

Component 3c

Engaging Students in Learning

OVERVIEW

Engaging students in learning is the centerpiece of the framework for teaching, and all the other components support it by promoting high levels of student understanding. In contrast to time on task, which refers to whether students are doing what the teacher asked them to do, engagement refers to whether what the teacher asked students to do is sufficiently rigorous to promote deep learning. Engagement requires that teachers hold high expectations for each student.

Student engagement may be hands-on, involving physical activity, but more important it should be minds-on, involving intellectual activity. School, in other words, is not a spectator sport. Mental engagement is

- Mental *work*.
- Real thinking, not just simple recall of facts.
- Often described by students as “difficult, but in a good way.”

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Assess your practice in Component 3c against the levels of performance below, then check the box that best matches the level of your own teaching for each element.

Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning				
ELEMENT	Level of Performance			
	UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
Activities and assignments	Activities and assignments are inappropriate for students' age or background. Students are not mentally engaged in them. <input type="checkbox"/>	Activities and assignments are appropriate to some students and engage them mentally, but others are not engaged. <input type="checkbox"/>	Most activities and assignments are appropriate to students, and almost all students are cognitively engaged in exploring content. <input type="checkbox"/>	All students are cognitively engaged in the activities and assignments in their exploration of content. Students initiate or adapt activities and projects to enhance their understanding. <input type="checkbox"/>

Component 3c

ELEMENT	Level of Performance			
	UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
Grouping of students	Instructional groups are inappropriate to the students or to the instructional outcomes. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional groups are only partially appropriate to the students or only moderately successful in advancing the instructional outcomes of the lesson. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional groups are productive and fully appropriate to the students or to the instructional purposes of the lesson. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional groups are productive and fully appropriate to the students or to the instructional purposes of the lesson. Students take the initiative to influence the formation or adjustment of instructional groups. <input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional materials and resources	Instructional materials and resources are unsuitable to the instructional purposes or do not engage students mentally. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional materials and resources are only partially suitable to the instructional purposes, or students are only partially mentally engaged with them. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional materials and resources are suitable to the instructional purposes and engage students mentally. <input type="checkbox"/>	Instructional materials and resources are suitable to the instructional purposes and engage students mentally. Students initiate the choice, adaptation, or creation of materials to enhance their learning. <input type="checkbox"/>
Structure and pacing	The lesson has no clearly defined structure, or the pace of the lesson is too slow or rushed, or both. <input type="checkbox"/>	The lesson has a recognizable structure, although it is not uniformly maintained throughout the lesson. Pacing of the lesson is inconsistent. <input type="checkbox"/>	The lesson has a clearly defined structure around which the activities are organized. Pacing of the lesson is generally appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/>	The lesson's structure is highly coherent, allowing for reflection and closure. Pacing of the lesson is appropriate for all students. <input type="checkbox"/>

Source: From *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, 2nd Edition* (p. 85), by C. Danielson, 2007, Alexandria, VA: ASCD. © 2007 by ASCD. Reprinted with permission.

Creating Engaging Activities for Students

Teacher tool

Student tool

Students are more likely to be engaged in learning when lessons contain multiple correct answers and pathways to find them, student choice, relevance to students' lives, collaboration, and rigor.

To practice creating engaging activities, revise the less engaging activities for each characteristic to make them more engaging. The first characteristic is done for you. When you're done, turn to page 312 for recommendations on engaging activities.

Characteristics of Engaging Activities	Less Engaging Activity	More Engaging Activity
<p>Multiple Correct Answers and Pathways When the work involves only one correct answer or one correct way to get to the correct answer, it tends to be less engaging than work that has more than one answer or way to get there.</p>	List the five significant events in the Battle of Gettysburg.	Assume the role of a Confederate or Union soldier. Write a letter home, describing the five significant events of the Battle of Gettysburg from your perspective.
<p>Student Choice When students have some degree of choice about what they learn, how they learn it, or how they show what they know, they tend to invest more and learn more.</p>	Learn about the hibernation of bears by reading Chapter 4 and answering the questions at the end of the chapter.	
<p>Relevance When the learning activities have personal meaning for students, they are more likely to be invested in the learning.</p>	Study the features of a persuasive letter, then pretend you are the owner of a candy store who petitions city council for free parking in front of your store.	

Activities and Assignments

Characteristics of Engaging Activities	Less Engaging Activity	More Engaging Activity
<p>Collaboration Learning is a social event. Students can learn from each other and find doing so more engaging. However, you should carefully structure the collaborative activity to produce engagement.</p>	<p>Students work together to answer questions on a worksheet.</p>	
<p>Rigor Learning activities need to be sufficiently challenging, making students really have to think.</p>	<p>Students read some text and answer recall questions.</p>	

Learning Contract

Teacher tool

Student tool

A learning contract is a working agreement between a student and the teacher that outlines how that student will meet specific learning objectives. Such a contract permits students to have control over their learning, with teacher approval. It also allows students to design a series of learning experiences that will result in certain types of learning. The teacher must approve the learning contract.

My Name: _____ Teacher Signature: _____

Class/Course: _____ Grade Level: _____

Topic: _____

Learning Objectives	Related Lesson/ Assignment/ Activities (How I will learn?)	Materials or Text Support (Things I'll need in order to learn.)	Evidence of Learning (How will I show that I learned?)	Due Date
I will learn...				
I will learn...				
I will learn...				
I will learn...				
I will learn...				

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