

***The Changing Nature of Society, its Effect on (ELA)  
Education, and the need for Adaptability***

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Motivation, Achievement, Disengagement, Gender, Family, Environment, Classroom, Teaching, Adaptability

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***Abstract:***

The rise of student disengagement and overall student apathy towards their education is a serious problem that continues to plague the ELA classroom. When teachers enter their classrooms they are presented with students who lack the drive and desire to continue their education. It is no surprise that these students are more likely to fall behind and make less productive gains than their more motivated peers. By identifying several main culprits behind the rise of student disengagement including family/environmental influences, the growing gender gap, and student perceptions of curriculum; teachers will be able to modify their lesson plans to reengage their students. This project includes solutions to the disengagement debacle as well as a poetry unit plan for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders that implements said solutions.

## ***Chapter 1: Problem Statement***

### **Problem Statement:**

It's 2015 and there is a growing population of students who simply do not care about school. It has become a nigh impossible task to teach students who simply hold no interest in being taught. With the rise of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there have come many changes in the average person's day to day lives. Many of these changes can be looked at as societal advancements and victories. The Internet is now a communication necessity, individualism and differences are celebrated rather than shunned, and new opportunities for jobs and careers have emerged. Unfortunately, this new time has also brought with it a significant decline in educational motivation and achievement. Educationally speaking, these times have presented a major problem. With the coming of this new age there has also been the steady rise of achievement gaps among genders, the changing structure of the household, significant lack of positive student perceptions of school curriculum, as well as distanced or poor relationships with adult figures. All of these factors contribute to an overall increase in student disenchantment with education. With so many forces acting as obstacles it has become difficult to "successfully" deliver an adequate education to today's student. The term "successfully" truly highlights the problem. Education as a concept requires two important components; teachers who teach and students who are ready and willing to learn. Teachers may be ready to deliver their lessons but if those lessons fall on deaf ears then no gains will be made. In other words, "cars are coming but the road is closed."

Studies such as Schultz and Stern's *WorkKeys Assessment* hat bridge the gap between high school content and career fields have proven that with the correct understanding, students can come to value their education as an investment for their future. In the same study (*College and Career Ready? Perceptions of High School Students Related to WorkKeys Assessments*) it was stated that 50% of new

jobs will require post-secondary education. The need to understand these facts is utterly necessary for youth who desire to pursue a career. If students are abandoning their school work because they view it as pointless then at the same time they are inadvertently abandoning their careers.

One may see the primary concern of this conundrum being the question: “How do I teach a student population that doesn’t see the value in education?” As students continue to become increasingly apathetic towards their educational careers there comes the need to dig even further into this problematic question. Before we can teach the student population who shrugs off the importance of learning we first must identify the root to our previous question which unsurprisingly is another question: How do we as English Language Arts teachers change the 21<sup>st</sup> century students’ outlook on education?” This project will serve as a model for providing both evidence and solutions to the problem of students simply not caring about school. It is my hope that through this project teachers will be able to identify both the cause of the problem as well as ways to implement solutions in their lesson planning.

### **Significance of the Problem:**

Society’s disengagement with education is a problem that is steadily becoming worse. Students who abandon their education in turn have children who see very little importance because their parents had such negative views. To abandon education becomes the norm for these students and they feel that education simply “isn’t for them.” Single parent households also have children who suffer in school motivation as they sometimes lack a role-model of the same sex to provide a positive example for work ethic. Headden and McKay state in their article *Motivation Matters: How New Research can help Teachers Boost Student Engagement*, that student disengagement is an almost naturally occurring process, with the student body disengagement increasing steadily from elementary to high school years. If left unchecked it was estimated that by high school 60% percent of students would be disengaged in their school work.

**Purpose:**

The purpose behind this project is to design a unit plan of lessons for the ELA classroom that will use what the research suggests the causes and solutions of academic disinterest and disengagement are. The findings of the research behind this inquiry yield that student relationships with peers/adults, perceptions of self and home life, a lack of meaningful connection with curriculum, and parental involvement/attitude towards education all are significant factors in student engagement in school. This project is designed to model an ELA classroom that includes lessons that will allow students to increase their perceptions of self-worth, connect materials with their own interests and futures, and develop positive relationships with classmates and teachers alike. This project will include a poetry unit for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders that will strive to reinvigorate student engagement and motivation as well as the bridge the gap between what is work and what is “valuable” work. The project focuses on providing a lesson for early high school students (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders) as data shows that decrease motivation increases steadily from year to year in schooling. It is my hope that by providing this unit to underclassmen that it will increase their motivation and willingness to learn for future years.

**Rationale:**

By analyzing why students are becoming increasingly uninvolved in their education, educators will be able to realize the critical points that need to be included in our lesson plans, classrooms, and even personal behaviors to help motivate students to want to learn for their own success. By taking note that lack of parental support, disconnection with course material, low perceptions of worth, and various other toxic stresses, teachers can create an atmosphere and unit plans that will allow students to see how their education is valuable to them. Once students begin to see the connection between their learning and their futures then they will be eager to continue in bettering themselves, just as long as they see what the fruits of their labor will be.

My own personal interest in working to solve the “motivation crisis” as I like to call it comes from my curiosity of why some students strive to succeed and why some do not. I used to believe that the students who succeeded were simply the “good” kids who knew how to play the “game of school” and that the ones who didn’t were simply the defiant few that were striking a rebellious pose for the sake of being just that. As I’ve grown and entered in the education field I’ve come to realize that the major difference between the students who succeed and the students who don’t are merely in the form of how they perceive their education. Those who succeed typically see where their education will take them (college, career, etc.) and how, with that education they will be successful in whatever choice they make. They also have educated peers and adults in their lives who are successful, thus they attribute those successes to education. There are other students however that do not have positive educational influences in their lives. They may come from varying backgrounds or carry interests that are different than others which can cause distance between themselves and their teachers. These divides may also cause a student to be unable to relate to the material that is being presented to them in the ELA classroom. The ultimate goal of this project is to make the value of one’s education apparent and accessible so that it is viewed as achievable and relevant to all groups of students. By creating lessons that encourage diversity in material and relevance to one’s future it will become possible to change the motivation levels of the student body for the better.

**Definition of Terms:**

**Student Perception of Self-** How students view themselves and gauge their own self-worth.

**Kinesthetic Learner-** Students who learn best when activities are more hands-on activities.

**Visual Learner-** Students who learn best when information is presented to them in a visible manner such as through a graph, chart, video.

**Auditory Learner-** Students who learn best when instructions and activities are verbally spoken to them.

**Student Engagement-** According to Richard Strong, Harvey F. Silver, and Amy Robinson from the article *Strengthening Student Engagement: What Do Students Want (and what motivates them)?*; the best definition comes from Paul Schlecty who states that students who are engaged exhibit three specific characteristics. “(1) They are attracted to their work, (2) They persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) they take visible delight in accomplishing their work.”

**SES-** is an economic and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation.

**Toxic Stress-** According to Susan Headden and Sarah McKay, “Toxic Stress” takes the form of anything that might prove to be a source of disengagement among students. Ex) a distrust of others.

### **Summary:**

As society has grown, the negative and/or apathetic perceptions towards education have become a significant issue. The apparent value of education has been lost to many modern 21<sup>st</sup> century students. Putting the importance and desire to learn back into education is a critical step that we as educators must take in order to adapt to the changing climate of the student body and deliver an education that allows all students to learn. As Paul Schlecty states, “students who are engaged in invested in their school work are as follows“(1) They are attracted to their work, (2) They persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and (3) They take visible delight in accomplishing their work.” Through this project I hope to encapsulate all of these qualities into my lesson plans that will allow students to see the value of their work while simultaneously enjoying themselves and desiring to be in school. I desire for this project to serve as a model for current and future teachers of how they can adapt to the changing needs of their students. As students continue to change there will come a need to develop further strategies that ensure that our students are provided the best education that we

as professionals can give them. Education is a constantly evolving system. Instead of passively mourning for the days where we cared about school, we instead need to mix things up and take action to reengage them. As the views and beliefs of the student body change, so should how we as professionals view how to teach. It is my intention that the over-arching theme of this project be that teachers should not expect students to change for them, rather teachers should adapt to suit the needs of their students. Adaptability has always been the key. Students are still here and still need to be taught. We as educators just need to adjust how we approach and then play the game.

## *Chapter 2: Literature Review*

Change is inevitable. We of the 21<sup>st</sup> century live in a world that is constantly changing. The way we dress, the way we act, the way we work. The list goes on and on. In particular, as a species, we have seen our society transform itself seemingly before our very eyes, and yet, at the same time this change has been gradual enough that few stop to mention its effects on the world at large. Our education system in particular is one such institution that has seen the effects of the changing of society. These changes include but are not limited to society's value of education, the changing structure of the familial household, and the continuing trend of gender division seen among students. All of these transforming factors in particular play a vital role in determining the implementation and effectiveness of ELA instruction to the modern student. Unfortunately, the majority of the changes that our society has experienced presents a negative impact on the student's educational career and the data presented illustrates that the society we live in is not necessarily very educationally friendly. The causes of this stand offish attitude towards education come from many sources, among them being society's general disengagement with the classroom, factors outside the classroom such as family, and the growing gap in achievement between the sexes.

### **Society's Outlook on Education**

When analyzing the various changes that have taken place within the 21<sup>st</sup> century and their effect on the ELA classroom, an important question to ask one's self is “Do people care about education?” “What kind of value does education hold to modern society?” Perhaps the biggest and most obvious change in our society is the way that people view the concept of long and short term reward. Something that has become painfully obvious to educators is that students are becoming more and more cynical to education because they simply can't see how it will benefit their future. What's in

it for them? As a society, we are becoming less likely to focus on the long term rewards of education and focus more on the here and now. This idea isn't something that simply materialized by itself either. On the contrary, this attitude that 21<sup>st</sup> century potential students share is the result of the passing on of these values. Students with parents who are unable to hold a job often put their education on hold to assist in dealing with the financial hardship. Likewise, students with parents who have little education are less likely to pursue education themselves. The problem here is that students can't bridge the gap between the content that they learn in high school and what is going to benefit them in their respective career paths. Students who do not see the value in education have lower success in their respective careers. Modern students have a difficult time understanding how reading for information, passing a math test, or setting up a proper chemistry experiment can benefit them in a field that is seemingly unrelated. What these students don't understand is the skills that they learn in high school are often the stepping stones for entry level positions, regardless of field. "U.S. Department of Labor projections indicate that nearly 50% of all new jobs created between 2008 and 2018 will require some form of post-secondary education or training, and for businesses to be globally competitive, entry level workers must have appropriate reading and math skills..."(Schultz,Stern 157). Without a doubt, businesses and the economy at large recognize the need for an educated worker, so then why don't the majority of the potential workers? Schultz and Stern themselves state in their work *College and Career Ready? Perceptions of High School Students Related to WorkKeys Assessments*; that only 34% of high school graduates are college ready. This is an appallingly low number. This means that at best, only about a third of high school students possess the skills that will make them ready for a career.

"As the academic requirements rise, so too must students' willingness to take on increasingly difficult tasks and to persist through the failures that often precede success."(Headden, Mckay 3) Part of the rather negative point of view that society often labels education with its often misconstrued "irrelevant" curriculum and how that curriculum is taught. Students often find what we touch

unengaging and therefore view it as unimportant in their lives. ELA teachers in particular can experience significant disengagement through the choice of literature materials that are presented in their classroom. In general as students age in school they become increasingly less motivated about their education. “In elementary school, fully eight in ten students are said to be “learning with a positive emotional tone and persevering in the face of challenges”; in middle school, just six in ten have that perspective; and by high school, according to Gallup, a mere four in ten students are engaged.”(Headden, Mckay). There is clearly a steady decline in student interest in education as children grow older, specifically seeming upon entry of adolescence. If by high school only 40 percent of the student body is actively engaged and invested in their learning then we as educators have a serious problem when going into our classrooms and attempting to teach. If the student is already “checked out” of school then how is one to deliver an effective lesson to a student body with only four out of every ten students willing to listen? The exact cause of this mindset of increased disengagement among 21<sup>st</sup> century youth can be identified through multiple sources. One of these sources can be known as what is called “Toxic Stress” as noted by Susan Headden and Sarah Mckay in their work *Motivation Matters: How New Research can help Teachers Boost Student Engagement*. Toxic stress can take the form of various factors but all of which lead to classroom disengagement. One of these toxic stresses in the classroom can be a distrust of others. If students are uncomfortable in their classroom setting either with their peers or perhaps the teacher themselves then their attentiveness and dedication towards schooling begins to wane. If students are not in a learning environment that they deem acceptable then their dedication to education suffers. This “sense of belonging” as stated by Headden and Mckay is vital for the success of students and when it is lacking the willingness and ability to learn is hindered. Headden and Mckay take note of a study in which students of minority race or SES at the University of Texas which has a “reputation as one of the nation's most selective public universities.”(Headden, Mckay 9) had poor graduation rates. Only 39% of these student completed

their degrees within the four years provided for their respective programs. “Experts who have studied this issue suspect that one reason for low completion rates is the sense the part of these students that “people like them” don't belong in college.”(Headden, Mckay 9).

“The term “learning environment” most frequently defines the social, physiological, or psychosocial environment in which learning, or as the case may be, teaching takes place.”(Rodovan, Makovec 120). The level of comfort and accessibility that students feel with their learning environment has a direct effect on the levels of motivation and goals for students. Students that have positive views of their environment typically display higher motivation towards their education as well as more focused goal orientation. In a 2004 study, a research model titled TARGET (task assignments, authority relations, recognition systems, grouping procedures, evaluation practices, the use of time.) tested students’ view of classroom structure which included but were not limited to tasks, support, evaluation, etc. in relation to their completion of school work and goals. The study yielded results that student perception was indeed a critical indicator of student performance and motivation. In addition to this, when students are able to understand the relevance of their assignments through their classroom teacher then their success is also augmented. “Their findings were the first to support the line of argument that when students access learning in the classroom as being relevant and interesting, this affects their positive assessment of learning in the future.”(Rodovan, Makovec 122). If the classroom teacher can manipulate their classroom environment(setting, interactions, tasks) in a way that students find relevant and comfortable then students who were once apathetic or even unwilling to learn may change their attitude.

### **What about the Family?**

Another critical component of society that's metamorphosis has affected the classroom is the changing nature of the American family unit. It's important to take note that while teachers have significant influence over students while they are in the classroom, parents and other family members

have the power when students are outside school walls. As such, it makes sense to focus on how the relationships that a student holds with their family might affect their performance, motivation, or even perception of education. Many factors come into play here, including but not limited to the size and composition of the family unit as well as the educational level of the members of the family.

“Family configuration and a variety of parental behaviors are important influences on development.”(Coates, Battle). One changing aspect of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society is the increase in the number of single-parent households. It's no secret that parental involvement has a large role on student academic achievement but what happens when that involvement is cut in half? Beyond this, what is the effect of a single-father only household, or one with only a single-mother? There's also the issue of SES as the result of a single adult household that could play a potentially major role in a student's educational life. Juan Battle and Deborah L. Coates discuss in their work *Father-only and Mother-only, Single-Parent Family status of Black Girls and Achievement in Grade Twelve and at Two-years Post High School*; how the influence of both single-father households and single-mother households effect black adolescent girls. The hypothesis of this experiment would be that girls from single-mother households would outperform girls from single-father households. “Results suggest that Black single-mother households create better pathways to academic success for their daughters than do single-father households.”(Battle, Coates). The study also states that as SES increases, so do the achievement rate of these students, more so in the single-mother households. The findings brought by Battle and Coates suggest that the influence of positive role-models of the same gender result in higher academic achievement. In every case where girls were raised in single-father households, their achievements were lower. The study suggests that while living in a single-parent household may produce less achievement than a two-parent household, the real deterrent to education comes from the lack of positive role-models of the same gender. Battle and Coates also insist in their work that SES also trumps single-parent households in terms of educational pitfalls however low SES can commonly be

seen to be a direct result of single-parent households. Households with fewer resources and money are more likely to be unable to support a student's academic needs outside of the classroom in terms of using technology or other resources that may typically be found in the child's classroom.

The perception a student has regarding their home situation and family life is also a critical part regarding their motivation for school. “For instance, a student may report living in a dangerous neighborhood, and may be able to see and articulate a connection between routine concerns about safety and an inability to succeed in school but be unable to see the relevance of schoolwork for his or her future.”(Chapman 6). In short, home lives of students, regardless of how good or poor dictate their priorities when it comes to education. The study shown by Chapman shows that an increased connection between problem avoiding and school value was shown in students of high poverty areas. Adolescents also adopt the attitudes of education that belong to their parents. There exists the impression that students from impoverished areas that “education isn't for them.” Unfortunately in this world, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer as this mindset tends to be a viscous cycle. Dr. Carol M. Swain details her own personal accounts “None of my siblings-seven brothers and four sisters ever graduated from high school.”(Swain 50). More and more students from either educationally unsupportive backgrounds or areas of low SES exhibit a negative outlook on their future of education and believe that it is not worth their time. “Ignorance is rampant among the poor. Before I dropped out of school, I believed that my situation was hopeless and that only rich people could go to college.”(Swain 50).

Another important aspect of changing familial behavior that can have a crucial effect on student achievement is direct parental involvement in regards to their child's education and career. In the continually changing familial composition of the 21<sup>st</sup> century family, direct parental involvement in student education is becoming rarer and rarer. With the growing number of families struggling in terms of SES or belonging to single-parent households are at a direct disadvantage with providing direct

involvement to their child's education simply due the unavailability of time. Students from economically poor backgrounds often times find themselves lacking support from home due to parents struggling to make ends meet. Parents who do not value education simply because they did not “need” or receive the same support from their parents are also hindering their children's success. The question here is how does the lack of direct parental involvement effect students? In the study, *History Repeats Itself: Parental Involvement in Children's Career Exploration*, authors Kathryn A. Levine and Dawn Sutherland surveyed current parents about their parents involvement in their education and career. The results of the study indicated that 18 out of the 33 parents surveyed did not graduate high school. The majority of the parents who did not graduate reported that their own parents had little or negative involvement in their education. “The majority of the parents' role in their education as negative, non-involved or irrelevant.”(Levine, Sutherland 245.) The study also yields that some of the parents never graduated simply because their own parents had low expectations of what they would achieve. This is a common problem in our society. Students are achieving lower than their potential simply because they are not being challenged enough. The fact that over half of the parents interviewed in this study failed to complete high school shows a lack of sense of importance to education. This trend is a viscous cycle as parents who received little involvement with education from their parents are more likely to repeat this behavior with their own children. Levine and Sutherland's study also claims that the parents who had low parental involvement in their education held jobs that did not lead to careers.

### **The Gender Gap**

“Over the past 3 decades, women in the United States have entered the work-force in ever increasing numbers. By 1990, approximately 57 million women held paid jobs, and women are projected to account for 47% of the labor force by the year 2005.”(Watson, Quatman, Edler 323). It's no denying that those of the female gender have made leaps and bounds in terms of ambition in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. More and more women are finding themselves employed and going to

college. Despite, however this growing movement of achievement with adolescent females, adolescent males seem to be left in the dust. The levels of achievement for boys in recent years has seen a steep decline in comparison to that of girls. The reasons for male underachievement can greatly vary but may include “lack of male role-models in schools, cultural attitudes about gender expectations, disinterest in subject matter, lack of organization and planning for the future, learning styles, and the need for physical space and movement...” (Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley 127). Many may argue that a gender gap does not exist and rather we as a society are on a road to “equalization” among the genders. But if that is the case why are girls’ numbers continuing to go up while boys are increasingly declining? Shouldn't boys be making the same strides towards achievement as girls? Watson, Quatman, and Edler of *Career Aspirations of Adolescent Girls: Effects of Achievement Level, Grade, and Single-Sex School Environment* state that what often hinders girls in their own striving for achievement is the sense of conflict they experience when they choose the position of either caretaker of one's family or a specialized career. Culturally, wouldn't boys have even less of a dilemma? In the study, *Tackling Male Underachievement: Enhancing a Strengths-Based Learning Environment for Middle School Boys* it has been proven that in the district studied that “Data analysis in our district showed gender differences at the middle school level with significantly higher numbers of girls than boys earning grade point averages (GPAs) that were “B” or higher.”(Clark, Flower, Walton, Oakley 128). The study also showed that behavior referrals were also much higher for boys than they were for girls. As stated previously the reasons for this gender gap are wide however the previously stated disinterest in subject material did prove to be a factor in the study in Alaska prior to the introduction of WorkKeys assessment which bridged the gap between content and career. The correlation between female success in same gender households in Battle and Coates' study also supports the need for positive role-models of the same sex.

So, the ultimate question here is what can be done to close the gender gap? In Clark and co.'s

study a group of middle school boys were given group sessions that included motivational guest speakers, healthy life tips, strength building sessions, advice for high school, and more. With the introduction of these sessions it was found that the grades of 88 percent of the mainstream students within the study increased. The amount of discipline referrals also decreased upon the introduction of this study. In addition improvements in both academics and behavior, student perception of school increased as well with more boys seeing school as being valuable to them. According to this study, making boys aware of their shortcomings and offering them helpful solutions and motivation allows them to increase their levels of achievement.

### **The Content Debacle and what the Data Suggests**

Ultimately, the majority of the issues discussed in this work are wide spread among educational domains. What can we as ELA teachers do to combat the issues brought about by societal changes? The answer here is all in the content. With all of the changing factors of the 21<sup>st</sup> century adolescent it is important for teachers in ELA to be themselves versatile and open to change. It is the job of educators to adapt to the needs of the students. Changing what is read in the ELA classroom is one positive step towards adapting to changing student climate. In the study *Reading Preferences and Perceptions of Urban Eighth Graders*, author Arlene Barry introduced the AMRP (Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey) which tested whether aspects such as race or genre had an effect on what students “enjoyed” to read. The findings of the experiment concluded that while race did play a role in the preference of novel, the genre of the novel had a larger effect. Through the AMRP students indicated that they would be more likely to read if the book was of their chosen genre. “Series” and “adventure” books as well as “fiction novels about people my age” scored highly for both the 76 females and the 72 males who participated in this survey. What all of these genres have in common is that 21<sup>st</sup> century students can relate to the stories that they chose. Students can see themselves in the “adventure” books and also compare their actions to those of characters within “fiction novels about

people my age”. Books such as these offer closer lens into what being an adolescent in this time period is like. Thus by allowing students to participate in the picking of their reading material, we as educators are promoting interest in learning as well as motivation to continue reading. Since our goal is to create lifelong learners it makes sense to allow students to have their input on “how” they want to learn. Unfortunately, non-fiction information books scored on the low side of the interest pole for both groups. Something that doesn't bode well for the recent pushes with the common core.

With more and more career options requiring more schooling as well as higher perception of basic reading and writing skills it's imperative that the first steps to jump starting society's interest in education is to make these facts common knowledge. Students need to understand that they are doing writing assignments and reading closely for a reason other than “they just have to”. By allowing students to understand “why” they are learning something, they may be able to see the endgame and value of what their education is leading to. If 50 percent of future jobs are going to require some form of post-secondary education as stated earlier then why is it that only 34 percent of today's youth are striving to meet the call? The study illustrates the lack of connections that students are making between what they learn in high school and how that knowledge translates to better suit their needs in the future. The modern youth needs to “see” just how the work they do in school can benefit them. In short, they need proof. The value for the skills that are learned within high school needs to be promoted in order for students to understand why achievement matters! This is where the WorkKeys system mentioned in Schultz and Stern's study really shines. In the urban school in Alaska where this study was tested, students were given the WorkKeys college/career readiness assessment which evaluated their performance on topics such as close reading and writing and ultimately determined in they were college/career ready. The results indicated that as a whole the majority of students performed at a level 4(level 5 is identified as college/career ready). WorkKeys was able to identify to both students and teachers that they were not yet ready for their respective careers while at the same

time being able to bridge the gap of understanding between “what we learn in school” and its application to one's career. By using this system, educators were able to make students understand why they are learning what they are and thus are better able to increase student motivation and perception towards education. Students will be able to see the value in ELA in terms of their career choice even if the comparisons are blatantly apparent.

Society is ever changing. It is the responsibility of educators to identify what aspects of society will affect the way students learn as well as the way teachers teach. The perception of education, the changing family structure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the widening gender gap between boys and girls are just some examples of how society's changing nature can effect education, not only from the perspective of ELA but universally. Familiarizing one's self with these issues is the first step to adapting to a changing world.

## ***Chapter 3: Application***

### **The First Step in Solving the Motivation Crisis**

As can plainly be seen through the various sources presented, students are becoming increasingly apathetic towards the prospect of education. In order to effectively provide an effective education to these students it is necessary to know how to best craft lessons as well as classroom environment that boost student motivation and make the youth of today once again place value in their education. Perhaps the most important step to take in combating this motivation crisis is first to simply acknowledge society's changing view of education. 21<sup>st</sup> century students look at education very differently than students of the past. The influences of our society have morphed students' perceptions and priorities towards education. As teachers we cannot expect students to change their opinions of school simply because we tell them to, nor should they have to. Essentially students need “proof” that their education is valuable. As outlined in the previous chapter, student disengagement has a variety of sources but among them are the student's life and environment outside the classroom, the growing gender gap, as well as a lack of student connection with curriculum. While chapter 2 highlighted the debilitating effects of these influences on student engagement, chapter 3 will instead focus on the

solutions as well as putting them into practice. Often times the solutions to one of these causes of disengagement with education are applicable to another, making them extremely accessible to implement in one's classroom and lesson plans. In order to solve this motivation crisis it is necessary to take special care to address each of these factors in the construction of one's lesson plans. By knowing how to effectively combat each cause of disengagement teachers will be able to recapture student attention and willingness to learn in their classrooms. In this chapter, solutions to each of these disengagement sources will be analyzed to be later integrated into a unit plan that is specifically designed to boost student motivation. Solutions to these causes of disengagement will be carefully examined for their effectiveness to be combined with a 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade poetry unit. The lessons that are included within this unit will effectively model the application of the solutions to the motivation crisis that has made itself present in the 21<sup>st</sup> century student body. Again, perhaps the most important and helpful tip to glean upon reading these solutions and lesson implementations is to remember that students should not change for their teacher, but rather good teachers will adapt for their students.

### **The Power of Environment and Building Relationships**

As presented by the research in chapter 2, the influences that a student experiences outside of the classroom are a direct influence on their attitude and performance in the classroom. As a teacher one has to remember that they typically will see their students for 7 hours of the day. Even accounting for a traditional and possibly generous 8 hours of sleep, that still leaves 9 hours of the students' time outside of the classroom. The main solution to this aspect of the problem is simply maximize the time you have with your students to the fullest. Making an impact on your students' lives with the time you have with them is crucial in boosting student engagement and success. The outside factors of a students' life, whether they be problems at home, in their neighborhood, etc. can often make learning difficult. Students who are preoccupied with these various issues during their time outside of one's classroom often will place their education on a lower pedestal than their other priorities. It is important

to never underestimate the power of factors outside the classroom, and when possible to attempt to work cooperatively with them. As shown in the previous chapter, parental involvement in student education plays a major role in the achievement of adolescents so keeping in contact with parents to encourage that involvement can be the key to student engagement and success. Adolescents are extremely impressionable and easily influenced by all factors in their lives. As shown in chapter 2, students who come from families of little education often place little importance on education themselves. Students from single-mother households in particular are greatly influenced by the behaviors and actions of their primary guardian. “An increase of one standard deviation of maternal schooling increases the likelihood of graduating from college by 14 percentage points.”(Ziol, Duncan, Kalil). The teacher and the class itself should be able to act as a positive model system for the student. Developing this positive relationship with students is key in improving student engagement. The more positive the teacher-student relationship, the more likely it is that students will participate in and enjoy their studies. Developing one's relationship with their students can be as simple as learning about what interests them, what's going on in their lives, and even acting as a support system for them in times of need. If the increase of a single standard deviation point can increase student motivation by such a large percentage then it is quite obvious that acting as a positive role-model for one's students can have a significant effect on the students' educational gains. The unit plan that is presented will follow this mantra by building positive classroom dynamics that will allow the students to engage in team activities. Aylin Koyalan states in the work *Towards More Cooperative Classrooms* that “students enjoy such activities, and consider them very helpful in providing a more positive relationship with peers.”(Koyalan 1) This principle will be seen heavily in the unit plan as each lesson will open with a cooperative five minute “talk of the day”. The topic of which will vary and may or may not have any real relevance to the lesson in general. The main purpose of this activity being to create an air of community and comfort within the classroom. Students will be encouraged to chime in when they feel

they have something to contribute to the conversation. Doing this will ideally increase a student's positive perception of the classroom environment and thus increase their engagement in the main lesson plan of the day. In addition to this the final assessment for the unit will involve the creation of a cooperative poem that involves students taking on one of three roles to cooperatively create an individual work of their own design. By developing positive relationships with their peers students will be more apt to participate in future activities that involve group work. This activity is enjoyable and allows students to socialize with friends and express their own creativity and interests simultaneously. Both activities contribute to developing a social influence network for students that will influence them to devote more motivation to their classrooms studies.

The physical structure of the classroom is another aspect that can be altered to suit the needs of the students in the classroom. The way a classroom is structured physically can also serve to encourage the positive perceptions of school in students. Arranging seats in a circle can build a stronger sense of community within a classroom. In addition to this displaying student work around the classroom is a subtle reminder to the student of the student-teacher relationship. For the majority of time the desks in the unit plan should be arranged in a circular fashion where students have optimal views and pathways of one another for communication. In the case of the final assessment, students will break off into smaller groups, again arranging their desks in a formation of their choice that will allow them to clearly see and hear their partners.

### **Closing the Gender Gap**

The next set of solutions to be implemented into practice are those that relate to the growing gender gap among students which causes a significant increase to student disengagement among males. To briefly recap, there has been significant gap in achievement and engagement between girls and boys. As Clark, Flower, Walton, and Oakley point out in their research the various causes of this gap including but not limited to cultural attitudes about gender expectations, various learning styles, lack of

interest in course material, etc. all contribute to lower motivation and achievement of boys in comparison to their female peers.

When attempting to look for solutions to the cultural attitudes about gender expectations teachers are best to identify what the learning climate of their classroom is first. David Taylor states in his work *The 'cool', 'uncool' influence of the school ethos on boys' achievement* that “Boys do least well when a strongly established anti-learning culture prevails among their peers.”(Taylor 1) What this essentially means is if male students believe that the assignment they are given is “uncool” or rather unimportant to them then they will not put their best efforts into it. Male students in particular are more prone to show a lack of motivation towards instruction due to anti-learning peer pressure as they feel that succeeding in school will make them stand out among their other male peers. To mitigate this, it is best when instructing boys to attempt to create a class wide atmosphere that takes away the “uncoolness” factor of the classroom. This can be easier said than done but some effective means of doing this are providing reward systems for good work. Another effective way of limiting the stigma of “uncoolness” is to monitor the male student progress more closely. “In schools where anti-learning peer pressure is a major barrier to boys' achievement, close monitoring can give boys 'an excuse to succeed'.”(Taylor 7). It's important to note that the majority of the lessons that will be included in the poetry unit plan will be student-centered and a large part of the teacher's role will be monitoring student progress and floating around the classroom. By keeping a constant presence, one will be able to assist students from feeling as though they shouldn't engage in assignments by essentially acting as the student's “scapegoat” to others who may be perpetuating anti-learning peer pressure.

It is necessary for teachers to remember to be versatile in crafting their unit plans to make sure that they are including lessons that cater to students of all learning styles including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Some boys in particular may be unable to learn in an environment where they can't move around or perhaps one that focuses more on visuals. As a teacher it is effective to use

various teaching styles to accommodate all of the learners in the room. Kin-esthetic learners in particular often take a bad rap as being class disruptions and significant sources of disengagement to themselves and others simply due to their inability to remain stationary for long periods of time. An activity that will be featured in the following unit plan will involve students working together in “poetry stations” which will involve them moving around the room to various locations to read the poems in that area and identify the sound devices used in that poem. Students who are more kin-esthetic based learners will respond more effectively to this lesson as they will be allowed to move during it. Of course visual and auditory learners will not be left out of here either. Targeting auditory learners with audio-readings or repeated directions and visual learners with videos and individual copies of readings are also extremely beneficial in boosting engagement. Many lessons will include links to audio recordings of poems as well as the distribution of physical copies of said poems for the auditory and visual learners respectively.

Finally the right choice of text and course material can help greatly in boosting engagement in male students who may be falling behind their female peers. “Boys, in particular, need to feel personally invested in the class and in the writing associated with the class.”(McIntosh 10). As stated earlier, it is crucial to develop strong teacher-student relationships in one's class to encourage participation and engagement in students. For boys a large part of building this relationship is to incorporate literature that is not exactly traditional but rather of their interests. Students, and boys in particular want to read about material that is important to them because simply put, it is fun to read! While the classics are fantastic choices in a classroom, some students may find themselves alienated and unable to relate to them. By taking a more unconventional choice of material, teachers will see a significant increase in engagement. Poetry in particular can be a strong source of material for motivation among boys. “Modern poetry comes in a vast array of styles from a vast array of voices and languages. This might include rap and hip-hop lyrics to the beat boxing of street poetry...”(McIntosh

11). The poetry unit included in this project is designed for just this purpose. Students will have the ability to choose many of the texts they analyze according to their own interests and some of the other course “texts” such as listening to Lupe Fiasco's “Go Go Gadget Flow” will provide even the most cynical male ELA student with some enjoyment.

### **Content and Interests**

While this subject does fall into the contributors to the gender gap, I believe that a student's lack of connection with course material is a major enough contributor to student-wide disengagement with education that it deserves its own sub-heading of solutions. As mentioned earlier in this project, a major reason for students becoming apathetic towards their education is that they simply do not see the value in it. What we may view as important may not translate over to a student's eyes. When crafting effective unit plans, teachers should remember that students want to see the value in the work that they are doing, including practical assignments for their futures as well as assignments that are relevant to their interests outside of school. “Research has shown that interest has a great effect on learning processes: Adults and children work harder and learn more when something interests them than when they engage in things that do not.”(Hagay, Baram-Tsabari, Peleg 410). Connecting a student's interests outside of school to the lesson plan is a fantastic way to boost student engagement and productivity. The website <https://www.poets.org/> which will be used within the accompanying unit plan will allow students to search for texts to analyze that correspond to their own interests through a search engine of occasions, themes and forms. Also, allowing students to choose the content they work with contributes to the ever-growing teacher-student relationship.

### **Introduction to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Unit Plan**

It is my hope that the unit plan that follows serves as a model to current and future teachers how adapting to the needs of students can be accomplished. The unit plan contains 10 lessons that incorporate the solutions discussed to the problem of student disengagement in schools. The decisions

made in terms of content and classroom management have made from thorough research of the current problems and solutions surrounding the 21<sup>st</sup> century student's attitude towards education. The lessons themselves cater in lesson goals appropriate to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders however the basic principle of adaptability as an underlying theme is universal.

## **Poetry Unit Plan for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Graders**

### **Lesson One: Imagery- Day 1**

**Introduction:** This lesson, like all in the unit will begin with a “Free Talk Discussion” which will allow students to share with their partners, the teacher, or the entire class what is going on in their lives. The classroom set up for this unit will be a large arrangement of desks in a circular pattern so that all students will be facing one another. This will promote discussion and participation. The objective of these free discussions is to boost student participation in class by making them feel more comfortable in the classroom setting. The basic design of this lesson is to allow students to cooperate with one another to better understand the concept of imagery which is a major aspect of poetry. Students will be able to communicate with partners as well as discuss openly with the class about their thoughts on the pictures presented to them. This discussion will allow the classroom to be a more community like setting where students feel comfortable to participate. The pictures used in the activity also include a variety of things that could be of interest to students (animals, videogames, acting) which will also bolster student engagement.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

**Required Materials:** Pen, paper, Pictures of various events/objects

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free talk discussion-5 minutes
2. What is poetry to you?- Socratic discussion – 10 minutes
3. Ask students what is Imagery? - In groups of four attempt to give Imagery a definition. Make a list of the qualities you believe it must have. - 10 minutes
4. Pick out several images and distribute them among the groups of four. Have students make a list of words describing the pictures- -10 minutes
5. Ask students what Imagery is. Is it important to poetry?
6. Using the words that you have chosen in your groups write a sentence with twenty words describing one of the pictures you saw. - 10 minutes
7. Find a partner who was not in your group. Have them read your sentence. - 5 minutes
8. Have students return to their seats. Ask if their partners could they figure out what your picture was by your words?
9. Explain imagery and how many authors use imagery in poems to paint a picture for their reader. - 5 minutes

**Assessment:** Ticket out the door – What is imagery? - write your definition on a half sheet of paper and turn it in.

## **Lesson 2: Sound -Day 2**

**Introduction:** The design of this lesson will explore the power of sound and how it can effect our perception as readers. This lesson will allow students to discuss what effect sound has on our enjoyment of poetry or literature in general. Some words simply sound better than others and cause or reading to be more enjoyable. Students will work together to find words that they found to be beautiful and explain their reasoning for so. The goal of this lesson is for students to understand the importance of sound while simultaneously enhancing their vocabulary.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events

and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- a. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

Writing Standard 9-10 #4- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Required Materials:** Pen, paper, SmartBoard Laptops/IPADS/Computer Lab

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free Discussion – 5 minutes
2. Share the article “32 Of The Most Beautiful Words In The English Language” on the SmartBoard. <http://www.buzzfeed.com/danieldalton/bob-ombinate#.aq6jPKA4g>. Read each word and their definitions out loud as you go through the list. -10-15 minutes
3. Ask the class “What makes a word beautiful?” Even words with negative meanings can sound pleasant to our ears. Why is that?. - 10 minutes
4. In pairs have students search dictionary.com for words that they believe are beautiful. Make a list of 10 words -20 minutes

**Assessment:**

Partner up with someone you have not worked with and start a conversation (It can be about anything!). Within your conversation, add in the words that you have chosen. The teacher will keep a timer with 10 minutes on the clock. After 10 minutes see if you can identify what “beautiful” words your partner chose to add in to your conversation – 15 minutes.

### **Lesson 3: Theme -Day 3**

**Introduction:** The design of this lesson is to introduce theme to the students so that they may identify it in the poems we read. The use of film clips as examples will prove to be beneficial to auditory and visual learners and by allowing kinesthetic students to distribute the copies of reading material to the class, these learners will also benefit by the adding motion. Students will also work cooperatively with other students in the room and physically move themselves to be in proximity of their partners.

#### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #2- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined in specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives

- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

**Required Materials:** SmartBoard, “We are Living”

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free Discussion Topic- 5 minutes
2. What is theme? In pairs give a definition of what theme is. - 5 minutes
3. On the smartboard go over the definition of theme. Theme is a message that the author is trying to convey to the reader. It is not often stated directly – 5 to 10 minutes
4. Show the clip from Sam Raimi's 2002 film Spiderman “With Great Power Comes Great Responsibility” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d6rTQcU2U> - Is this a theme? How? - 10 minutes
5. Have students pass out copies of “We are Living” by Brendan Kennelly and read the poem twice out loud. Given opportunities to students to read if they want. -10
6. What themes did you find in the poem? Have students find another person in the room and share what they believe the themes were. Why do you think that way - 10 minutes
7. Share out- 5-10 minutes

**Assessment:** Ticket out the door: Name a popular movie or television show that you are interested in. What do you believe a possible theme of that program could be? Write this on a half sheet of paper and submit – 5 minutes

#### **Lesson 4: Tone -Day 4**

**Introduction:** In this lesson, students will view trailers from the popular film, *Mary Poppins* which will ideally provide connections to curriculum within students as it is likely that they have seen the film at one point or another in the past. By having the option to write their 10 line poem about anything of their choice will allow students to write about something they enjoy and therefore increase their motivation for completing the assignment.

#### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives

- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

Writing Standard 9-10 #4- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing Standard 9-10 #11- Create literary texts that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of texts of recognized literary merit.

- a. Engage in a wide range of prewriting experiences, such as using a variety of visual representations, to express personal, social, and cultural connections and insights.
- b. Identify, analyze, and use elements and techniques of various genres and literature.
- c. Develop critical and interpretive texts from more than one perspective, including historical and cultural.
- d. Create poetry, stories, plays, and other literary forms (e.g. videos, art work).

**Required Materials:** SmartBoard, paper, pen, “A Blade of Grass”, “The Happy Grass”

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Show the class two clips from YouTube. One is the original trailer for Mary Poppins, the second is the recut trailer. - 10 minutes

1. Clip 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuWf9fP-A-U>

2. Clip 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T5\\_0AGdFic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2T5_0AGdFic)

2. In pairs have students make a list of the differences between the two. What changed about the trailers to make them different? 5 -10 minutes

3. Come back together as a whole class. Share out thoughts – 10 minutes

4. Explain how tone is the author's attitude toward a work. How did the tone change between the two clips? - 5 minutes
5. How might a poet use tone to their advantage? Look at "A Blade of Grass" by Brian Patten, what tone is being given off? How can we change the tone? What words imply the sad tone? - 5-10 minutes
6. Look at the poem "The Happy Grass" by Brendan Kennelly. What tone is being implied? - 5 minutes

**Assessment:** Write a 10 line poem with a definitive tone. Keep in mind what tone is. You are free to write about anything but make sure you make the tone clear. Model your work after the poems we have looked at in class. Use line breaks for emphasis on certain words. - 15 minutes

## **Lesson 5: Alliteration -Day 5**

**Introduction:** In this lesson students will discover that poetry can be found in forms other than simple written text. Students will listen to a modern rap song “Go Go Gadget Flow” by Lupe Fiasco and identify the aspects of alliteration in that song. By showing students that poetry can be in different more “mainstream” forms, teachers will be able to engage students who view poetry as an “uncool” literature. Students will also enjoy finding their own songs that include alliteration or other sound devices.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events

and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

**Required Materials:** SmartBoard, pen, paper, SmartBoard, computer.

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free discussion topic- 5 minutes
2. What is Alliteration? In pairs(someone you have not worked with previously) write down your best example of what you believe alliteration is. – 5 minutes
3. Bring class back to their seats. Go over what Alliteration is. “The repetition of two or more stressed syllables of a word group that have the same beginning consonant sound or sound group” – Give students several examples. Ex) The Brave Boy Bought a Bear- 10 minutes
4. Play the song “Go Go Gadget Flow” by rapper Lupe Fiasco  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js2RosE8Uwk> The first time students are just to listen but on the second time have them write down some examples of alliteration that they found in the song. – 10 minutes
5. Share out examples – 5 minutes
6. Alliteration stations: Divide the class into five groups. There are five stations around the room with a particular poem. In your groups, mark on a separate piece of paper where the alliteration in that poem is found. Each group will spend 3 minutes at each station and then rotate. – 15 minutes
7. Share examples of alliteration in the stations – 5 minutes

**Assessment:** What is the definition of alliteration and give an example (write on a half sheet of paper)

– 5-10 minutes

**Further Practice:** Try and find other songs that have alliteration present in them. Think of your favorite song and try to identify any alliteration.

### **Lesson 6: Assonance & Consonance -Day 6**

**Introduction:** In this lesson students will identify assonance and consonance in sentences written on the SmartBoard. The sentences will involve topics that have been specifically catered to student interest (sports, clubs, etc.). They will then write a Free Poem of 10 lines that will be about what they plan to do in the future. This activity will bridge the gap between curriculum and plans for after high school. It will allow students to think about what they want for themselves after school and how they will plan to get there.

#### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically

and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

Writing Standard 9-10 #4- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing Standard 9-10 #11- Create literary texts that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of texts of recognized literary merit.

- a. Engage in a wide range of prewriting experiences, such as using a variety of visual representations, to express personal, social, and cultural connections and insights.
- b. Identify, analyze, and use elements and techniques of various genres and literature.
- c. Develop critical and interpretive texts from more than one perspective, including historical and cultural.
- d. Create poetry, stories, plays, and other literary forms (e.g. videos, art work).

**Required Materials:** Pen, paper, “Protus”, SmartBoard

**Direct Instruction:**

1. **Free Discussion – 5 minutes**
2. Start the lesson by writing examples of Assonance on the board (use topics that students have interest in, ex)sports, videogames, clubs). Ask students what they notice about each of the sentences. Make a list of what you notice. – 5-10 minutes
3. Give the definition of assonance. “The repetition of internal vowel sounds between

words” Ex) Bo mowed the lawn and Row, row, row your boat. Ask students to write their own examples in pairs. – 10 minutes

4. Share examples – 5 minutes
5. Have two students pass out the poem “Protus” by Robert Browning and read the poem aloud to the class – 10 minutes
6. Open the floor to students to come up to the board and write examples of assonance that they found in the poem. – 5-10 minutes
7. Introduce Consonance, explain that consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds within words. Ex) she sells sea shells by the sea shore (Be sure to explain that while similar, alliteration and consonance are different as consonance involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning and the interior of words) Ex) Rick played a trick on Dick (the ‘ck’ sound indicates consonance)– 5 minutes

**Assessment:** Free Write Poem – Write a 10 line poem about where you want to be in 10 years. What will you do? Where will you live, etc. Include at least one example of consonance and one example of assonance. – 15 minutes

**Further Practice:** Finish your free write poem for homework if you did not have time in class.

## **Lesson 7: Find your own poems - Day 7**

**Introduction:** This lesson will involve students using the internet to find poems of their own interests to read. Ideally, students will find reading and identifying sound devices in poetry more enjoyable when they are reading about something they enjoy. The sites that are suggested to them have a plethora of poems of various interests that should appeal to a universal body of students.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events

and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

**Required Materials:** Computer, Access to Internet, (Computer Lab preferable, IPADS/Laptops are a good alternative)

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Go to the computer lab and allow students to research and find other poems that use the sound devices that we have been learning. The following websites will be useful in finding poems: <https://www.poets.org/> , <http://www.poemhunter.com/> , <http://www.loc.gov/poetry/180/>, and <http://www.poetryarchive.org/> -42 minutes
2. Pick 5 poems and print them (two copies each)
3. Share out the poems that you have selected – 10-15 minutes

**Further Practice:** For HW identify and label the various sound devices that you have found within your selected poems. Bring both your copies with the identified devices and a blank copy of each poem to class tomorrow.

## **Lesson 8:** Sharing your own poems- Day 8

**Introduction:** Students will have the opportunity to share the poems they found with their classmates. They will be able to learn more about the interests of their peers through reading the various poems that they have chosen and simultaneously become more proficient with sound devices as they will be identifying them in their partner's work.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically

and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- b. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

**Required Materials:** Printed Poems from last class, paper, pen.

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free Discussion – 5 minutes
2. Find a partner which you have not worked with yet. Give your partner copies of the poem you found yesterday – 5 minutes
3. Identify as many sound devices in your partner's 5 poems as you can- 25 minutes
4. Re-group with your partner- compare the identified sound devices in each poem – 20 minutes

## **Lesson 9: Cooperative Poetry Project – Days 9-11**

**Introduction:** Students will be beginning their final assessment of the unit during this lesson. The final assessment is designed to simulate an adult business venture. Students will understand the value of working together in a “business” team by taking on various “employee titles” for the construction of their cooperative poem. Students will either be Image Designers, Theme/Tone Supervisors, or Sound Device Consultants. By working together they will display knowledge of incorporating Tone, Theme, and Sound Devices into an original work of their own creative design.

### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #1- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences from the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #2- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined in specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

- a. Self-select text to respond and develop innovative perspectives
- a. Establish and use criteria to classify, select, and evaluate texts to make informed judgements about the quality of the pieces.

Writing Standard 9-10 #4- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing Standard 9-10 #5- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Writing Standard 9-10 #10- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Writing Standard 9-10 #11- Create literary texts that demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of texts of recognized literary merit.

- a. Engage in a wide range of prewriting experiences, such as using a variety of visual representations, to express personal, social, and cultural connections and insights.
- b. Identify, analyze, and use elements and techniques of various genres and literature.

- c. Develop critical and interpretive texts from more than one perspective, including historical and cultural.
- d. Create poetry, stories, plays, and other literary forms (e.g. videos, art work).

**Required Materials:** Pen, Paper, Computer if the desired to be typed, Instruction/Role sheet.

**Direct Instruction:**

1. Free Discussion- 5 minutes
2. Introduce Cooperative Poetry Project. Divide students into groups of 3.  
Pass out Cooperative Poetry Assignment. -5-10 minutes
3. Students will cooperatively write a poem of their own design that includes a definitive theme and tone as well as the at least two examples of each sound device that we have discussed. The poem can be about whatever the group pleases. The length of the poem should be between 35 and 40 lines. Each member of the group will have an individual role.
  - a. Image Designer – This person will be responsible for suggesting and providing words that will contribute to the imagery of the poem
  - b. Tone/Theme Supervisor – This individual will provide ideas of what the theme and tone of the poem will be and will be responsible in getting approval of such from the classroom teacher.
  - c. Sound Device Consultant – This person will check the poem to make sure that there are at least two examples of all sound devices included in the poem. (Alliteration, Consonance,

Assonance)

**Assessment:** Begin project- Remaining time and next two class periods

### **Lesson 10 Poetry Slam Day 12**

**Introduction:** Students will share the cooperative poems that their groups have written in an environment modeled after a traditional poetry slam. Groups will recite their poems and the teacher will provide “only” positive feed-back to their works. The groups will share why they included certain aspects into their poems. This lesson will contribute to increasing a student's confidence in their own abilities as well as their comfort in the classroom. Students will also see how poetry slams can be another outlet for creativity and a way to enhance their enjoyment of writing and performing poetry.

#### **Common Core Standards/Objectives:**

Reading Standard 9-10 #5- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Reading Standard 9-10 #11- Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.

**Required Materials:** Cooperative Poems

#### **Direct Instruction:**

1. Free discussion – 5 minutes

2. Explain what a Poetry Slam is and show a clip from the National Poetry Slam 2014 Finals,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GJJ03Z6stf4> – 10 minutes

3. Explain to students that each group will be performing their group in a poetry-slam style performance. The judge(s) will be the classroom teacher and any other adult in the room (Aides, Assistants, Co-Teachers, etc.) They will then receive feedback on both their performance and content of their poem.

4. Allow groups time to plan their performance -20 minutes

5. Poetry Slam – Remainder of class/ beginning of next class.

**Ticket out the Door:** On a separate sheet of paper write down what you believe was the most valuable aspect of the poetry unit that was completed.

## ***Chapter 4: Conclusions and Further Practice***

The increased levels of student apathy towards their education is a growing problem in schools and in particular the ELA classroom. In order for education to be successful there must be two separate but equally important components that greatly depend on the other. One, being teachers who are able to effectively deliver a quality education, and two, students who are willing to learn and accept this education. Unfortunately, student motivation and achievement levels have plummeted within recent years and because of this teachers are finding it difficult to adequately educate a growing student population that simply does not care to be taught. If students don't care about their education then providing them with the knowledge that they will need to succeed in their post-graduate lives becomes increasingly difficult. Unfortunately, without intervention this problem is only becoming worse. Students who show apathy towards their education are found to have this attitude because adult figures in their lives also share this belief. As these students grow they likely will pass the same educationally unfriendly attitude to future generations of students. It is necessary that we as educators take a positive step forward to fight educational disengagement by making students care about school again. Essentially, teachers need to be willing to adapt to the changing student climate and cater their lessons to the task of reinvigorating student interest in the classroom. We need to help clear the negative or bland perceptions of school from the student mind in order to help motivate them to learn again. We as

educators cannot sit idle and wait for students to suddenly see the so-called errors of their ways but rather we must be adaptive in our approach. In order to combat the motivation crisis it is necessary that teachers realize the causes and solutions of the increased student disengagement and then incorporate aspects of those solutions into their unit plans as well as classroom environment and even themselves as professionals.

While the causes of student disengagement with education are varied, several major contributors have been identified. These being the achievement gaps among genders, the changing structure of the household, a lack of positive student perceptions of school curriculum, as well as distanced or poor relationships with adult figures or poor home environment. To reenergize the 21<sup>st</sup> century students' motivation in the classroom it is necessary as educators to understand how these factors contribute to the decline in student gains and engagement. Boys typically display increased attitudes of school having an “uncool” factor when compared to their female peers and therefore decide to distance themselves from learning environments, many students have fractured families or unsecure home lives which results in them putting school on a lower pedestal than their other priorities, some students simply don't have an adequate number of positive role models to influence them to strive for greater goals in their lives, and other students simply cannot make connections to the curriculum being taught simply because it doesn't interest them or seem relevant to their futures.

As seen in the accompanying unit plan, special attention has been paid to make sure that these various contributors of disengagement are addressed with solutions that are seamlessly incorporated into the lesson plan material. Each lesson plan began with a 5 minute “free discussion” period that allows students to feel more comfortable in the classroom environment. Students will be able to achieve higher levels of self-perception amongst themselves, their peers, and the classroom teacher. If students are more comfortable in the classroom then they will be more inclined to be increasingly motivated in their school work. The structure of the classroom is also a valuable resource for the

teacher to influence in order to increase motivation in the classroom. Turning one's classroom into a sort of "safe haven" will allow students who don't have positive home environments to experience more positive interactions. By setting up the desks in a classroom in a circular fashion, the classroom teacher can promote a community style classroom where all the students face one another and thus each student feels more inclined to participate in classroom discussion and activities if they feel they are a part of a community or family, rather than simply an ELA classroom. Since the data suggests that many students describe education as "not being for them" due to other issues in their home lives, creating a secondary "family" structure in one's classroom can work as a logical solution.

Teachers also need to address their approach to curriculum as well in their quest to bring students' attention back to the classroom. While many may see this as a daunting task, it is perhaps the most valuable aspect of increasing student success and willingness in education. In many cases what we teach may not be the problem but rather how we go about delivering that content to our students is the main culprit. If one is to approach a classroom that is teaching close reading for example, the classroom teacher may want to choose the text material based on their students' interests rather than a text that while possibly considered a classic may or may not be relatable to one's students. Many of the images used in the imagery activity in lesson one are of objects and events that interest students, in addition to this, students are able to search for their own poems based on their own interests in lesson 7, and create their own unique poems with their peers in the final assessment of the unit plan. Students are still learning the fundamentals of sound devices and literary elements however they are doing it "on their terms".

Finally, how one carries themselves as a role-model and in terms of adaptability is important in developing an adequate plan to increase student motivation. Since students spend on average 7 hours a day in the classroom, it is up to the teacher to decide how their students will view them. By presenting one's self as a confident, skilled, and compassionate educator, students will come to respect the teacher

and the content that they provide. Teachers must put students first above all else and this includes socially, emotionally, and academically. The five minute “free discussions” included in the unit plan not only function as a great contributor to classroom peer morale but also allows the teacher to know what is going on in their students’ lives. In addition to this the way one presents their lessons to their students is important. Teachers should focus on diversifying their instruction so that they include lessons that target visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. In the poetry stations activity in the unit plan, students are physically moving from station to station which benefits the kinesthetic learner while videos and paper copies of poems have been distributed to students who are more visually or auditory inclined.

While this project provides in great detail many solutions to the problem of student disengagement and educational apathy, there are indeed further measures that one may desire to look into to further develop their classroom. Many of the solutions revolving around increasing student motivation involve the topic of building relationships. Further research on more effective ways to build healthy school relationships with students is recommended. In addition to this, the correlation of student behavior in regards to increases and decreases in educational motivation is a topic that could be of potential interest and use in the future. Would students who are more apathetic towards their education be more likely to become behavior problems in schools or perhaps would their attendance plummet? Research into these questions may yield possible results for increasing behavior and attendance through employing the reengagement strategies depicted in this project.

Since education is a system that is constantly changing in terms of standards and procedures it is only natural that we as teachers should be open to change. In the end, we cannot expect students to accept what they are learning is valuable simply at face value. Adaptation is necessary. We need to understand why students carry a negative mindset on education and from there we need to develop unit plans and procedures specifically designed to offset and change this mindset.

**Lesson 1 Materials (Pictures for Imagery Activity)**











### **Lesson 3 Text**

#### *We Are Living*

What is this room

But the moments we have lived in it?

When all due has been paid

To gods of wood and stone

And recognition has been made

Of those who'll breathe here when we are gone

Does it not take its worth from us

Who made it because we were here?

Your words are the only furniture I can remember

Your body the book that told me most.

If this room has a ghost

It will be your laughter in the frank dark

Revealing the world as a room

Loved only for those moments when

We touched the purely human.

I could give water now to thirsty plants,

Dig up the floorboards, the foundation,

Study the worm's confidence,

Challenge his omnipotence

Because my blind eyes have seen through walls

That make safe prisons of the days.

We are living

In ceiling, floor and windows,

We are given to where we have been.

This white door will always open

On what our hands have touched,

Our eyes have seen.

Lesson 4 Materials

**A blade of grass**

You ask for a poem.  
I offer you a blade of grass.  
You say it is not good enough.  
You ask for a poem.

I say this blade of grass will do.  
It has dressed itself in frost,  
It is more immediate  
Than any image of my making.

You say it is not a poem,  
It is a blade of grass and grass  
Is not quite good enough.  
I offer you a blade of grass.

You are indignant.  
You say it is too easy to offer grass.  
It is absurd.  
Anyone can offer a blade of grass.

You ask for a poem.  
And so I write you a tragedy about  
How a blade of grass  
Becomes more and more difficult to offer,

And about how as you grow older  
A blade of grass  
Becomes more difficult to accept.

- Brian Patten

### **The Happy Grass**

Here, in their final quiet, the singers lie.  
True to the dead, to the living true.  
The grass is growing as it always grew  
Drinking every human cry  
Like the rain of summer reaching the repose  
Of singers long out of sight.  
Will we ever know what the grass knows  
Flourishing in green wisdom, green delight?

When delusions of communication cease  
And we are victims once again  
Of rumors the gossip wind is bringing  
We'll celebrate the singers in their peace  
Because above the graves of men  
The happy grass is singing.

~Brendan Kennelly

**Protus by Robert Browning**

Among these latter busts we count by scores,  
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,  
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,  
Loricand low-browed Gorgon on the breast,---  
One loves a baby face, with violets there,  
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,  
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. ``Protus ends a period  
Of empery beginning with a god;  
Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant,  
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant:  
And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like fire  
Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.  
A fame that he was missing spread afar:  
The world from its four corners, rose in war,  
Till he was borne out on a balcony  
To pacify the world when it should see.  
The captains ranged before him, one, his hand  
Made baby points at, gained the chief command.  
And day by day more beautiful he grew  
In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,  
While young Greek sculptors, gazing on the child,  
Because with old Greek sculptore reconciled.  
Already sages laboured to condense  
In easy tomes a life's experience:  
And artists took grave counsel to impart  
In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art---  
To make his graces prompt as blossoming  
Of plentifully-watered palms in spring:  
Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,  
For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,  
And mortals love the letters of his name."

Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.  
New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say  
How that same year, on such a month and day,  
John the Pannonian, groundedly believed  
A Blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved  
The Empire from its fate the year before,---  
Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore  
The same for six years (during which the Huns  
Kept off their fingers from us), till his sons  
Put something in his liquor"---and so forth.  
Then a new reign. Stay---``Take at its just worth"

(Subjoins an annotator) ``what I give  
``As hearsay. Some think, John let Protus live  
``And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age  
``At some blind northern court; made, first a page,  
``Then tutor to the children; last, of use  
``About the hunting-stables. I deduce  
``He wrote the little tract `On worming dogs,'  
``Whereof the name in sundry catalogues  
``Is extant yet. A Protus of the race  
``Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,---  
``And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head. Great eye,  
Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can  
To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

## Lesson 9 Cooperative Poetry Project Assignment

### Cooperative Poetry Project

#### Directions:

Students will cooperatively write a poem of their own design that includes a definitive theme and tone as well as the at least two examples of each sound device that we have discussed. The poem can be about whatever the group pleases. The length of the poem should be between 35 and 40 lines. Each member of the group will have an individual role.

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- c. Sound Device Consultant – This person will check the poem to

make sure that there are at least two examples of all sound devices included in the poem. (Alliteration, Consonance, Assonance)

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