

Widening the Circle

Celebrating Neurodiversity in Faith-based Schools

FOCUS

STRATEGY:

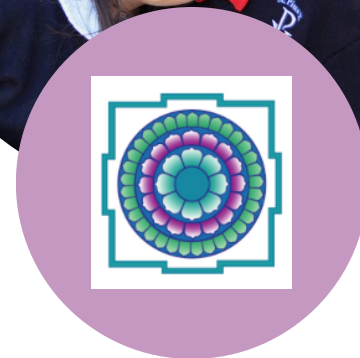
Student Engagement

Decades of research on student engagement tells us conclusively that students who are engaged in learning do better in school. No mystery there.

But what does engagement look like? How is it measured? What does the term engagement actually mean? Let's dig in.

Engaged students are those who connect with the content presented in the classroom or during a learning activity. Students can engage in a variety of ways. This is good news because it means students have a variety of ways they might connect with a concept including intellectually, behaviorally, physically, emotionally, socially, or culturally. Teachers can develop lessons, learning spaces, and activities that increase student engagement if they consider all these potential on ramps.

According to CAST's Framework for Universal Design for Learning, increasing student engagement can be facilitated in a variety of ways. Whether neurotypical or neurodivergent, a student's response to curriculum and/or the environment impacts his or her engagement with the content. should be considered by teachers—students' success hinges on engagement level! Considerations for how a student engages



RESOURCES

For more information on student engagement, visit these resources:

[Universal Design for Learning Guidelines by CAST](#)


[Bauld, A. "How to Engage High School Students in Learning."](#)

[The good, the bad, and the ugly of student motivation. The Education Hub.](#)

[Parsons, S.A., Nuland, L.R., and Parsons, A.W. "The ABCs of student engagement."](#)



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intellectually may be different from how a student may emotionally or physically engage with content. Plan for multiple means of engagement!

Implementing intentional strategies can impact engagement for neurotypical AND neurodivergent learners. Research by CAST notes that increasing the relevance and value of a topic or concept, minimizing distractions, and integrating choice and autonomy increases engagement for learners.

Measurement of engagement is more complex than teacher observation or the time a student spends on a task. It is possible for a student to appear to be busily working while not actually accomplishing anything or being interested. Because engagement includes aspects of cognition, behavior, physicality, culture, and social-emotional response, measurement strategies can include students' level of collaboration and participation in classroom activities in addition to focused completion of activities. Another way to gauge a student's level of engagement is when a teacher detects a student's enthusiasm, curiosity, and interest in a particular topic. Whether a student feels valued and a sense of belonging at school impacts engagement as well. Engagement can be demonstrated and measured in a multitude of ways.

The teacher's relationship with each student impacts engagement, too. Students are more motivated when they have a positive relationship with their teacher. Motivation impacts effort and persistence, two factors necessary for high engagement. Teachers who foster strong relationships with students can also increase a general sense of community within the classroom, which is one way to improve student collaborative experiences and increase engagement.

