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The Effectiveness of the Appeal to Will Drivers

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As a response to ongoing conversations around motivation and engagement in schools, this study focuses on appealing to the will drivers mastery, purpose, autonomy, and belonging in the high school English classroom. This research hypothesizes that differentiating to appeal directly to students' specific drivers will result in increased motivation and engagement. Students' individual drivers were identified, and survey responses to lessons centered around each individual will driver were analyzed and compared. Additional student commentary about each lesson was also taken into consideration. The results do not yield an infallible methodology for addressing student motivation and engagement but imply that lessons with real-world applications and lessons that fulfill students' social-emotional needs can positively affect these aspects of learning.

Keywords: will driver, secondary education, engagement, motivation

Many teachers wrestle with the question of how to motivate and engage their students. While there is no singular answer to this question, several suggestions and theories have been proposed, from reward-punishment systems to differentiation. Throughout my classroom experience as a preservice teacher, I searched for a personalized but concrete method for keeping students motivated and engaged. I believe that personalizing education as much as possible is essential to ensuring that students have a positive relationship with school and learning. Thus, I sought a method of teaching that would allow me to motivate and engage students by drawing upon their personal preferences in terms of mastery, purpose, autonomy, and belonging (see Jackson, 2011) in the processes of learning and expressing knowledge. Jackson (2011) described the will drivers of mastery, purpose, autonomy, and belonging in a classroom setting, and suggests that appealing to these "drivers" might increase motivation and engagement in the classroom. Mobilizing will drivers in the classroom presents an opportunity to design a teacher action research project to understand how a teacher can concretely acknowledge and utilize students' learning preferences to motivate and engage them.

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The purpose of this study was to provide data on the effectiveness of appealing to will drivers. Due to limited research on this topic, I conducted a study identifying my students' will drivers and creating lessons that appeal to each student's will driver. Through this study, I analyzed whether appealing to students' will drivers in the classroom increased their motivation and encouraged deeper engagement with the material. I conducted this action research study in two senior English classrooms during my student teaching practicum at Planter High School (pseudonym), with forty-nine students as the participants. I anticipated that the results would demonstrate increased student motivation when students learned and communicated knowledge in a manner aligning with their preferences, leading to an observable positive change in the students' engagement with lessons that appeal to their dominant will drivers.

Review of Literature

As there are no studies examining the effectiveness of the appeal to will drivers in the classroom, I referred to further theory, teaching practices, and studies that involved motivation and engagement, differentiation, or the appeal to traits or preferences similar to will drivers. Differentiation is widely explored in education and is implemented in different forms in classrooms. Tomlinson (2014) emphasized the need for personalizing rather than standardizing students' learning and shared the practices of teachers who differentiate based on skill mastery, independence, and observable progress (p. 11-12). This range of differentiation, covering both student needs and student preferences, allows for a more tailored education. By differentiating to accommodate students' will drivers, teachers would be able to align their teaching to their students' specific motivators rather than creating a standard teaching method or style that may not be effective for all students.

Heacox's (2017) theories aligned with Tomlinson's (2014) emphasis on individualized education, acknowledging the constant evolution of teachers' methods of differentiation and suggesting that teachers survey their students to learn more about their prior knowledge, learning preferences, and interests (p. 13). To identify students' learning preferences and gauge the extent of their prior knowledge, Heacox (2017) suggested addressing questions such as "Who prefers to work alone rather than in a group" and "Who needs acknowledgement that she or he is making progress in order to 'see' herself or himself getting better" (p. 20). This suggestion aligned with learning more about students' will drivers to differentiate according to their learning preferences and motivators. The idea of differentiation is by no means a recent development in education—Dewey (1902) stressed the teacher's responsibility to learn more about the student's understanding and use of the subject in order to properly address

the student's learning (pp. 226-227). Differentiation has withstood the test of time in education, signifying that appealing to will drivers could be successful.

Furthermore, according to Sousa and Tomlinson (2018), differentiation encourages divergent thinking, which in turn stimulates creative thinking (p. 14). As a result, students' brains benefit from experiencing varying methods of differentiation in the classroom, as differentiation presents them with "different ways of solving problems" and opportunities for "expanding existing cognitive networks" (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018, pp. 14-15). Thus, by appealing to will drivers, teachers may be able to increase cognitive engagement by allowing students to experience differentiation for their own driver and other students' drivers.

Pink (2009) introduced the concept of will drivers in the workplace as an attempt to explain a form of motivation other than the popular reward-punishment system. He suggested that deeper engagement and desired behavior were the outcomes of activities and tasks that were rewarding in nature, rather than rewarded via a reward system (Pink, 2009). Pink (2009) asserts that the reward-punishment system produces short-term achievement, whereas addressing will drivers is a more meaningful and long-lasting approach to motivation. Similarly, Ryan and Deci (2017) identified "competence, relatedness, and autonomy" as basic psychological needs, suggesting that people either thrive according to or are hindered by the presence or absence of these needs (p. 3). It is evident that studying will drivers in the classroom may be beneficial because it could yield a more effective and fulfilling method of motivating students than the reward-punishment system.

Autonomy

Autonomy was identified as a primary means of motivation in several pieces of literature. Pink (2009) asserted that people given the autonomy to work according to their own schedules produce higher quality work due to increased focus on the task at hand rather than on concerns about deadlines (pp. 85-88). Alongside recommendations about flexible scheduling, Pink provided examples of companies allowing their employees to experiment with creative designs, leading to the creation of innovative and useful products (p. 95-96). Jackson (2011) presented autonomy as a will-driver in a classroom setting and suggested giving students choice within assignments (p. 114). While teachers may not have the freedom to create a schedule-free environment, teachers can differentiate to support autonomy-driven students by allowing students to choose tasks that will best demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Cheon et al. (2019) examined "autonomy dissatisfaction" in P.E. classrooms, aiming to distinguish between autonomy satisfaction,

frustration, and dissatisfaction (p. 685). A group of Physical Education teachers participated in an autonomy-supportive intervention program (ASIP) and applied its training to their classes, while other teachers were instructed to continue their usual practices (Cheon et al., 2019). Students were surveyed with Likert-scale questions to report their experiences in their Physical Education classes, and the students' engagement was measured using several scales. The findings indicated that when the teachers applied the ASIP practices, their students' autonomy dissatisfaction decreased, specifically indicating a "moderately large ($d = .29$, $p < .001$)" decrease and a "small but significant ($d = .08$, $p = .014$)" increase in autonomy dissatisfaction when teachers did not apply the ASIP practices (Cheon et al., 2019, p. 698). It is evident that autonomy satisfaction and dissatisfaction play a role in engagement, thus indicating the necessity of further studying it as a primary will driver in the classroom.

Now, in a critique of constructivist teaching, Kirschner et al. (2006) indicated that "unguided or minimally guided" instruction does not align with knowledge about cognitive structure or working memory (p. 77). Kirschner et al. (2006) argued that minimally guided teaching is not backed by research, nor is it beneficial to students (pp. 83-84). However, while minimally guided teaching may not be the best option for students who thrive under more structure and support, Ryan and Deci (2007) emphasized that an excess of control in school settings yielded undesirable results such as dropout and disengagement, whereas autonomy support led to self-motivation (p. 18). Ryan and Deci (2007) also clarified that autonomy support in schools does not necessitate removing structure and support from classrooms (p. 18), signifying that there are more ways of supporting student autonomy than "minimally-guided" teaching that may not be as effective or differentiated (Kirschner et al., 2006, p. 83).

Mastery

Pink (2009) also identified mastery as a will driver. Through an anecdote, Pink (2009) presented mastery as an opportunity for people to pursue their interests to the fullest and relish in challenge, thus learning creative and innovative ways to approach their interests (p.130). Heacox (2017) echoed this line of thinking in an educational context, suggesting that teachers appeal to autonomy alongside mastery by indicating that student choice allows students to "act on their interests" (p. 68). Thus, mastery-driven students can have their preferences addressed while engaging in lessons that also appeal to autonomy-driven students. Dompnier et al. (2009) emphasized mastery as an individual will driver instead of a blanket means of increasing motivation. Their study concluded that psychology students who did not see mastery goals as socially

desirable demonstrated higher goal endorsement than those who did (Dompnier et al., 2009, p. 942). Additionally, if students viewed mastery goals as helpful to their academic achievement, they also demonstrated higher goal endorsement (Dompnier et al., 2009, p. 942). The difference in student responses to mastery goals indicates that some of the students were truly mastery-driven, whereas others simply believed that they were expected to be mastery-driven, and that this mastery-driven mindset was “correct.”

Additionally, Jackson (2011) promoted a mastery-centric classroom, indicating that mastery is a motivator due to the increased sense of competence that accompanies mastery (p. 52). While working towards mastering skills and understandings seems essential to any classroom, it is necessary to remember that some students will be motivated by the concept of mastery itself, whereas other students may be motivated by other will drivers. Thus, as many traditional American schools still measure achievement based on meeting a standard, mastery-based teaching is still necessary for students to succeed in this system. However, teachers can design lessons around autonomy, purpose, and belonging while simultaneously addressing the needs of mastery-driven students and guiding all students to learning a skill or meeting a standard.

Purpose

The final will driver Pink (2009) introduced is purpose. Pink (2009) explained this driver through an anecdote about the function of TOMS, a company that gives consumers the opportunity to provide a child with a pair of shoes upon buying a pair of their own (p. 136). Purpose-driven people are drawn to the idea of their actions having greater meaning and function beyond the action itself. Jackson (2011) asserted that many 21st-century students are no longer motivated by grades, but rather by knowing the utility and applicability of what they are learning in school (p. 55). Similarly, Newmann et al. (2007) emphasized purpose as an integral part of designing assignments, asserting that assignments should present students with a situation they have or will experience in their everyday lives (pp. 50-51). If lessons have real-world uses, they will be more motivating to purpose-driven learners. Tovani (2004) suggested that teachers design lessons with clear purposes (p. 54), and that they should strive to eliminate tasks or information that do not relate to the main objectives (p. 58). While teachers may not be able to control what material they teach due to curriculum requirements, they have some control over the lessons students take from their interactions with the curriculum (Tovani, 2004, p. 59). Thus, no matter what material is being taught, it is possible to give the material purpose. Smagorinsky (2008) advised English teachers to shape units around a specific justification.

Some suggested unit topics included cultural and civic awareness, intended to familiarize students with their surroundings and the society they live in, current social issues, and social needs (Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 142-145). A further recommendation is teaching based on “relevance,” adhering to the idea that students will learn from content that reflects their own lives (Smagorinsky, p. 145), thus aligning with Newmann et. al (2007)’s suggestion to motivate students by creating lessons with purpose and applicability in mind.

The process of “transfer” also appeals to purpose-driven learners, mastery-driven learners, and autonomy-driven learners. The idea of transfer is to provide students with the skills and understandings they need to transfer their knowledge into different contexts (National Research Council, 2000). Dewey (1902) emphasizes the importance of transfer, encouraging real-world connections and the avoidance of learning becoming purely symbolic (p. 227). In theory, most classroom experiences should appeal to purpose, mastery, and autonomy-driven learners according to the idea of transfer; however, extensive differentiation may need to occur for each student to experience transfer in its ideal form.

Belonging

Jackson (2011) also emphasized that a sense of belonging is essential in a classroom setting. She stated that a sense of mutual acceptance and respect between teachers and students can lead to deeper interest in the content (Jackson, 2011, pg. 58). Ryan and Deci (2007) addressed the necessity of belonging as well, though they refer to it as “relatedness” (p. 11). Relatedness, or belonging, is described as a sense of connectedness and significance (Ryan & Deci, 2007, pg. 11). Cooper and Miness (2014) discussed the need for belonging in high schools, explaining a connection between connectedness with teachers and engagement and motivation (p. 265-266). One student who described a disconnect between himself and his teachers also expressed disinterest in school, while other students associated lack of help from teachers as an indicator of lack of caring (Cooper & Miness, 2014, p. 275). This example demonstrates the importance of differentiating to meet the needs of belonging-driven students—belonging-driven students who do not receive the support they need can become disengaged from school and can also feel deterred from asking for additional help from teachers. Smagorinsky (2008) theorized that teachers can demonstrate their own growth and change to their students by engaging in “work that parallels student work” (p. 63), further presenting the importance of mutual respect between students and teachers.

Addressing the needs of belonging-driven students in the classroom to increase peer connectedness reflects a deep cultural ideal that Nyerere (1962) describes, in the African context, as “Ujamaa” or “Familyhood”

(p. 10). The cultural value of familyhood articulated in Nyerere's African socialism, resonates beyond pedagogical practices, including in the restorative justice lens. Evans and Vaandering (2016) presented teachers as facilitators for engagement and self-change (p. 67). The concept of restorative justice in education focuses on a larger scope of community and belonging, aiming to move students, teachers, and the surrounding community away from control and towards engagement (Evans & Vaandering, 2016, p. 12). Restorative justice in education yielded results from drastically improved social dynamics and awareness (Evans & Vaandering, p. 96) to lower suspension rates and higher graduation rates due to a reformation of disciplinary practices (Evans & Vaandering, p. 104). The ideals of African socialism and restorative justice are applicable to belonging-centered educational practices, as they promote accountability as a foundation of respect and a means of dismantling class systems and power hierarchies.

It is evident that the will-drivers of autonomy, mastery, purpose, and belonging each have valuable roles in the classroom. As it cannot be assumed that all students are the same, it is essential to differentiate to ensure that each of these will-drivers is accommodated in the classroom. Heacox (2017) suggested that teachers review their instructional plans to determine where differentiation opportunities may occur (p. 10). In an English classroom, this may appear as developing a conceptual unit and determining which lessons may yield themselves to emphasize on specific will-drivers and which lessons may be used to appeal to multiple will-drivers. Differentiating according to students' will-drivers has the potential to expand students' learning experiences, increase motivation and engagement, and transform class dynamics.

Methodology

This action research occurred in two senior English Language Arts classes in a suburban high school in the Chicagoland area during my student teaching practicum. This project utilized data from forty-nine students across both classes. Classes were taught in an in-person hybrid learning environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students learning remotely attended class on Zoom and were encouraged—but not mandated—to keep their cameras on during class. Students attending class in the classroom were not required to log into the Zoom session, and screen-shared content from Zoom was also projected in the physical classroom. Audio from Zoom was projected to the classroom, and audio from the classroom was projected to the Zoom, thus allowing interaction between the two groups of students.

Identifying Students' Drivers

During a month-long process, fifty-one students were surveyed to identify their primary will driver. Of these students, forty-nine responded, and the two students who did not respond were excluded from further data collection. The primary driver identification survey consisted of twenty Likert-scale questions—five per will driver. Two peers reviewed each question to increase the clarity of the wording and to ensure that questions from one will driver could not be used for the others. One question per will driver was reverse scored. Scores were calculated based on a points system—each response could receive a score of -2 at the lowest and 2 at the highest. Totals from each will driver were compiled and compared, and the driver with the highest score was recorded as the student's primary driver. During the scoring process, twelve students received negative scores. One student received two negative scores. This factor suggested the concept of *negative drivers*: will drivers that were predicted to be associated with decreased motivation and engagement. Results of the primary driver identification survey were not shared with the students to avoid bias in the individual lesson surveys. Two students were equally driven by purpose and belonging, two students were equally driven by mastery and purpose, and six students were driven by mastery and belonging. Each of these students was counted in the totals for all individual drivers. The results from the primary driver identification survey are available below:

Table 1. Primary Driver Identification Survey Results

Mastery	Purpose	Belonging	Autonomy	Negative Mastery	Negative Purpose	Negative Belonging	Negative Autonomy
19	14	26	1	2	4	1	6

Driver-Based Lessons

Data collection for lessons associated with each will driver occurred across four synchronous class periods. The purpose-centered lesson occurred at the beginning of the week and was conducted entirely on Zoom due to the school's schedule accommodating an upcoming holiday. The belonging-centered lesson occurred the next day in a hybrid setting. One day passed between the belonging-centered lesson and the mastery-centered lesson due to the school's block schedule. The autonomy-centered lesson occurred five days later due to a three-day weekend and the school's asynchronous Monday schedule.

Each lesson featured a main learning topic and an interactive

component. As students were between units, a learning segment was developed to maintain a consistent theme. The learning segment focused on using descriptive language to highlight accomplishments and strengths. The purpose, belonging, and mastery-centered lessons featured interactive components and a main topic relating to the theme of the learning segment. As classes outside of the learning segment usually featured many interactive opportunities, this aspect was maintained throughout the segment to avoid a drastically different learning environment.

The purpose-driven lesson began with a connection back to descriptive language skills that the students had built during the previous unit. Students had previously practiced descriptive language in a cultural criticism essay about the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. My intention was to emphasize the utility of previously learned skills to appeal to purpose-driven students. The class was informed that these language skills would be useful when describing their accomplishments and achievements with college, careers, and résumé-building in mind. After stating that these skills would remain useful, I provided the students with two Zoom chat prompts: “What’s your dream job?” to encourage students to think about life after high school and “What’s something you’re good at?” to get students thinking about specific skills and strengths. These prompts allowed students to interact with each other and express thoughts related to the learning segment. Following the chat prompts, students viewed and discussed common interview questions listed on a college website, identifying which questions required descriptive language to be used in their responses. The class had a short conversation about each of the identified questions, discussing how to use descriptive language to respond to the questions.

I framed the belonging-centered lesson around the idea of mutual respect between the teacher and the students, and peer-to-peer respect. The belonging-centered lesson started out with me praising the class for their hard work over the course of the semester and emphasizing the community each class had built. I posed the questions “What does a community do?” “What makes our class a community?” and “What have we done to make our class a community?” to establish a sense of belonging and to prompt students to describe class accomplishments and dynamics. Then, the class participated in a Padlet describing one thing the class accomplished during the year, one thing they had accomplished as individuals during the year, and something they had done that they were proud of during the year. My cooperating teacher and I commented encouraging words and compliments on students’ responses, and the students were instructed to read through their classmates’ accomplishments. The students were also encouraged to comment and respond to others’ posts, and several students took this opportunity to interact with their classmates on the Padlet.

I designed the mastery-centered lesson around the hypothesis that mastery-driven students would report increased motivation and engagement in a lesson that communicated the correct way to demonstrate a skill. This lesson began with a verbal introduction about how to use descriptive language to communicate about the skills and accomplishments the students had discussed during the previous two lessons. The class participated in a Pear Deck lesson about creating sentences with action verbs and detailed language to describe their accomplishments. Students utilized the “draggable question” feature on Pear Deck to distinguish action verbs from regular verbs. Finally, examples using action verbs and descriptive language were compared using the “draggable question” feature. This part of the Pear Deck emphasized specificity, as it allowed students to practice distinguishing sentences that used action verbs from sentences that did not.

I structured the autonomy-centered lesson around choice and student-set timing. At the start of the period, I instructed students to choose three accomplishments, create a narrative describing each one, and create a separate description of the accomplishment using the action verb sentence structure from the day before. I informed students that they had options for how to create the narrative and gave choices like writing a poem, writing a creative paragraph, making a collage, comic, or video, or using another format that they thought was fitting. I also informed students that they had class time to work on the task or on anything else, and that the product would be due at the start the following class. I intended for this lesson to emphasize student freedom in terms of both how to complete a task and when to complete the task, recalling literature about options and scheduling.

At the end of each lesson, students completed a six-question survey about their motivation and engagement during the lesson and specific features of each lesson. Five questions included Likert-scale answer choices. One question was reverse scored; however, survey results indicated a possible misreading of the reverse scored questions, as several students responded to the reverse scored questions in ways that contradicted their responses to the other questions. As the surveys were distributed at the end of each class period, the possibility that students read the question too quickly factored into an ultimate decision to eliminate reverse scored questions from the point totals. Reverse scored questions were not eliminated from the primary driver identification survey, as that survey was the students’ only work for the day, and the students had an extended amount of time to complete the survey. Each driver-centered survey also featured a short response question asking students if there was anything about the lesson that stood out that they liked or did not like.

The Likert-scale questions were scored the same way as the primary

driver identification survey: the lowest answer choice was given a point value of -2, and the highest was given a point value of 2. Students were given the option to comment on each lesson. These comments were sorted to distinguish between positive comments relating to an aspect of the targeted will driver such as “I liked knowing how to use action verbs correctly,” negative comments relating to an aspect of the targeted will driver such as “I didn’t like having so many choices,” comments about the format (Padlet or Pear Deck), positive but vague comments such as “I liked this lesson,” and vague comments such as “No comment.” If a student made a positive driver-related comment about a lesson, one point was added to that lesson’s score. If a student made a negative driver-related comment, one point was subtracted. Comments about the format, positive but vague comments, and vague comments were not assigned any points. Point totals were calculated, and the highest points between the four lessons were identified. Each student’s highest-scoring lesson was compared to their dominant will driver. Due to the volatile nature of hybrid learning, most students failed to complete all of the surveys. However, there was only one student who was noticeably disengaged from the lesson due to a lack of response to prompts during the lessons. As a result, presence in class and minimal participation from most of the students led to my decision not to eliminate any students’ results due to a lack of response to all surveys.

Results

Tables 2-5 detail students’ responses to each question on the primary driver identification survey. The results of the driver-specific surveys indicated that many students did not experience increased motivation and engagement in relation to the lesson centered around their primary driver. Of the twelve students who had negative drivers, two students reported the lowest levels of motivation and engagement for the lesson associated with their negative drivers, indicating a potential connection between negative drivers and low motivation and engagement. Tables 6-9 detail students’ responses to each of the driver-specific lesson surveys. A score of -2 indicates “I was not engaged at all,” “I was not motivated at all,” or “Strongly disagree.” A score of -1 represents the choices “I was not very engaged,” “I was not very motivated,” or “Disagree.” A score of 0 represents “Neutral.” A score of 1 represents the choices “I was engaged with this lesson,” “I was motivated by this lesson,” or “Agree.” A score of 2 indicates “I was super engaged with this lesson,” “I was super motivated by this lesson,” or “Strongly agree.”

In total, of the forty (the student with three dominant drivers did not complete one of the three corresponding surveys) students who completed the survey associated with their dominant driver’s lesson, fourteen

students' highest motivation and engagement scores stemmed from their will driver's lesson.

While numerical results do not show an increase in motivation and engagement for lessons centered around dominant will drivers or a decrease in motivation and engagement for lessons centered around negative drivers, observational data suggests that some connections can still be made. For instance, though nearly half of the students did not complete the survey for the mastery-centered lesson, all but three of the students who were present during the lesson were active participants in the Pear Deck activity. Of the students who participated, all but two progressed from selecting incorrect answers to selecting correct answers by the end of the period. While the lack of student responses does not provide motivation data, the students' participation in the Pear Deck demonstrates some level of engagement. Furthermore, twenty-nine students submitted narratives and action verb sentences at the end of the learning segment. Of these twenty-nine, twenty used the action verb as it was explained in the mastery-centered lesson. This demonstrates while it is impossible to prove that the motivation and engagement the students reported was due to the will driver as opposed to the Pear Deck format, at least twenty students were engaged enough with the mastery-centered lesson to comprehend the correct use of the sentence structure and were motivated enough to put effort into creating their own sentences using the structure. Most students indicated that they had participated in Pear Deck lessons before, indicating a level of familiarity with the platform and implying that any increase in motivation and engagement would not be due to interest in a new lesson format. Only one student specifically mentioned that the Pear Deck format was influential in a self-reported increase in motivation and engagement. While it is possible that the format of the lesson influenced the students' motivation and engagement, mastery was the second-most popular will driver in the sample. The outcome of the lesson indicates the possibility of students in the sample being motivated and engaged due to the lesson's focus on developing and perfecting a specific skill.

Additionally, belonging was the most popular will driver across the two classes and had the highest levels of motivation and engagement. The belonging-driven students who were most motivated and engaged with the belonging-centered lesson also had the greatest number of positive, driver-related comments on the belonging lesson. Of the belonging-driven students who reported their highest levels of motivation and engagement for the belonging-centered lesson, four of these students left positive comments related to the central will driver. For example, one belonging-driven student stated, "I enjoy sharing my accomplishments because I am able to bond with the class on things that we both feel accomplished by, which makes everyone feel good." Another belonging-driven student

stated, “I liked reading about what my classmates have done this year.” In the initial driver identification survey, forty students agreed or strongly agreed that feeling respected by their classmates was important to them—this result was expected.

The belonging-centered lesson extended the idea of respect from classmates, as students had thoughtful and supportive reactions to each other’s comments. All names were changed to protect student privacy. For example, one student, Danny, stated, “I am proud of participating in class over Zoom, which I found very intimidating in the earlier months of school.” A student commented, “I’m gonna retweet that one, Danny.” A third student commented “^,” signifying his agreement with the previous student’s desire to “retweet” (affirm) Danny’s statement. Interactions such as this demonstrated the students’ attentiveness to each other’s accomplishments and respect and support for one another and emphasized the importance of social emotional learning practices.

While the data did not demonstrate quantifiable connections between will drivers and motivation and engagement (and this is not surprising considering the duration of the study and sample size), observable positive differences could be seen in the two classes’ attitudes, participation, and products in the lessons associated with the two most popular will drivers.

Discussion and Future Action

Numerous adjustments made to the class schedule due to accommodations necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for only one targeted lesson per will driver. Results indicated promising implications about the appeal to will drivers. While further studies would need to be conducted to reach more sophisticated conclusions about the connection between will drivers and motivation and engagement, this study emphasized the potential effectiveness of targeted lessons. Group totals could not be accurately compared due to the large number of missing responses to the mastery survey, but responses to individual questions allowed for a much more concrete sense of students’ needs in the classroom. For instance, the high emphasis on mutual respect from peers and teachers indicated in the initial driver identification survey and in the Padlet discussion demonstrated the participants’ need for affirmation and positive acknowledgement. The participants’ desire for choice as indicated in the initial identification survey was reflected in their responses to the autonomy-centered lesson.

While creating lessons based on specific will drivers did not have a consistent positive impact on the students’ motivation and engagement, this study prompted deeper thinking into addressing and assessing students’ motivation and engagement needs and teachers’ responses to these needs. The data collected during this study emphasized the students’

need for a sense of respect and praise, suggesting that a focus on social-emotional learning could be effective in supporting this group of students. Responses to having options emphasized the value of student choice.

The survey responses also indicated the possibility of a new, more specific set of drivers for the participants' motivation and engagement—affirmation, respect, applicability, specificity and choice. These new drivers were branches of the primary four drivers and were identified as the specific aspects of the primary drivers that had the most influence on the students' motivation and engagement. The “affirmation” driver was based on the students' positive feedback about viewing and commenting on each other's accomplishments in the belonging-centered lesson. The “respect” driver was derived from students' responses to the primary driver identification survey indicating their need for mutual respect from teachers and peers. The “applicability” driver stemmed from the responses on the primary driver identification survey that suggested that the students would rather learn useful skills than ones they could only apply in school. The “specificity” driver referenced the idea that students preferred to know how to complete a task correctly before attempting the task, and the “choice” driver was based on the students' responses to the identification survey and the autonomy-centered lesson. Continued support of these more specific drivers will yield lessons that eliminate aspects of the four primary will drivers that the two classes deemed unimportant or uninteresting and that increase the aspects of the primary drivers that the classes thrived on.

Future action in these two classes and when putting these methods into practice elsewhere necessitates attention to how to interpret the individual survey results. For instance, while the purpose-centered lesson did not garner as many positive responses as the other lessons, the results do not indicate that I should stop making purpose-centered lessons. Instead, using more specific interpretations of the other surveys will allow me to prepare more effective lessons that may address the purpose of the lesson while appealing to narrower drivers. In future classrooms and in similar studies, striving to identify narrower drivers within the class—such as affirmation, respect, applicability, specificity, and choice—should be the teacher's focus rather than attempting to mold every lesson to fit a singular driver.

This study also creates space for broader conversations about teaching methods and philosophies. While this study can be replicated to attempt to identify more specific drivers to address, this study—and other studies—cannot be used as a sole solution to remedy low motivation and engagement. This study emphasizes the unreliability of using broad, formulaic methods to shape teaching. While teachers may choose to seek answers through studying theory and methods and applying rigid attempts

at diagnostic practices, their approaches should remain student-centered. Teachers must continue challenging and re-shaping their understandings and learnings to seek the best course of action for their students—individuals whose learning defies generalization.

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Appendix

Table 2, Mastery Survey - Results

Statement	Definitely not me.	Not really me.	Neutral.	Sort of me.	Definitely me.
When given a task, I prefer to know how to complete it correctly before starting to work.	0	1	4	11	33
I spend time making sure my work is correct before turning it in.	2	3	3	18	23
I strive to complete tasks correctly even if it is difficult to do so.	0	2	7	13	27
I don't focus on whether or not my work is "perfect." I just want to get it done (reverse scored).	5	16	13	12	3
I become frustrated when I can't figure out how to complete a task the right way.	0	4	6	28	11

Table 3, Purpose Survey - Results

Statement	Definitely not me.	Not really me.	Neutral.	Sort of me.	Definitely me.
I enjoy learning new skills even if I can't use them in my daily life (reverse scored).	2	6	12	21	8
I would rather learn useful things instead of skills I will never use.	0	1	5	12	31
When given a task, I like knowing why it is being assigned.	0	7	12	20	10
I dislike work that is only assigned to keep me busy	0	0	5	9	35
It is frustrating to learn things that I know I will never use outside of the classroom.	1	9	12	15	12

Table 4, Belonging Survey - Results

Statement	Definitely not me.	Not really me.	Neutral.	Sort of me.	Definitely me.
Feeling respected by my classmates is important to me.	0	1	8	13	27
I am comfortable being an outsider (reverse scored).	3	15	13	13	5
I like it when my hard work is acknowledged.	0	1	4	11	33
It is important that I feel like my teacher respects me.	0	1	2	18	28
It is important that I can be myself in the classroom.	0	0	8	22	19

Table 5, Autonomy Survey - Results

Statement	Definitely not me.	Not really me.	Neutral.	Sort of me.	Definitely me.
I like to figure out how to complete tasks on my own.	0	6	12	17	14
I would rather work at my own pace than have many set deadlines.	3	15	11	10	10
I am more comfortable working on a group project where everyone has a task than I am working on my own (reverse scored).	1	9	26	8	5
When given a task, I would rather have a few choices for how to complete it instead of just one option.	1	6	8	27	7
I would rather decide how to complete a task than have someone else tell me how to do it.	1	10	26	7	5

Table 6, Purpose Lesson Survey Results

Statement	-2	-1	0	1	2
Rate how motivated you were by today's lesson. (Motivated: driven/inspired, wanting to keep learning how to build related skills).	2	5	22	17	0
Rate how engaged you were with today's lesson (Engaged: attentive, interested, curious).	1	14	17	14	0
Learning about how the skills I have built in class can help me later made me want to pay attention to today's lesson.	0	1	18	23	4
I want to learn more about how to use my descriptive language skills for my own benefit.	0	1	16	21	8

Table 7, Belonging Lesson Survey Results

Statement	-2	-1	0	1	2
Rate how motivated you were by today's lesson. (Motivated: driven/inspired, wanting to keep learning how to build related skills).	2	2	11	17	6
Rate how engaged you were with today's lesson (Engaged: attentive, interested, curious).	1	4	6	19	8
Being able to share my accomplishments made me want to pay attention to today's lesson.	1	2	11	14	10
This lesson made me want to learn more about how to share my accomplishments with others.	1	2	18	11	6

Table 8, Mastery Lesson Survey Results

Statement	-2	-1	0	1	2
Rate how motivated you were by today's lesson. (Motivated: driven/inspired, wanting to keep learning how to build related skills).	1	2	15	14	3
Rate how engaged you were with today's lesson (Engaged: attentive, interested, curious).	0	4	16	12	2
Learning how to use action verbs correctly made me want to pay attention to today's lesson.	0	4	11	16	3
This lesson made me want to keep learning how to improve my action verb use.	0	1	11	18	4

Table 9, Autonomy Lesson Survey Results

Statement	-2	-1	0	1	2
Rate how motivated you were by today's lesson. (Motivated: driven/inspired, wanting to keep learning how to build related skills).	3	3	17	18	1
Rate how engaged you were with today's lesson (Engaged: attentive, interested, curious).	2	4	13	22	1
Having more choices for how to complete the assignment made me more engaged with the assignment.	1	2	9	24	6
Being able to work at my own pace today made me want to put more effort into my work.	2	2	11	20	7



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