

The Opportunity Myth: Meet Maggie

Fall 2018

Throughout today's session about *The Opportunity Myth: What Students Can Show Us About How School Is Letting Them Down – and How to Fix It*, you'll follow the experiences of **Maggie**, a tenth-grader who worries that she won't be prepared to be a trauma nurse

because she might not be prepared for college, which is her goal. "I don't want to feel like I'm behind or, metaphorically speaking, that I'm sinking."



Maggie has lived in the same rural stretch of land her whole life. Her mother's side of the family has been in the region for generations, and she loves the place she's always called home. But she's considering colleges a bit further afield—maybe even out of state. Wherever she goes, she knows what she plans to do there.

"I'm going to get my Bachelor of Science. I want to be a trauma nurse, so I'm going to go to nursing school and get additional qualifications that will allow me to get more opportunities in that," she says. "It doesn't sound hard, but it's actually pretty hard to get."

Maggie, like the majority of her classmates at the one high school in her district, is white. She feels fairly confident that her school is setting her up for success in college, but she also worries, especially about math and science.

"I expect to be getting the knowledge I need to go to college and get a career, to do whatever it is I plan on doing, to be a trauma nurse," she says. "I don't expect it to be fun, but I also don't expect it to be the mountain that it is." She describes class periods where she finishes her work early and sits there with nothing else to do, and those where she's assigned a lot of work to get through, but doesn't feel she has the support or guidance to do the work.

"Sometimes, if it's not something I feel stimulated by, I feel like taking a nap, honestly. But I don't," she adds quickly. "Or if it's something I don't understand how to do, I feel frustrated. I would rather be given the tools to solve the problem, instead of just being told 'you need to do this by tomorrow.' It's frustrating or it's boring. That's about it."

Today, we'll pause throughout the day's presentation, and you'll dig into the experiences Maggie had in her 10th grade Physical Science class on a given day in the 2016-2017 school year, focused on the question: **Will Maggie be well-prepared to reach her goal of being a trauma nurse?**

Please stop here and don't read ahead in your packet – we'll direct you to the right page when it's time to flip ahead!

What types of assignments did Maggie work on in her 10th grade Physical Science class?

Here is one example assignment that Maggie experienced in her 10th grade Physical Science class. *This assignment has been shortened to one page for the ease of this activity; in the full assignment, students completed 13 additional questions that are comparable to the ones below.*

Physical Science Study Guide

Complete the following questions.

- 1) Elements located within the same _____ have similar chemical properties.
- 2) Who developed the first periodic table?
- 3) What happens to the valence electrons in a covalent bond?
- 4) What happens to the valence electrons in an ionic bond?
- 5) The elements lithium and oxygen react explosively to form lithium oxide. How many moles of lithium oxide will form if 2 moles of lithium react?
- 6) What are the elements in the eighteenth group called?
- 7) What are the elements in the first group called?

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What type of instruction did Maggie receive in her 10th grade Physical Science class?

The objective on the board was “Students complete a review for their quiz on chemical reactions.”

These notes are organized as “teacher actions” and “student actions” so you can get a feel for what both the teacher and students were doing throughout the lesson. They have been streamlined for the ease of this activity.

Time	Teacher Action Notes	Student Action Notes
10:15	Teacher: “Welcome to class, guys. Come in, sit down, and get started on your warm-up.” Teacher begins to circulate to check homework completion.	19/19 students have out their notebooks and are responding to the warm-up prompt, which asks them to reflect on how prepared they feel for the upcoming physical science quiz they’ll be taking.
10:19	Teacher continues circulating to check homework completion.	8/19 students have finished their reflection, and most sit silently with a few whispers while the remaining students finish.
10:21	Teacher: “Let’s debrief how you are feeling about your upcoming quiz and whether or not you’re ready to take on the chemical reactions quiz.” Teacher: “Blake, how are you feeling?” Teacher: “Sounds great! Sarah, how about you?” Teacher: “We can totally work on this. James, final thoughts?”	Blake: “I feel ready! I’m having a bit of trouble remembering the names of the groups on the periodic table, but I know all the other stuff.” Sarah: “I’m nervous because I get mixed up on some of the unit conversions.” James: “I just need a little more practice, but I’m feeling good.”
10:24	Teacher: “Great. It sounds like we all feel pretty good but need some more review, so we’re going to do that today. Everyone take your classwork paper out and get started on the review. This is something you’ll work on independently – and ask me if you have questions.”	19/19 students take out their paper and start working. The majority of students are flipping through their notebooks.
10:25	The teacher goes to Sarah, and they start on a unit conversion problem together. He models how to solve one, asking Sarah questions about the steps. He then observes her doing one on her own.	
10:40	The teacher continues to circulate, working with individual students and asking them specific questions.	19/19 students are still working silently.
10:50	The teacher continues to circulate, working with individual students who are still working on their review and asking them specific questions.	Approximately five students have completed their review activity and turned it into the bin. Three of them pull out independent reading books, and two put their heads on their desk.
11:10	The teacher continues to circulate, working with individual students who are still working on their review and asking them specific questions.	12/19 students are finished with their review. The majority of them are reading books, and three have their heads on their desk.
11:45	<i>This continues until 11:45, when class dismisses.</i>	<i>This continues until 11:45, when class dismisses.</i>

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How engaged was Maggie in her 10th grade Physical Science class?

Here are Maggie’s responses to our daily student survey while she was working on the Physical Science study guide. Overall, Maggie was **Minimally Engaged**.

Today, class was...	<input type="radio"/> Too easy	<input type="radio"/> A little too easy	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Just right	<input type="radio"/> A little too hard	<input type="radio"/> Too hard
Today...					
	Not true	A little true	Mostly true	Very true	
Class was about something interesting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I really liked what we were doing in class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I was thinking more about class than anything else.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
Today during class, I felt...					
	No	Yes			
Happy	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>			
Excited about learning	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Successful	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Smart	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Confused	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>			
Angry	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Proud	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Focused	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>			
Bored	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
Today in class...					
	No	Yes			
Did you wish you were doing something different?	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>			
Did you wish you had more chances to share your ideas?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			

Class today was about something...

	Not true	A little true	Mostly true	Very true
I can use outside of school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Important to my life right now.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Important to my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I already know how to do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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What expectations did Maggie's 10th grade Physical Science teacher have for her students' success against the standards?

We asked Maggie's Physical Science teacher to respond to the following questions on a teacher survey, which we used to create an expectations construct. Maggie's teacher had **Moderately High Expectations** for his students' success against the standards.

Statement	Response
Students are overburdened by the demands of our state's standards.	Somewhat Disagree
My students need something different than what is outlined in our state's standards.	Somewhat Disagree
The standards make it difficult for students to learn basic skills in my subject.	Disagree
Our state's standards are too challenging for my students.	Disagree