructional activities in formal educational settings, including teaching in the classroom and online, working with graduate students, and tutoring students one on one. Therefore, these terms are applicable to teachers, tutors, professors, and faculty, and they are the intended audience of this article.

Providing Positive Comments

Instructional feedback is sometimes described in the literature as inherently "face-threatening," as it implies evaluation/judgment of student work and even critique (Kerssen-Griep & Witt, 2012; Shvidko, 2018, 2020). As Trees, Kerssen-Griep, and Hess (2009) stated, "Even when combined with glowing comments about strong aspects of the students' work, suggestions about improvement inherently contain the message that students did not do as well as they could--and perhaps *should*--have" (p. 398, emphasis in original). Therefore, feedback messages may inadvertently "heighten emotional tension and pose identity threats" (Kerssen-Griep & Witt, 2012, p. 499) for students. This affective dimension of response to student writing is often overlooked because, as previously mentioned, it is often viewed from a fundamentally cognitive--as opposed to relational--lens.

Nevertheless, it is important for teachers to remember that negative feedback may potentially be discouraging for student writers and detrimental to the overall teaching-learning enterprise. For example, learner identity and self-esteem can be harmed by teacher negative evaluations (Carnicelli, 1980). Student motivation can also be shattered due to teacher criticism (Värlander, 2008). Furthermore, negative comments may potentially have a damaging effect on the learning process. Thus, as Witt and Kerssen-Griep (2011) stated, feedback "imposes on [students'] freedom to act and often negatively evaluates what they have done, which can provoke negative, unhelpful responses" (p. 79). Finally, even students' perceptions of the instructor--e.g., instructor's credibility--can be influenced undesirably by teacher response to their written work (Lee & Schallert, 2008; Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011).

While it is true that teacher feedback is intended to offer constructive criticism to facilitate student learning, it should also acknowledge positive aspects of student work and highlight the strengths of their writing. As Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) put it, "[I]t is human nature to desire and appreciate favorable responses to the work that we have done" (p. 242). Therefore, even simple positive remarks such as "*Well said*," "*Good point*," and "*Excellent example*," can build student motivation and confidence in their abilities as writers. By providing a "blend of encouragement and constructive criticism" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p. 240) in their written comments, teachers also validate student time spent on the assignment, thus making them feel respected and open to further feedback. It may not always be easy to achieve a balance between praise and criticism when commenting on student work, so in my own teaching, I found that responding as a reader, not only as a teacher (see below), helps me discover more positive features of student writing.

Avoiding Appropriating Student Writing

From my personal experience as a writer, I know that there is nothing more discouraging than comments that take over the writer's voice and creativity. From my teaching practice, however, I also learned that appropriating (i.e., taking over) student work oftentimes happens inadvertently. That is, in their best efforts to help students improve their papers, teachers may involuntarily impose too much control and authority--sometimes to the point that a student's paper looks like it belongs to the teacher. Then, as Severino (2004) pointed out, "students are confused or demoralized by having to puzzle out their teachers' expectations and write to fulfill them instead of writing from their own impetus and intentions" (pp. 50-51).

While it is obvious that taking over student agency and creativity is a negative practice, part of the teacher's job is to facilitate student learning by providing feedback that may include guidance, critique, and correction. How, then, can teachers distinguish between appropriating student writing and offering suggestions necessary for further improvement? Goldstein (2004) describes an important differentiation between appropriation and what she calls "helpful intervention" (p. 68), summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: *Difference between appropriation and "helpful intervention" (Goldstein, 2004).*

Feature of student text	Appropriation	Helpful intervention
Purpose	"commentary that ignores what a student's purpose is for a particular text and attempts either purposefully or accidentally to shift this purpose"	"commentary that shows a student where he or she is not achieving her/his purpose(s)"
Point of view	"commentary where a teacher demands that a student shift a position or a point of view"	"commentary that suggests a student read about a different point of view or interview others with a different point of view in order to know the other side"
Intended meaning	"commentary that "corrects" sentences or passages without asking the student about the intended meaning risks changing that meaning"	"commentary that asks students what they want to say and then helps students find the language to do so"

Note. Statements in Table 1 are taken from Goldstein 2004, p. 68.

Writing experts offer numerous suggestions on how to avoid appropriating student work (e.g., Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Goldstein, 2004; Severino, 2004). I personally like to ask myself the following questions addressed by Joy Reid in her article "Responding to ESL students' texts: The myths of appropriation" (1994): "When might I interfere with their objectives or crush their creativity? In what ways might I assume control or ownership over their texts? What might I say that would deter them from becoming independent writers?" (p. 277). As a teacher, I learned that giving students power over their texts and a chance to exercise their writer agency and express their voice freely and proactively is crucial both for their writing

development and their evolving self-confidence and motivation. Some of the suggestions described below (i.e., giving students opportunities to challenge teacher comments, request specific feedback via reflective notes or memos, and discuss their papers in one-on-one conferences) may help to endow students with such power and control over their own texts, thus allowing their papers to fully reflect students' original voices.

Responding as a Reader

Teachers can also encourage and support student writers by responding to their texts not as an evaluator or an expert but as an interested reader (Sommers, 2013). According to Hyland and Hyland (2001), "By expressing their commentary as a personal response, […] teachers can make a subtle adjustment to the interactional context and perhaps foreground a different persona. It allows them to relinquish some of their authority and adopt a less threatening voice" (p. 198).

The key to responding as a reader is in showing students genuine interest in their ideas, thoughts, feelings, and experiences that students share through their written work. For instance, teachers can reply to students' experiences by sharing their own. They can relate to students' challenges by describing similar struggles of their own. They can also include affective comments in their responses, such as expressing surprise ("Who would have thought!" "Oh really?"), empathy ("That must have been challenging!" "That would make me sad too."), or disappointment ("That's too bad!" "How disappointing!"). Expressing this candid interest to the things students write about promotes relationships of trust and mutual respect, increases solidarity and prosocial connection, and makes feedback more authentic and meaningful (Shvidko, 2018). As Sommers (2013) put it, "Knowing that there is a real, live person--a teacher as a reader--at the end of the composing process imbues that process with meaning and significance that would otherwise be absent" (p. xii).

Involving Students in the Revision Process

Revision should not be "just a giver-receiver relationship with the teacher giving the information and the student receiving it" (Shvidko, 2015, p. 55); instead, it should be a collaborative endeavor. Such collaboration may stimulate student engagement in the revision of their writing, which in turn may help them grow into independent learners who are able to reflect on their development and make necessary changes for further improvement (Andrade & Evans, 2013; Benson, 2007; Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 2000; Milton, 2006; Shvidko, 2015). Research suggests that students' ability to reflectively analyze their writing may not only

increase their revision skills (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014), but it can also promote their motivation (Lamb, 2001; Sommers, 2013), establish connections between writing instruction and students' academic and professional life in the future (Beaufort, 2007; Downs & Wardle, 2007), and cultivate self-regulated writers (Andrade & Evans, 2013). Therefore, it can be argued that involving students in the revision process facilitates their "long-term improvement and cognitive change" (Reid, 1993, p. 229).

Teachers can involve students in the revision process by helping them learn how to thoughtfully and meaningfully respond to feedback (Shvidko, 2015; Sommers, 2013). One of such methods is to encourage students to reply to teacher comments in the margins of a paper/writing assignment. Many computer programs allow for this function, so this strategy would probably work best when feedback is given electronically, although the classic "pen and paper" approach is possible as well. When commenting on teacher feedback, students can explain what revisions they made based on the feedback, ask questions about the comments they do not understand, or even challenge teacher remarks. Teachers can also give students the opportunity to argue their cases--for example, in a memo/note attached to their draft. In other words, when disagreeing with the feedback, students would explain why the comments were disregarded, and the expected revision was not made. Providing students with the opportunity to respond to feedback and even challenge it may promote students' engagement in "a dialogue about their writing" (Sommers, 2013, p. 9) and send them the message that the feedback should not be seen as the ultimate judgment of their work, and that the teacher is open to negotiation (Shvidko, 2020).

Along with encouraging students to respond to feedback, teachers can also engage them in the revision process by holding one-on-one writing conferences. The value of such conferences, whose purpose is to "transmit feedback and discuss potential revision" (Qureshi, 2013, p. 27), is in negotiation and collaboration that usually take place during this pedagogical activity (Gilliland, 2014; Martin & Mottet, 2011). Thus, writing conferences "allow students to exercise their agency by negotiating teacher feedback and standing up for their ideas" (Shvidko, 2018, p. 20). My own experience with writing conferences as a teacher demonstrates that these "dialogic encounters" (Consalvo, 2011, p. 30) are usually one of the students' favorite features of writing courses I teach. Most students appreciate the opportunity to discuss their writing face to face, ask questions and receive immediate answers, and clarify feedback. To facilitate their preparation for conferences, I usually ask my students to complete *conference preparation notes* (Appendix A). I noticed that completing these notes helps students reflect on their writing and be better engaged in the discussion.

Involving student writers in the revision process can also be achieved by encouraging them to reflect on and analyze their writing. By being immersed in the systematic analysis of their

own drafts, students become more attentive and reflective readers (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Sommers, 2013). According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2014), self-evaluation[2] "builds confidence as students become more aware of their own strengths and of their abilities to help themselves" (p. 262). To this end, I like to implement a technique called *Letter to the Reviewer*, which facilitates collaboration between the teacher and the student. A *Letter to the Reviewer* is a short reflective note/memo submitted with each draft, in which students pinpoint both the strengths and weaknesses of their paper and request specific feedback that, from their perspective, would improve their draft (see Shvidko, 2015 for the description of this technique and examples of *Letter to the Reviewer*). Similar strategies are described in the literature as Dear Reader letter (Sommers, 2013), student-teacher memos (Sommers, 1988), writer's memos (Sommers, 1989), and process notes (Giles, 2010). To help students compose their letters/notes/memos, teachers can provide a list of questions/prompts to be used as a guideline (Appendix B). My experience with *Letter to the Reviewer* shows that students participate more actively and agentively in the collaborative revision process, become more reflective readers, and are able to better recognize the relationship between classroom instruction and their own written work. I also noticed that interaction developed through students' composing such reflective memos and teachers' responding to them increases interpersonal connections between teacher and student (Tobin, 1993) and encourages teachers to respond "to a *person* rather than to a script (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 206, emphasis in original).

Minimizing Student Frustration

To provide supportive and helpful feedback, teachers should avoid responding to student writing in a way that would cause their frustration. Student frustration can be triggered by unclear and even cryptic comments such as confusing symbols (e.g., "?" "^"), abbreviations (e.g., "awk," "frag"), single-word questions (e.g., "transition?" "summary?"), vague remarks (e.g., "weak paragraph," "more evidence"), and writing/grammar-related jargon (e.g., "discourse-level transitions," "subject-verb agreement"), which not all students, and language learners, in particular, are familiar with. Feedback is most useful when it is understood by

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[2] While not discussed in this article, self-evaluation, and more specifically self-editing, is a crucial skill that promotes student long-term writing development and helps them become independent writers. See Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) for an extensive discussion on strategy training for self-editing skills, as well as examples of practical activities teachers can implement to help students develop their self-editing skills.

To promote student independent assessment of their own writing, teachers can also introduce students to online self-editing tools and software, including grammar and plagiarism checkers.

students; therefore, teachers should try to comment on their work with complete sentences or detailed phrases that are clear, specific, and concrete. Along with clarity, feedback also needs to be legible. That is, if students receive hand-written comments, they should be able to read them effortlessly, instead of deciphering what the teacher has written.

Overwhelming comments are equally frustrating. When teachers comment on every single weakness of the paper, students may lose motivation and interest in writing, they may become "overly dependent on teacher feedback" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p. 242). Therefore, instructors should provide focused feedback by prioritizing features of student-written texts. The literature on writing feedback sometimes suggests responding to content (also called *higher-order concerns* or *global writing issues*) in earlier drafts and commenting on form/linguistic features of student work (also called *lower-order concerns* and *local writing issues*) in later drafts (Keh, 1990; Searle & Dillon, 1980; Zamel, 1985; also see Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014 for more discussion on the "content-form" dichotomy). Whether instructors choose to follow this model or provide a combination of feedback on content and linguistic issues of student texts, focusing on just a few characteristics/patterns of student writing would help to avoid overwhelming students with "commentary that may exceed the amount of text that students themselves have produced" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, pp. 241-242).

Another important factor influencing student perception of teacher feedback--its transparency. Different instructors have different approaches to delivering feedback. A few examples of such approaches include focusing on content and topic development in early drafts and on linguistic characteristics of student papers in later drafts, formulating feedback as questions, affirmative statements, or imperatives; implementing marginal comments, end notes, or a combination of both; combining written feedback with other modes of responding to student work (e.g., conferences, audio comments). Similarly, teachers' expectations regarding student responses to feedback may also differ. Therefore, teacher philosophies about feedback, their approaches to responding to written work, and expectations from students should clearly be articulated to learners. In my own teaching practice, for example, I prefer to use categorized, color-coded feedback (Appendix C), which, as I discovered, helps students differentiate the purpose/point of each of my comments. I realize, however, that students may not be familiar with this method; therefore, I always give them an information sheet with the description of this approach and the list of color-coded categories of comments I use while responding to their writing.

Conclusion

As Sommers (2013) rightly noticed, "Our comments are written for specific purposes--to inspire, to encourage, to nurture, to evaluate--and are written to our students, who need respect and honesty, not harshness or mean-spiritedness" (p. 5). The evaluative function of feedback may sometimes overshadow its relational aspect and its inspiring, encouraging, and nurturing purposes, mentioned by Sommers. Unfortunately, it is possible for busy teachers to overlook this human dimension of the revision cycle and the fact that there is a real person behind each paper, and that every evaluative remark may have consequences of a personal and affective nature. As Hyland and Hyland (2006) suggested, "interpersonal aspects of response have the potential to construct the kinds of relationships that can either facilitate or undermine a student's writing development" (p. 209). This article highlights this very view of feedback and encourages teachers to remember that responding to student written work constitutes more than just commenting on content, language, and mechanics.

The above suggestions aim to provide instructors with further insight into the interpersonal--as opposed to informational--dimension of feedback. There is no single recipe on how to respond to student writing in a caring and supportive way. Therefore, this article only discusses five principles that can help teachers attend to the relational aspect of their feedback: providing positive comments, avoiding appropriating student writing, responding as a reader, involving students in the revision process, and minimizing student frustration. The principles described above may help instructors deliver supporting and encouraging feedback that will be able to demonstrate their genuine interest in students' ideas, acknowledge students' efforts and writing progress, respect their voice and agency, and foster their growing motivation and self-confidence as writers.

Ultimately, offering thoughtful and caring comments on student written work may contribute to the development of positive rapport (Lee & Schallert, 2008), whose pedagogical value is hard to overestimate (e.g., Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Frymier & Houser, 2000; Nguyen, 2007; Shvidko, 2020). Therefore, teachers should carefully consider their feedback--its content and the manner of delivery, and pay attention to the significance of their comments "in both providing helpful advice on […] students' writing and in negotiating an interpersonal relationship which will facilitate its development" (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 208).

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Appendix A

Conference Preparation Notes (handout for students)

Name of Assignment: _____

Date of your conference: _____

Name: _____

Instructions: Carefully think about your current draft and things that you need most help with.

Please fill out this form and bring it to the conference.

My goal for the conference (Please be very specific):

Questions/comments I have about my draft (organization, ideas, etc.):

I have the following technical or computer-related problems or questions:

I have the following grammar-related problems or questions:

I have the following problems or questions about documenting sources (APA):

Any other comments/questions

Appendix B

Examples of Questions/Prompts for Letter to the Reviewer

Questions/Prompts for First Draft

- What are the strengths of your draft?
- What are the weaknesses of your draft?
- Does the draft have sufficient support or does it lack support?
- Is the organization of the paper effective? Briefly explain.
- What part of the draft is in most need of further work?
- What would you like your reader to pay close attention to while reading your draft?
- Are you expecting feedback on any particular elements of your draft? If so, what are they?

Questions/Prompts for Second Draft

- Briefly identify the major revisions that you have made in this draft based on the feedback that you received from your teacher and your classmate.
- What difficulties did you encounter while revising this draft? What was the most challenging part of revising this draft?
- What makes this draft stronger than the first one?
- In what ways does this revised draft better fulfill the purpose of the assignment than the first draft?
- What parts of this revised draft still need further work? Identify specific problems that you feel need to be addressed.
- Are there any particular places in your draft you want your reader to pay close attention to?
- Are there any language concerns (e.g., grammar, word choice) that you would like your reader to help you with?

Questions/Prompts for Final Draft

- Briefly identify the major revisions that you have made while composing this final draft.
- What difficulties did you encounter while working on this paper?
- What makes this final draft stronger than the previous ones?
- What are the major strengths of this final draft?
- Are there any weaknesses in this draft you want your reader to be aware of?

Appendix C

Categorized, color-coded comments for providing feedback

Categories of comments:

`C: Content` Comments that relate to the content of your essay, usually suggesting some revisions/additions in the content (e.g., ideas, supporting details).

`O: Organization` Comments about organization (e.g., flow of your ideas, paragraph structure, transitions words)

`L: Language` Comments that relate to linguistic elements of your writing, such as grammar and word choice.

`F: Formatting` Comments that relate to the format of your draft (e.g., spacing, font, documenting style)

`R: Reader remark` Comments that I make as a reader, not as a teacher. They are my "thinking aloud" comments, my reactions to your writing. These comments do not require any action from you.