Analysis of Primary Sources and Student Engagement in Middle School Social Studies

Classrooms

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine if the use of primary sources in middle school social studies classes would impact student engagement. The measurement tool used was created by the teacher and based on the findings of Lee in the article "The Relationship between Student Engagement and Academic Performance: Is it a Myth or Reality?" The study was quasi-experimental and used a pre- and posttest design with a comparison group. There was no statistically significant increase in student engagement when either primary or secondary sources were used, with the exception that students who analyzed secondary sourced avoided disruptions more frequently than their peers who analyzed primary sources.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Engagement is a key factor in predicting a student's academic success. Engaged students focus on mastering the task assigned during class, demonstrate persistence during learning challenges, build relationships with peers, and connect with their school (Wang & Degol, 2014). Disengaged students, however, are far more likely to struggle academically, drop out of school, and display problem behaviors during class. Gersten, Baker, Smith-Johnson, Dimino, and Peterson (2006) found that students become disengaged because of traditional textbook and lecture-based formats. Dotterer and Lowe (2011) added that students also become disengaged when they are taught in classrooms with low levels of instructional quality. Social studies teachers can increase their students' level of engagement during class by incorporating primary sources into lessons. Students become more engaged when they enjoy what they are learning about, and many students enjoy learning more from authentic sources than secondary sources (Malkmus, 2010).

Overview

Student disengagement is a large problem in the field of education, and students become disengaged from school for multiple reasons. Many school curriculums are developed using traditional textbooks, and textbooks do not stimulate student engagement. Using a textbook reading, followed by a teacher lecture and whole-class discussion, is a traditional teaching method, but one that rarely engages students, especially lower-achieving students, during class (Malkmus, 2010). Traditional lesson formats were not found to have high levels of instructional quality, so students in these classes were less likely to be academically competent (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Teachers who do not provide high quality instruction and instructional materials,

then, are more likely to have their students become disengaged, leading to a variety of behavior and academic issues during class.

Students who are disengaged from school struggle academically throughout their educational careers. Lee (2014) found that high school students who dropped out of high school did not graduate not because of a single incident, but because of a long-term process of student disengagement. Students tend to become more disengaged as they move from elementary school to middle school, and middle school to high school. Since a decrease in engagement is such a pervasive issue throughout a student's education, educators must take steps to increase their students' engagement if they want to ensure their academic success.

This educator became interested in the issue of student engagement after teaching in a high-poverty, low-performing middle school for several years. Each year, many students demonstrated a chronic lack of engagement throughout the school day, and failed multiple classes as a result. While the school community tried several different means of incentivizing achievement to motivate students to perform at a higher level, many students still remained disengaged and disinterested in becoming positive members of their school community and experiencing any academic success. If students are not engaged during lessons, they are not gaining the required content required to be successful students. Engaging students with high-interest and complex learning materials is a good strategy for enhancing student understanding of required content and motivating students to do well in school.

Statement of Problem

Teachers can present course content to their students in a variety of ways. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of one strategy for effectively teaching and engaging students in social studies classes. Primary sources have been shown to have a positive impact on student

engagement. Primary sources link students with people of the past and allow them to gain a deeper understanding of different perspectives on a historical event (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). When working with primary sources, students examine artifacts from the past and construct their own meaning from what they have interpreted about an event. This is a hands-on, challenging, and authentic task. Since students become more engaged during these types of tasks, analysis of primary sources is an effective means of teaching content and increasing engagement (Wang & Degol, 2014). Malkmus (2010) determined that when used effectively, primary sources stimulated student interest due to their ability to connect emotionally with a text, so students became more involved in completing their work.

Hypothesis

This researcher hypothesized that the engagement of 8th grade students in an American History class would not increase when teaching strategies included analysis of primary sources.

Operational Definitions

Primary sources are defined by the Library of Congress (2016) as the raw materials of history, or the original documents and objects which were created at the time under study. *Secondary sources* are defined by the Library of Congress as accounts or interpretations of events, created by someone without firsthand experience. *Engagement* is defined as how often students are on-task while learning and being taught, as measured by teacher observations of student behavior. A copy of this instrument can be found in Appendix A.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review examines the issues related to student engagement and potential solutions for middle school social studies classes. Section 1 discusses the importance of student engagement. Sections 2 and 3 deal with problems related to and causes of student disengagement. Section 4 explores the positive impacts of primary sources on student engagement.

The Importance of Student Engagement

Student engagement is important in predicting a student's academic success. For example, engagement is a key factor in students' abilities to attain literacy skills. Duhaylongsod, Snow, Selman, and Donovan (2015) designed and implemented a new middle school social studies curriculum that would also work to increase students' literacy skills. When implementing this curriculum, the researchers found that they needed to start with engagement in order to effectively reach their goal of teaching history and increasing literacy skills. It is very hard for students to improve their literacy skills if they refuse to complete their required work. However, when teachers select high-interest, discipline-specific topics, in which students connect to their own lives, and provide opportunities for students to work together, students instinctively become engaged in their work. If students effectively complete their assigned learning tasks because of their level of engagement and motivation to do so, they will show improvement with literacy skills over time.

Student engagement is also important because students who are interested in their work will have a better understanding and retention of the subject matter. Behavioral engagement, therefore, does mediate the link between classroom context and academic achievement (Dotterer

& Lowe, 2011). Additionally, in a survey of college professors conducted by Malkmus (2010), professors who created well-structured lessons with readings that stimulated student interest found that their students had a greater understanding of the topic covered. Finally, Wang and Degol (2014) found that students exhibiting high levels of behavioral and cognitive engagement had higher grades, aspired to higher education, and showed positive gains in academic performance. Therefore, since engagement has been shown to increase academic achievement, and it is the goal of educators to have their students demonstrate a level of achievement that displays their highest ability level, it is recommended that teachers strive to find the means of increasing their students' engagement during class.

Additionally, high levels of behavioral engagement were associated with higher scores on standardized tests. Dotterer and Lowe (2011) found that students who were psychologically and behaviorally engaged during class had significant and positive associations with academic achievement, when measured using the Woodcock-Johnson Broad Reading and Broad Math Subtests. Dotterer and Lowe also noted that students with higher levels of emotional engagement (happiness, enjoyment) and behavioral engagement (paying attention, completing schoolwork) were associated positively with scores on standardized achievement tests for African American adolescents. Teachers are expected to assist their students in achieving academic success. Since students' skills are commonly evaluated by their scores on standardized tests, finding a way for students to demonstrate their success in that manner is an important task for teachers to undertake. If a high level of engagement is the pathway to student success, teachers have an obligation to implement strategies to increase engagement and boost their students' academic achievement.

Finally, when students engage in learning, they focus on mastering the task, persist through learning challenges, build relationships with peers, and connect with their school (Wang & Degol, 2014). These behaviors are key for students to obtain academic success during class. Dotterer and Lowe (2011) echoed the benefits of building relationships with peers during class when they found that students who felt a sense of belonging and social support were more likely to be engaged and participate in school. When students are given a complex assignment to complete or reading to comprehend, teachers can easily introduce it as a collaborative assignment. Students working together to complete this shared task will feel a connection with each other and their school, and be motivated to not only complete, but excel on future assignments.

Problems Related to Student Disengagement

Student disengagement is a major issue in the field of education. Disengaged students are more likely to struggle academically and drop out of school. Lee (2014) determined that these findings were not isolated incidents, but the result of a long-term process of student disengagement. A major reason for students dropping out of high school was disengagement, as reported in an ethnographic study of adolescents who did not complete high school. If the goal of school systems is to make students college and career-ready, students at minimum need to complete high school, as a deterrent to unemployment, under-employment, or a lack of higher education. If educators know that disengagement is a major reason why students do not complete their high school education, steps must be taken to increase student engagement, especially when engagement is a factor teachers can influence. Whereas other factors that lead students to drop out, such as intelligence and low socio-economic status, cannot be influenced by educators.

Disengaged students are also more likely to have problem behaviors during class. Students who are engaged attend class, avoid disruptive behaviors, respond to directions, follow classroom rules, concentrate, make an effort, are persistent, contribute to class discussions, and ask questions (Lee, 2014). If exhibiting these behaviors means that a student is engaged during class, then students who are not engaged cut class, disrupt instruction, are noncompliant, and make no effort to attempt their assignments. This is not only a behavior management issue for teachers, who may find it difficult to provide high-quality instruction when they have students exhibiting problem behaviors, but also for the engaged students in class, who may become disengaged due to being distracted by their peers.

Finally, engagement decreases throughout a student's educational career. Students become less engaged as they progress from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school (Lee, 2014). If disengagement starts to have a major impact on students' education as they transition into middle school, middle school teachers need to implement strategies to either maintain or increase their students' level of engagement from elementary school. It will be a point of no return if students are already starting to disconnect as early as their pre-teen years.

Causes of Student Disengagement

Students become disengaged from school for a variety of reasons. One reason is that many school curriculums are developed using traditional textbooks. Many students find the information in content-area textbooks to be boring and too technical for ease of comprehension. Gersten et al. (2006) found this to be especially true for students with learning disabilities. These students were rarely able to comprehend the information in their assigned textbooks and only gained at best a superficial understanding of key concepts covered in the text. As inclusion

classes have become more commonplace, teachers legally need to ensure that all of their students have access to information that allows them to understand the topics covered during class. If students cannot understand what they are supposed to read, they will disengage from their assignments. Malkmus (2010) reported that textbooks do not stimulate student engagement. If traditional textbooks are too boring for average-achieving students and too difficult for below-average achieving students, then it is the teacher's responsibility to provide lesson materials that will engage their students, which will help lead them on the path to academic success.

Another reason why students become disengaged from school is that teachers may teach using a lecture-based format, and students retain little information from lectures alone. Gersten et al. (2006) found that traditional teaching methods, such as an assigned textbook reading, followed by a teacher lecture and whole-class discussion, rarely engaged lower-achieving students during class. Malkmus (2010) echoed this idea and found that there was no evidence to support that textbook and lecture approaches worked to engage students during class. Although a lecture format allows teachers to cover content efficiently, this does not mean that they allow students to learn effectively. As there is much evidence to support a lack of achievement and engagement from students when they are taught using traditional, lecture-based lessons, teachers should look to increase engagement and achievement by using methods that require more student involvement.

Finally, students become disengaged when their classroom has a low level of instructional quality. Students in classrooms with high levels of instructional quality (positive classroom climate and high teacher instructional quality) demonstrated more on-task behavior, social competence, and academic competence (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Students in classrooms with low levels of classroom quality were found to be less frequently engaged in assigned

activities and more disruptive to their peers and teacher. Adolescents in classrooms with high

levels of instructional quality, as observed by Dotterer and Lowe, were more likely to try harder

on assignments.   Therefore, if teachers are unable to provide high quality instruction and

instructional materials, they are more likely to have their students (both at-risk for academic

failure and not at-risk) become disengaged, distract their teachers and peers from doing their jobs

effectively, and fail to put forth the effort required for academic success during class.

Positive Impacts of Primary Sources on Student Engagement

Research suggests that effective usage of primary sources in the classroom has a positive

impact on student engagement. Primary sources can make history come alive for students, by

linking students today with people of the past (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). When students

analyze primary sources, they read the words and examine the artifacts of actual people and

places that existed in the past, which allows them to gain a deeper understanding of past and

present perspectives of an event. Students become more interested in their work when they are

excited by and feel a connection to it, so primary sources are a great starting point for students to

work through an analysis of a historical event. Student engagement increases when students are

interested in what they are learning about; since primary sources increase student interest levels,

their engagement levels will increase as well. In a survey of college professors, Malkmus (2010)

found that students who used primary sources in higher education enjoyed discovering facts

about history from authentic sources. Malkmus also noted that when used effectively, primary

sources stimulated student interest and students demonstrated greater involvement in their work.

This was found to be true across all levels of higher education, from introductory survey courses

to senior capstone courses. Even though this study focused specifically on higher education,

many middle school social studies courses are also survey courses, so it is reasonable for middle

school social studies teachers to report similar findings when incorporating primary sources into coursework.

Many students work best when they work with others. Because primary sources require complex analysis, students are often tasked with working together to analyze a source or multiple sources and then draw on their own conclusions. Bickford and Bickford (2015) found this to be true on the middle school level when they tasked students with creating timelines of the American Civil Rights Movement after examining multiple primary sources from that time period. In this study, students were asked to work together to comprehend different sources from the 1950s and 1960s and pull together the most important events into timelines, which were then shared with the class and major points summarized using a class discussion. Bickford and Bickford found that students were eager to question each other on why they chose to focus on certain events or sources and determined that this particular method of teaching was an excellent means of facilitating a historical investigation. Students in this middle school easily could have created a timeline of events using a traditional, independent textbook reading, but because they were given such high-interest, diverse materials and a project on which they needed to collaborate, all groups of students in that class were engaged and motivated to not only complete their group's timelines, but also participate in a class discussion about the sources used. Successful usage of primary sources in this middle school clearly led to student engagement in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, all of which are important Common Core State Standards. Therefore, not only did primary source lesson implementation lead to greater engagement, but consequently greater achievement as well.

Secondary sources often leave gaps in the retelling of a historical event. Even the best textbooks are unable to inject students into the time and place they are learning about (Nava &

Schmidtberger, 2011). It is important that teachers make sure to provide students with a variety of primary sources on a given topic, so students gain the ability to completely understand an entire topic, not just one, biased point-of-view. To provide students with only one source would be equivalent to giving them a textbook reading, as there would be many gaps in the interpretation of that event or topic. Using a variety of primary sources on a given topic allows students to question and investigate the information provided to them. These behaviors are both indicative of positive engagement.

Engagement is greater when learning tasks are hands-on, challenging, and authentic (Wang & Degol, 2014). Incorporating primary sources into lessons allows students to work with artifacts from a period of study and construct their own meaning from the sources examined (Ensminger & Fry, 2012). The only other alternative to using primary sources is secondary sources, or summaries of events, which are typically found in traditional textbooks. Students are much more likely to find primary sources challenging, due to the antiquated vocabulary and historical context surrounding the source. For many students, successful comprehension of primary sources requires hands-on analysis, either independently or with peers. This will lead to increased levels of engagement, as students often have to work hard and work together to successfully comprehend a complex set of sources.

Finally, primary sources allow students to connect emotionally with a text, which then naturally increases their level of interest and engagement in completing an assigned reading. Malkmus (2010) noted that students were emotionally moved by working with authentic materials. If students are able to have an emotional response to a text, they will feel more connected to that text's author, event, or time period in which the source was created (Morgan & Rasinski, 2012). According to Wang and Degol (2014), enjoyment of learning, also known as

emotional engagement, can lead to greater behavioral engagement, such as on-task behavior, during class. Therefore, when students are emotionally invested in the primary sources they are assigned to analyze, they are more motivated to learn about their assigned topic, which leads to increased levels of engagement.

Conclusion

Student engagement is an important factor in increasing student achievement. Students who are engaged during class experience an increase in literacy skills, have a better understanding and retention of the subject matter covered, perform better on standardized tests, and develop important skills such as persistence and the ability to work effectively with others. Students who become disengaged are more likely to struggle academically, drop out of school, and have problem behaviors during class. This disengagement is caused by traditional teaching materials and methods, which goes hand-in-hand with low levels of instructional quality. Primary sources can positively impact student engagement in social studies classes because they make history come alive for students, lend themselves to collaborative activities, allow students to gain a clear and complete picture of a historical event, provide students with hands-on, challenging, and authentic learning experiences, and allow for students to make emotional connections to the source. As a result, the research shows that social studies teachers who use primary sources during instruction increase student engagement and achievement.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine if the use of primary sources in middle school social studies classes impacts student engagement. Increasing student engagement during class benefits students by aiding in comprehension and retention of content knowledge.

Design

This study was quasi-experimental and used a pre-and posttest design with a comparison group. During the pretest period of the study, students in the same standard 8th grade American history class were observed for five class periods. Any behaviors indicative of engagement were marked on a teacher-created spreadsheet. Groups of students were then given either a primary source or secondary source on the same topic for two weeks. After five class days, engagement data was then collected. The type of source used was the independent variable, while engagement was the dependent variable. At the conclusion of five class periods, the teacher compared the findings of the groups of students who used primary sources against the groups who used secondary sources to determine if the type of source utilized during class had an impact on student engagement.

Participants

Participants were chosen from the 8th grade American history classes taught by the researcher at a public middle school in a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. Of the three classes taught by the researcher, one was randomly selected by the teacher to form a convenience sample. From that class, intact groups of students (formed by their assigned tables in the classroom) were randomly selected to receive either primary or secondary sources during instruction. All students in this class participated in the study. The 27 students in the study

ranged in age from 13 to 14 years old. 19 students were African-American, 4 students were

Hispanic, 3 students were Caucasian, and 1 student was from two or more races. There were 13

male and 14 female students.

<div align="center">**Instrument**</div>

At the beginning of the study, all participants were observed for five class periods by their

teacher. They were also observed for five class periods during the study. Observations of

student behavior that demonstrated engagement were recorded on a checklist developed by the

researcher but based on the findings of Lee in the 2014 article "The Relationship between

Student Engagement and Academic Performance: Is it a Myth or Reality?" Lee developed a

similar checklist for high school students using information from the U.S. data of the Program

for International Student Assessment. Analyses of that data were found to be both reliable and

valid (Adams & Wu, 2002). The checklist was also based on data from the National Survey of

Student Engagement, which sought to describe aspects of a high quality learning environment.

This measure was also found to be a valid and reliable means of assessing student engagement

(Kuh et al., 2000). The items on the checklist for this study included the following behaviors

- completed assignment,

- avoided disruptions,

- contributed to class discussions, and

- asked relevant questions.

A copy of the checklist is included in Appendix A.

<div align="center">**Procedure**</div>

All 27 participating students in the selected 8th grade American history class were observed

for five class periods as a pretest. On those days, students were only given secondary source

material, such as video clips, textbook readings, and articles from the school curriculum to analyze during class.

Over the course of the study, similar sized groups of students were given either a primary source or a secondary source on the topic of that day's lesson. Three groups received primary source materials and three groups received secondary source materials. Despite being given different types of sources to analyze, all students were given the same assignment to complete (chart, graphic organizer, and/or writing prompt). Over the course of five class periods, the teacher circulated throughout the room, marking whether or not each student demonstrated one of the engagement behaviors described on the checklist.

Results of the pre- and postdata from the primary source and secondary source groups were compared to determine whether the type of source used made an impact on student engagement.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study hypothesized that the engagement of 8th grade students in an American history class would not increase when teaching strategies included analysis of primary sources. Increasing students' engagement by using high-interest and complex learning materials seems to be a good strategy for enhancing student understanding of required content and motivating students who would otherwise struggle to do well in school.

Hypothesis Tested

The null hypothesis for this study stated that there would be no difference in the engagement of 8th grade students in an American History class when teaching strategies included analysis of primary or secondary sources.

Student engagement was assessed by analyzing a change between the pre- and post-test, which included teacher observations of student behavior using a teacher-generated engagement checklist. The posttest occurred after students received instruction in how to analyze primary source documents and practiced doing so during class.

To test whether the differences were significant, a series of t-tests were run. First, an independent t-test was run to examine any potential differences between the two groups of students at either pre- or posttest in completed assignments, avoided disruptions, discussion participation, and asked questions. For the pretest measures, no significant differences were found on completed assignments, avoided disruptions, discussion participation, and asked questions. The two groups were similar at pretest. For the posttest measures, no significant differences were found on completed assignments, avoided disruptions, discussion participation,

and asked questions. The two groups were equivalent on these measures and showed no differences.

Next, a series of dependent t-tests were run to examine any potential group changes, from pretest to posttest. For the primary source group, there were no significant differences, pretest to posttest on any of the measures (completed assignments, avoided disruptions, participated in discussions, and asked questions). For the secondary source group, there were no significant differences for completed assignments, discussion participation, and asked questions. Results did show a significant difference for avoided disruptions [t(11)=-2.803, p <.05]. At posttest, avoiding disruptions was observed less frequently than at pretest. The null hypothesis was rejected for this measure, but supported and accepted for the remaining three measures.

Table 1. *Pre and Post-Test Measures for the Groups*

	Primary Source Group M (SD)	Secondary Source Group M (SD)
PreTest Measures		
Completed Assignment	2.33 (1.877)	2.75 (1.712)
Avoided Disruptions	2.20 (1.859)	2.50 (1.624)
Discussion Participation	1.67 (1.345)	1.75 (1.712)
Asked Questions	.73 (1.163)	2.58 (1.676)
Post Test Measures		
Completed Assignment	1.87 (1.187)	1.58 (1.505)
Avoided Disruptions	2.73 (1.981)	1.25 (.965)
Discussion Participation	1.00 (1.00)	1.00 (1.044)
Asked Questions	1.13 (1.060)	.83 (1.193)

These results and their implications will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study hypothesized that the engagement of 8th grade students in an American history class would not increase when teaching strategies included analysis of primary sources. The study tested the null hypothesis, which stated that there would be no difference in the engagement of participants as measured by pre- and posttest scores on a teacher-generated engagement checklist. After analysis of the data, the null hypothesis was accepted for 3 of the 4 measures of assessing student engagement.

Implications of Results

The results of this study confirmed the null hypothesis. While there was no significant difference in the engagement of students who analyzed either primary or secondary sources during class, there was a statistically significant difference for the secondary source group, who avoided disruptions less frequently at the posttest than the pretest.

These results suggest that the type of source students analyze has little impact on their level of engagement during class. While there were statistically significant findings that students who analyzed secondary sources disrupted class less often, this could be due to the inconsistencies in how the data was collected. Since these findings were based purely from teacher observations of student behavior, it is likely that students in the secondary source group may have been off task, but not causing a disruption of the magnitude of some other students in the class, who were tasked with analyzing primary sources. This would not have drawn the observer's attention as frequently as a major disruption. Overall, the data collected suggests that engagement is not impacted by analysis of either primary or secondary sources.

Theoretical Consequences

Several benefits of using primary sources during social studies instruction have been suggested by previous research as a means of increasing student engagement during class. Researchers noted that since analyzing primary sources is a hands-on, challenging, and authentic task, students will become more engaged when involved in this type of activity (Wang & Degol, 2014). There is also a positive correlation between engagement and academic achievement (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Therefore, social studies teachers are encouraged to explore this type of material during class, as engaged students are more likely to perform at higher academic levels in school.

The results of this study did not support the research discussed in Chapter II. Incorporating analysis of primary sources did not significantly impact the engagement of the participants, as was suggested by the research. However, there were statistically significant findings that students who analyzed secondary sources disrupted class less frequently. Prior to implementation of this study, the participants had experience analyzing secondary sources. It is possible that had the study occurred over a longer period of time and the students in the primary source group had more opportunities to practice analyzing primary sources, they may have been less disruptive, as they would have felt more comfortable working on that type of academic task.

Threats to Validity

There were several threats to the validity of this study. This study used a small sample (27 students). A larger sample would have increased the validity of this study. Another constraint was related to student attendance. Several students were absent for one or more days of the study, so their levels of engagement could not be measured every day. Additionally, as this study used a type of source students were largely unfamiliar with using during class (primary

sources), any absences during this study would have negatively impacted the amount of time they had during the intervention to practice their new skills in preparation for the posttest. Finally, the data from this study was based entirely off of teacher observations of student behavior. Therefore, it is possible that students were showing signs of either engagement or disengagement that were not accurately recorded by the researcher.

Connections to Previous Studies and Existing Literature

Student engagement is important, because students who are interested in their work will have a better understanding and retention of the subject matter (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011). Therefore, it was the goal of this study to find a strategy that would assist teachers in increasing their students' engagement levels. Research indicated that teaching strategies that included analysis of primary sources would have a positive impact on student engagement (Malkmus, 2010). However, in this study, there were no statistically significant differences in the engagement levels of students who analyzed either primary or secondary sources. This does not indicate that engagement has no impact on academic achievement, but does indicate that primary sources are not the best means of increasing student engagement in middle school social studies classes.

Implications for Future Research

Future research related to increasing student engagement in middle school social studies classes should be conducted to provide teachers with additional strategies for increasing the engagement and achievement levels of their students. It is clear that engagement does have a positive impact on academic achievement, but this study demonstrated that primary source analysis is not the best means of increasing engagement of middle school students in social studies classes. It is recommended that future studies include a larger sample size and are

conducted over a longer period of time in order to increase the validity of those studies. This would ensure that more students would have greater time to practice during the intervention period and potentially show better results on a posttest.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrated that analysis of primary or secondary sources in middle school social studies classes did not significantly impact the levels of engagement of the students, based on the data collected. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted for all but one measure of this study, which indicated that students who analyzed secondary sources were less disruptive than their peers who analyzed primary sources. If the suggested changes to this study were implemented, future research might indicate more clearly why this change was so significant. A larger sample size and greater amount of time spent on the intervention would indicate a study with more validity and greater practical applications for teachers.

APPENDIX A

Student Engagement Checklist

Student	Group	Pre-Completed Assignment	Pre-Avoided Disruptions	Pre-Class Discussion Participation	Pre-Asked Questions	Post-Completed Assignment	Post-Avoided Disruptions	Post-Discussion Participation	Post-Asked Questions

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