Creating an engaging learning environment

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TE 6243 Technology As A Tool for Teaching
Spring 2014
Can we recognize student engagement?

• Student engagement
  o complex
  o individual student
  o context is important
    • Certain methods may work better in certain situations
• Is it enough to see that students are on task?
• Today we will discuss the types of student engagement, components, and ways to improve.
Types of Engagement

Three types in research:

- Behavioral
- Cognitive
- Emotional
Behavioral Engagement

Measure of students’:
- Effort
- Participation in class activities
- Following of classroom rules
Cognitive Engagement

Measure of students’:
- Effort and investment in learning
- Desire for challenging work
- Willing to go beyond status quo
- Self-regulating, employ strategies
Emotional Engagement

Measure of students’:
  - Emotional reactions to teacher
  - Interest
  - Anxiety
  - Boredom
What affects student engagement?

- Student voice, shared decision making
- Clear expectations and goals
- Challenging, authentic, real-world tasks
- Student accountability, sense of ownership
- Concerned, supportive teachers
- Cooperative learning opportunities
- Sense of community among peers and teachers
What do students say makes a teacher engaging?

- Being a positive person in the classroom
- Showing genuine concern for students
- Showing confidence in students’ abilities
What else makes a teacher engaging?

• Having high expectations
• Helping students make connections to material
• Making sure students understand the purpose behind the lesson
• Reminding students of learning strategies
What else makes a teacher engaging?

• Monitoring and scaffolding
• Covering material deeply and challengingly
• Giving assignments that require high-level thinking and problem solving
• Encouraging independent thinking
• Requiring student accountability
Students’ interests are important

When students are interested in a topic, they are often:

• Happy
• Excited
• Proud
• Hopeful
• Less anxious and less frustrated
  
  o Teachers may consider using an interests inventory at the beginning of each school year.
Music

• Increases engagement and learning
• Songs are fun—increase student interest
  o Students customize lyrics, style and notes to create sense of ownership
• Material is easier to remember
Inquiry & Active Learning

- Student-centered inquiry-based groups
- Students acquire information for themselves
  - Inquiry, investigation and discovery
Inquiry & Active Learning

Students prefer active classrooms:

- Science labs
- Math manipulatives and games
- Dramatic re-enactments and skits
- Writing songs about content
- Using clickers and Smart Board for class participation
Student Identity & Authentic Tasks

Students are learning about their own capabilities and interests
  o May become situated in certain roles and identities
  o May not recognize other opportunities
  o Teachers can help students realize new roles
Student Identity & Authentic Tasks

Give students a sense of agency and the opportunity to show competence
  o Work-related, future-career projects
  o Research projects
  o Community projects
  o Leadership, decision making
The engaging classroom

- Differentiated and student-responsive instruction
- Student voice and sense of identity
  - Avoid passive participation
  - Creation of class rules and project assignments
- Student communities
  - Shared responsibility for learning
    - Better identify with course material
    - More engaged with assignments and activities
  - Collaborate with other faculty members
The engaging classroom

• Know your students’ individual abilities
  o help students reach goals

• Methods
  o inquiry learning
  o collaborative grouping
  o differentiated instruction
  o learning strategies
Review

• Consider students’ interests and other factors
• Learning environment should be:
  o Positive
  o Student-responsive
  o Active
  o Challenging
• Encourage students to develop new identities
• Build sense of community and shared responsibility
References


References


Strahan, D., & Hedt, M. (2009). Teaching and teaming more responsively: Case studies in professional growth at the middle level. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 32*(8), 1-14.

