**TE 861 C Final Action Research Plan**

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**Introduction:**

I am interested in what methods I can use to help students in my class who are struggling. A few of my students put their heads down and do not do many of their assignments. I would like to see if there is anything I can do to encourage them to participate and take a more active role in their learning. I will research this on my own in my own classroom over the course of a semester.

I have noticed a few students who do not participate in class activities and their grades are suffering as a result. I would like to know how to help encourage them to participate and increase their grade. These students usually do not participate during individual class work and during notes. Often, these students sleep in class and do not complete individual seatwork or homework. I plan to keep a journal and record the behavior of these disengaged students during various class activities to determine their level of participation.

When students do not participate, I wake them up only to find they have gone back to sleep a few minutes later. When they do not take notes, I ask them to take notes but they do not take proper notes; they just scribble down a few words and pretend like they are working. If incomplete assignments become a common problem, I usually contact a parent and continually remind the student to turn the work in.

Contextual factors that are important: Usually, when we are doing group work or labs (labs are usually done in partners or groups), my students who tend to be disengaged are more involved. They usually take an active role in a group setting; however, they still look to the other students for guidance and leadership. These students could also be bored, they could be intimidated by content that is too challenging, they may have to work at night, or they may be involved in too many extracurricular activities.

**Research Question:**

Why are certain students disengaged and performing poorly in my class? Will these students be more engaged during social activities vs. individual activities?

**Literature Review:**

Many teachers would agree that in most classes, there are several students who are disinterested in class activities. The typical disengaged or reluctant learners “avoid challenges, don’t complete tasks, and are satisfied to “just get by””(Protheroe, 2004, p. 46). According to Erika Daniels and Mark Arapostathis, it is important to study disinterested learners because “understanding the phenomenon of disengagement is imperative for educators if they are to help their students realize increased academic achievement to avoid remedial or punitive measures and so that districts will be ensured of continued state and federal funding” *(*2005). Teachers must try to reach every student in their class even if the student does not initially have the desire to learn.

It is important to examine why students might be disengaged. This is not always an easy task due to the fact that numerous conditions can influence a student’s ability to learn. Factors such as difficult home life, poor housing conditions, poor nutrition, and absent parents are only a few possible reasons (Darling-Hammond, 2006). In addition, school conditions may not be ideal. Teachers are stressed and have many large classes and may not have proper resources at school (Darling-Hammond, 2006). It is very easy for students to become frustrated and say I “”don't care about the (stupid) work" rather than risk proving themselves incompetent by trying and failing” (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Similarly, student disengagement could be the result of other factors.

According to the College Board (2010), there are several reasons why students become disengaged. First of all, students “who have a poor self-image avoid activities that they deem beyond their capabilities” (College Board Website, 2010). Although the student can most likely handle the task at hand, they are convinced that they can’t. It is easier to avoid trying to complete the task rather than feel bad if they fail. Second, home life has an enormous effect on attitudes towards learning. “In a home where curiosity, questions, and exploration are encouraged, children are given the message that education is worthwhile and personally satisfying” (College Board Website, 2010). Students who grow up in this type of environment are more willing to attempt challenging work. “On the other hand, in a home where learning is not encouraged, children are given the message that education is of little value and that they lack the competency and ability to learn” (College Board Website, 2010). Another reason for lack of interest in class could be low expectations. According to the College Board (2010), kids tend to mimic teachers’ attitudes. Teachers who assign challenging (yet reasonable) work believe that their students are capable of completing the work. Teachers who believe that their students are not intelligent are more likely to have students tune out. These are important factors to consider in determining why my students are disengaged.

It is important that teachers attempt to make all students successful. Though lack of student interest is an increasing concern in education, “Identifying the reasons behind these students’ reluctance to learn is integral to engaging their interest and helping them to succeed” (Protheroe, 2004). There are numerous methods that teachers can use to encourage students to take a more active role in learning and help them to be successful.

**Methods:**

I will use several different methods to collect data about my students. I will keep a journal where I will record my observations of disengaged students daily. I will incorporate group work into my lessons and record observations again. I will also allow students to work on class work in partners and see if there is an increase in the number of assignments I receive completed from my disengaged students. I will collect data on a daily basis over the course of a semester. Student interviews will be less frequent; possibly once every unit.

1. **Teacher Records**: I need to keep good records of lessons I use (and how they are presented) and student grades. In addition, I would like to keep photocopies of student work so that I can see their responses in addition to their grade.

2**. Journal**: Since some of my data will be observations of students’ behavior/participation I will want to keep good notes on what I observe.
I like the idea of the predefined checklist. I can list specific behaviors and a few specific behaviors and place a check mark to record what I see quickly and easily.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Lesson:  | Date:  |  |  |
| **Action** | **Jared** | **Matt** | **Sarah** |
| Participating in group work  |  |  |  |
| Off Task during group work  |  |  |  |
| Participating in individual work  |  |  |  |
| Off task during individual work |  |  |  |
| Homework returned and complete |  |  |  |
| Homework not returned or not complete  |  |  |  |
| Sleeping during group lesson/activity  |  |  |  |
| Sleeping during Individual lesson/activity |  |  |  |
| (Leave blank for additional observations/notes) |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

1. **Conducting a Trend Analysis**: I will need to assess what instructional factors made a difference in student performance. I will need to look for behavior and grades For example, I will take note of their general attitude during activities and I will examine things such as homework completion, quiz grades, participation in activities, and test grades to see if students’ overall performance has changed.
2. **Interviews:** I would like to interview students to get more information on why they are disengaged in my class. This will help me learn more about factors within my class as well as factors outside school (like family, work and sports) that may have an effect on their level of involvement in class.

**Analysis:**

For the data analysis, I will make graphs to help me sort out my data. I will make one graph that uses data from my checklists above and compares level of participation during group activities vs. individual (example below). I will also make a graph that allows me to analyze changes in grades throughout the study (a line graph to easily show trends in grades over the course of the semester). I would also like to create a chart that helps compare answers from student interviews. This will help me to determine if there are common factors between all of my students who are disengaged.

**Conclusion:**

Although there are numerous factors that could affect student involvement, I would like to know what some of these factors are in order to encourage all of my students to participate. Hopefully, over the course of the study, I will be able to identify factors that influence my students’ participation. Using data that I collect, I hope to increase participation from my students who are normally disengaged.

References

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