Where Engagement, Relevancy and Achievement Intersect: Student Learning and Flocabulary

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Flocabulary helps students thrive by bringing the K-12 curriculum to life with videos and activities that are captivating, relevant and research-based. By engaging students in academically rigorous content, the platform supports teachers in their daily instruction and helps students master standards, build vocabulary and develop 21st-century skills.
Introduction

Student engagement measures students’ psychological investment directed toward learning, with engaged students demonstrating more effort, persistence, concentration, and enthusiasm for learning than disengaged students (Skinner, Kindermann, & Furrer, 2009).

As a result, engaged students tend to achieve higher grades and test scores than similar students identified as disengaged (Finn & Rock, 1997; Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007; Skinner, Wellborn, & Cornell, 1990; Sing, Granville, & Dika, 2002; Wang & Holcombe, 2010). The company administered student and teacher surveys in the summer of 2018 to evaluate and communicate the extent to which Flocabulary fulfills this mission as well as to inform internal continuous improvement measures.

Findings from the surveys include:

- 91 percent of student respondents agreed that after watching a Flocabulary video they had a better understanding of what they were learning. (See page 2 for more information.)

- 99 percent of teacher respondents reported that their students were somewhat, very, or highly engaged in Flocabulary lessons. (See page 4 for more information.)

- 97 percent of teacher respondents with students whom they reported were challenging to engage agreed that their students were somewhat, very, or highly engaged with Flocabulary lessons. (See page 7 for more information.)
Student Learning with Flocabulary

As shown below, 91 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of what they were taught after watching a Flocabulary video. Over three-quarters of student respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that they were excited to learn about a topic when using Flocabulary and that Flocabulary is one of their favorite ways to learn in school. Concurrently, approximately three-quarters of teacher respondents reported that Flocabulary increased their students’ background knowledge, retention of content, and vocabularies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Agreement with Learning and Engagement:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When asked to share what they enjoyed the most about Flocabulary:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 percent of students cited the use of music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 percent of students mentioned the use of videos.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 percent of students described The Week in Rap, rap videos which highlight news from the past week.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Student Agreement with Learning and Engagement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After watching a Flocabulary video, I have a better understanding of what we're being taught.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am excited to learn about a topic when we use Flocabulary.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flocabulary is one of my favorite ways to learn in school.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Music and Learning

Students reported responding well to the use of music in Flocabulary videos. Integrating music into educational activities can be part of a Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP). The goal of CSP is to provide educational experiences that allow students to reclaim their education by validating and explaining students’ lived experiences through critical engagement. CSP is based on the premise that students learn best when taught first from within their cultural frame of reference (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).
Students engage in academic work to fulfill a need for competence, which can be accomplished through school membership and authentic work (Marks, 2000; Newmann et al., 1992; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). There are many strategies for fostering student engagement in the classroom. Programs that successfully improve engagement among at-risk student populations often provide hands-on learning opportunities that allow students to contribute in socially and personally meaningful tasks (Wehlage & Smith, 1992). By integrating these features, programs reframe student learning in a way that contributes positively to students’ perceptions of themselves and their place in their school and local community. Students determine the authenticity of work based on the extent to which activities are explicitly linked to extrinsic rewards, align with intrinsic interests, allow students a sense of ownership over their work, connect to the “real world,” and provide fun learning experiences (Newmann et al., 1992). Students are also more likely to engage in school when they can be true to themselves and have agency in their learning (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Providing work that supports these goals enhances student engagement in classroom activities (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007; Gamoran & Nystrand, 1992).

For instance, student engagement and academic achievement increases when teachers use conversational and interactional styles with which students are familiar (Gay, 2000; Heath, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Philips, 1982). Linking students’ experiences with educational material not only helps students feel at home in the classroom community, it also provides an anchor through which to understand and classify new information. For all students regardless of background, music and other oral traditions further engage the brain’s memory systems through the use of emotion, rhythm, and movement (Hammond, 2015).

**Student Engagement with Flocabulary**

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*For those who struggled, I believe Flocabulary was the difference between passing and failing.*

*8th grade teacher, Tyner Middle Academy, Chattanooga, TN*
99 percent of teacher respondents reported that their students were somewhat (2), very (3), or highly (4) engaged when using Flocabulary, with similarly high rates of engagement reported regardless of how often teachers used Flocabulary in the classroom.

Further, teachers across all levels of Flocabulary use reported that their students were more engaged on average when using Flocabulary than during a typical non-Flocabulary lesson. The difference between student engagement in Flocabulary versus non-Flocabulary lessons is even higher in classrooms where teachers reported assigning their students to work within the Flocabulary website.

Average Student Engagement by Frequency of Flocabulary Use Compared to a Typical Non-Flocabulary Lesson

*1.09 value is significantly different than Flocabulary use of less than monthly at the .05 level.

4 - Highly engaged: all students actively participate in instructional activities continuously throughout the lesson
3 - Very engaged: most students actively participate in instructional activities for most of the lessons
2 - Somewhat engaged: some students participate (actively or passively) in instructional activities for at least part of the lesson
1 - Not engaged: most or all students do not participate in instructional activities
Student Engagement with Flocabulary

Average Student Engagement by Whether a Teacher Assigned Students to Work Within the Flocabulary Website Compared to a Typical Non-Flocabulary Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement When Using Flocabulary</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement During Typical Non-Flocabulary Lesson</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in Engagement</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.99*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significantly different from not assigning work within the Flocabulary website at the .05 level
Research establishes that the positive relationship between engagement and achievement persists across diverse student populations (Finn, 1989, 1993; Finn & Rock, 1997), with student engagement often mitigating potential negative ramifications of less than desirable school or classroom characteristics (Dotterer & Lowe, 2011; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012).

However, student engagement tends to be strongest among students with a track record of academic success, as those successes provide students a sense of belonging within the school community (Marks, 2000; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012; Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006). Thus, it is more challenging to engage students with previous academic challenges for whom engagement in the learning community may not initially contribute to positive self-identity or sense of belonging.

Programs successful at engaging at-risk student populations focus on building positive relationships with adults, connecting with one’s community, and engaging in authentic, meaningful learning opportunities (Wehlage & Smith, 1992). By integrating these features, programs reframe student learning in a way that contributes positively to students’ perceptions of themselves and their place in their school and local community.

“... My students are actively engaged during Flocabulary lessons. Even the ones who hardly ever participate in class are eager to participate in Flocabulary.

2nd grade teacher, Olanta Creative Arts and Science Magnet School, Olanta, SC
Re-engaging Disengaged Students with Flocabulary

Engaging historically disadvantaged student populations is a priority for Flocabulary.

Over half of all teacher survey respondents taught in a school that qualified for Title 1 funding, which accurately represents the roughly 60 percent of Flocabulary users whose schools meet Title 1 funding qualifications.

Further, 92 percent of teacher respondents reported that they had students in their classroom who are challenging to engage. As shown below, 97 percent of those teachers, as well as 97 percent of teachers employed by a Title 1 school, agreed that their students who were challenging to engage were somewhat, very, or highly engaged when using Flocabulary.

How engaged are students in your classroom who are challenging to engage when using Flocabulary?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly Engaged</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Engaged</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Engaged</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Engaged</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 2018 surveys documented that teachers and students believed Flocabulary contributed to high academic engagement and positively influenced student learning in the classroom. Students particularly enjoyed the use of music and visuals in Flocabulary videos.

Further, teachers reported significantly higher engagement when Flocabulary was used daily and when students were assigned to work within the Flocabulary website. Notably, teachers reported that Flocabulary engaged students in their classrooms who were generally challenging to engage.

Conclusion
Methodological Appendix & Company Information

Flocabulary administered two parallel surveys, one to all educators with active Flocabulary subscriptions and the other to students of educators with Master Certified Educator (MCE) access. We provide additional details on the methods employed for each survey below.

Teacher survey

Flocabulary sent a copy of the teacher survey to approximately 18 thousand educators with active Flocabulary subscriptions. In total, 714 teachers responded for a response rate of four percent. Teachers received two reminders and no incentives for their participation. The proportion of teacher respondents who reported teaching in a school that qualified for Title 1 funding corresponded with the proportion in the population of Flocabulary users.

Student survey

The student survey was sent to 300 members of the Flocabulary educator community with three reminders (sent via email and closed social networks). The students of 57 educators completed the survey for a response rate of 19 percent. An average of 26 students completed the survey per educator for a total of 1,466 students respondents. The students who completed the survey attended schools across 25 states and were enrolled in the 1st through 12th grades during the 2017-18 school year. No incentives were provided to educators for encouraging their students to complete the survey.
Methodological Appendix & Company Information

Students Responded to the Survey from School Districts Across 25 States
References

References
