

ADMinsight

A fact sheet for principals & vice-principals that focuses on leadership in public education

Question

“What are the most effective strategies for engaging students?”

Terms

Social Engagement

Students have a sense of connectedness to school.

Academic Engagement

Students are active participants in their own learning.

Intellectual Engagement

Students are visibly engaged in their own learning and strive to achieve all types of success.

Students who are engaged in their work are driven by four essential goals, each of which satisfies a particular human need:

Success (the need for mastery)

Curiosity (the need for clarity of understanding)

Originality (the need for opportunities for self-expression)

Relationships (the need for connection with others)



Engaging Together

According to the Canadian Education Association (CEA), intellectual engagement for students begins to decline at Grade 7 and by Grade 9 fewer than 50% of students are intellectually engaged in school. Engaged students are motivated to learn, work and succeed to the best of their abilities. Addressing student engagement levels often involves the staff as a whole to change school culture in ways that better meet student needs and interests. Other actions will be more closely tied to the nature of classroom instruction. Often, improving student engagement begins with staff engagement.

Encourage Proven Classroom Strategies Designed to Improve Engagement

1. Design with intention

Design lessons and learning that deepen understanding, facilitate connections and are inquiry based.

2. Assessment drives instruction

Assessments that enable students to reflect upon their own learning and encourage them to focus on the next steps in their learning are important pieces of the assessment process.

3. Focus on relevance

Strive to personalize the learning and make authentic



Key Points

Research shows that in a typical school, about 25% of all students have low engagement.

Researcher Dr. Douglas Wilms, Co-director of the Canadian Research Institute of Social Policy identifies the following actions for schools;

1. Identify advocates for disengaged students. Students benefit from at least two adults in school who believe in their success.
2. Increase access to in-school and after-school extra-curricular activities.
3. Disengagement can often be related to anxiety or depression. Identifying disengaged students and developing school-wide interventions can increase engagement.
4. School culture can play a significant role in improving engagement. Create opportunities for students and staff members to give feedback and monitor the levels of positive school culture.

connections to the lives of students.

4. Assessment drives instruction

Design assessments that enable students to reflect upon their own learning, articulate what they have found and speculate about where they might go.

5. Relationships are key

Creating a learning community within the classroom that is based on trust and encourages stretch goals with high levels of support and low levels of anxiety for students.

6. Improve collaborative opportunities

Creating the opportunities for teachers to have collaborative conversations about engagement increases the likelihood that affective strategies will be shared throughout the school.

7. Enable self-expression

Embedding self-expressive components into the work required of students promotes a deeper connection to their work and their learning. In addition, personalized connections to the learning leads to deeper understanding and increased retention.

8. Provide Affirmation

Classroom affirmations can be used to create a classroom tone that is supportive and positive. Providing explicit instruction in the many ways that students can be supportive of one another encourages the shared use of positive affirmations. Developing a safe environment where there is acknowledgement by all class members of the importance of supportive affirmations can change students' attitudes and their actions.

REFERENCES

Wilms J.D., Friesen S. & Milton P. (2009) What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming classrooms through social, academic and intellectual engagement. (First National Report) Toronto: Canadian Education Association

Canadian Council on Learning (2005, December 16). Good news: Canada's high school drop out rates are falling. http://en.copian.ca/library/research/ccl/lessons_learning/good_news_hs_dropout_falling/good_news_hs_dropout_falling.pdf