

# MOTIVATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND STUDENT VOICE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

## ENGAGEMENT MODULE

DECEMBER 2014

## INTRODUCTION

This professional development module was created as part of a partnership between [Students at the Center](#), a [Jobs for the Future](#) initiative, and the [Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents](#). Six Connecticut high school teachers worked closely with researcher and lead author of "Prioritizing Motivation and Engagement" in [Anytime, Anywhere: Student-Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers](#), Dr. Eric Toshalis, and Jobs for the Future staff to engage in a learner-centered development process resulting in a PD curriculum designed to be delivered in a learner-centered manner. The completed PD series consists of four modules of 3-4 lesson hours each, totaling around two full days of PD.

The full professional development series includes:

### > **Motivation Module**

In this module, participants will explore how teacher behaviors can affect student motivation. The module includes an exploration of the malleability of student motivation, explores teacher best practices for motivating students, and compares reward/punishment or praise motivation to intrinsic motivation.

### > **Engagement Module**

In this module, participants will explore definitions and personal experiences with student engagement, review and apply research-supported strategies to increase engagement, learn to identify and evaluate engagement, and make adjustments to lesson plans and classroom practice to increase student engagement.

### > **Self-regulation Module**

In this module, participants will learn to identify and support students who struggle with self-regulation. Participants will leave these sessions with a teacher-generated document to bring back to the classroom and use with their students in support of self-regulation.

### > **Student Voice Module**

In this module, participants will assess how much student voice is cultivated in their school or district, identify ways to support and encourage student voice within the class and school, and define potential barriers to student voice.



# WHAT ROLE DOES ENGAGEMENT PLAY IN THE CLASSROOM?

## LESSON 1

By Chris Willems and Justyne Nuzzo, with Tobie Baker-Wright and Eric Toshalis

DECEMBER 2014

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this unit, participants will be able to:

- > Identify and reflect on personal, engaging learning experiences
- > Explore and discuss definitions of student engagement
- > Determine the significance of engagement in the classroom

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- > What role does engagement play in the learning process?
- > Why should we prioritize engagement ahead of many competing priorities?

## MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- > Overhead projector, whiteboard, or flip chart/poster paper
- > Markers
- > Scratch paper
- > Index cards
- > Copies of "[Defining Engagement](#)" handout

## TOTAL TIME

- > 60-75 minutes



## ENGAGE: BUILDING CONNECTION AND PURPOSE

Time	Facilitator Steps
15 minutes	<p><b>Cooperative Grouping</b></p> <p>Before the session begins, think of how participants should be grouped. Be intentional. Should groupings encourage cross-department collaboration? Is there a new team that could use time to work professionally together? Table size should be four to six participants, ideally in even numbers.</p> <p><b>Think, Pair, Share</b></p> <p>Ask participants to reflect silently on the following prompt displayed on a screen or poster or board:</p> <p>&gt; <i>Think about a time when you felt you were really <b>engaged</b> as a learner. It may have been when you were learning to cook a new dish, challenged yourself with the latest fitness craze, took a graduate or undergraduate course, or taught yourself how to knit a scarf. Take a moment to think about this time in your life. Whatever your story is, be sure to detail what you did, how you pursued your interest, how you felt, and what was happening around you at the time that suggested you were engaged.</i></p> <p>After a moment of individual reflection, ask participants to turn to a colleague and share experiences.</p> <p>Solicit responses by asking pairs to share by discussing their experiences, and note aloud any overlapping themes or similarities in terms of overall engaging components. Record core concepts (choice, spent free time on project, sought further instruction, etc.) on chart paper.</p>



Students at the Center author Eric Toshalis

explains that to engage students, we must be engaging.



Piloting teachers grouped participants

in a way that got them working across departments, across grade levels, and across professions (e.g., counselors, school psychologists, and administrators sitting and working with teachers).

## DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE

Time	Facilitator Steps
15-20 minutes	<p data-bbox="277 254 521 281"><b>Defining Engagement</b></p> <p data-bbox="277 302 1008 329">Distribute the “<a href="#">Definitions of Engagement</a>” handout to participants.</p> <p data-bbox="277 350 1179 413">Ask them to quietly read the definitions then circle one or two features they feel are most relevant to the idea of increasing engagement in the classroom.</p> <p data-bbox="277 434 963 462">Write the following prompt on the board/poster/screen, and ask:</p> <p data-bbox="277 483 1192 609"><i>What are researchers saying that sticks with you? You may choose elements of the definition that confirm your experiences or you may choose ideas that challenge what we normally see in classrooms, school structures, and educational systems.</i> Direct table-groups to discuss the prompt.</p> <p data-bbox="277 630 1174 693">Allow time for small group conversation before asking for key ideas for whole group discussion.</p> <p data-bbox="277 714 1192 777">Display the essential questions from this lesson on a PowerPoint slide, whiteboard, or poster paper, and ask:</p> <ul data-bbox="277 798 1153 871" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="277 798 917 825">&gt; What role does engagement play in the learning process?</li><li data-bbox="277 846 1153 873">&gt; How does the literature reflect your and your colleagues’ engaging experiences</li></ul> <p data-bbox="277 894 898 921">If conversation slows, feel free to ask follow-up questions:</p> <ul data-bbox="277 942 1166 1056" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="277 942 1166 1005">&gt; What other priorities compete with engagement in our work? What should we do about those tensions?</li><li data-bbox="277 1026 1011 1054">&gt; What happens to our other priorities if students are not engaged?</li></ul> <p data-bbox="277 1077 1182 1140">If there’s time, do a quick full-group share-out or “popcorn” (pick just a few hands or respondents).</p>

## DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE

Time	Facilitator Steps
25-35 minutes	<p><b>Developing Engaging Lessons</b></p> <p>Say: <i>We are now going to move from discussing definition and theory to looking at our work in the classroom. In this exercise, we will look honestly at some of our “good lessons” as teachers, and also at some of our “could be better” lessons. This may feel risky, so let’s make certain we are being kind to ourselves and each other—everyone has experienced a lesson that sparked their students’ interest, and everyone has taught a lesson that could be more engaging. In our professional learning community, being open, honest, and compassionate to ourselves and others need to be the norm for our work together over the next few sessions.</i></p> <p>Post a scale on the board from 1 to 10 or create one on a PowerPoint slide. Label the number 1 “not engaging at all” and label the number 10 “highly engaging.” Ask participants to write down on a piece of paper the topic or the name they give to the last highly engaging lesson they taught. Then have them write down next to that lesson what rating they’d give it on the engagement scale from 1 to 10.</p> <p>Say:</p> <p><i>Now we’re going to take this a step further.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <i>What evidence do you have to support your rating?</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>If students were engaged, how do you know?</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>Were some students more engaged than others, and if so, which students?</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>Why do you think this lesson was engaging for your students?</i></li> </ul> <p>Ask participants to take a moment to think and record their thoughts.</p> <p>Then, as they discuss in small groups, encourage participants to focus on the evidence that supports the rating and the practices that seem to inspire engagement.</p> <p>Next, briefly poll the room and record <b>evidence and indicators</b> on chart paper. Create a second chart for the <b>practices</b> that teachers felt created engagement in the classroom, and collect responses from the group.</p> <p>Say: <i>We are now going to take some risks and look at areas of our work that will help give ideas for professional growth.</i></p> <p><i>Think of a lesson that missed its mark and resulted in less student engagement. Rate the lesson, based on the continuum above and reflect on the following questions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; <i>How did you know students were less engaged?</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>Why do you think students were less engaged?</i></li> <li>&gt; <i>How did this lower engagement affect your learning outcomes for the day?</i></li> </ul> <p>After a moment of independent reflection, ask participants to discuss in their small groups. Next, have participants share out, keeping the focus on the three guiding questions.</p>



Does this text capture what you might

need to say to create a safe space for the transparency asked by the unit? If not, what else might you want to say to your group?



If certain voices are dominating, ask for new

voices to contribute or for participants to share a practice they heard that was inspiring.



You may want to have a slide or flip chart paper

pre-printed with these questions.

## PROCESS AND SYNTHESIS

Time	Facilitator Steps
5 minutes	<p><b>Exit Ticket/Closure</b></p> <p>Hand out note cards and say:</p> <p><i>We are not closing today on our “lesson flops.” We are going to close by using these experiences—our engaging and our not-so-engaging lessons—to think about how we will prioritize and increase student engagement in the classroom. This is an anonymous activity, so no names needed. On your notecard, please fill in the following phrase:</i></p> <p><i>“I used to think . . . but now I think . . . ”</i></p> <p>You can also record on the back of the card any questions we should discuss over the next few sessions together.</p> <p>After participants write down the shifts in thinking they have had during the session, collect the cards to help frame facilitation of the next session.</p>



# DEFINITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

### STUDENTS AT THE CENTER DEFINITION OF ENGAGEMENT:

#### THE SUBDIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Researchers have identified multiple subdimensions that combine in various ways to produce behaviors teachers would commonly recognize as engagement. These four areas are largely accepted as apt descriptors of engagement, although they may be named and subdivided differently.

**Academic engagement:** Time on task, problems attempted, credits earned toward graduation, homework completion

**Behavioral engagement:** Attendance, classroom participation, question posing and question answering, extracurricular involvement

**Cognitive engagement:** Self-regulation, learning goals, perceived relevance of schoolwork to future endeavors, value of the knowledge or skill to be learned

**Psychological engagement:** Feelings of identification or belonging, relationships with teachers and peers, experience of autonomy

–Rebecca E. Wolfe, Adria Steinberg, & Nancy Hoffman. 2013. *Anytime, Anywhere: Student-Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press

“We define engagement here as the range of activities a learner employs to generate—sometimes consciously, other times unconsciously—the interest, focus, and attention required to build new knowledge or skills.” –Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman 2013

“Numerous studies show that higher engagement in thought, feeling, and action in the classroom are supported by the teacher’s ability to: deliver quality instruction; create a caring, structured learning environment; have high expectations of students; involve students in meaningful tasks with real-world implications; and allow students to share knowledge with each other.” –Michael J. Corso, Matthew J. Bundick, Russell J. Quaglia, & Dawn E. Haywood. 2013. “Where Student, Teacher, and Content Meet: Student Engagement in the Secondary School Classroom.” *American Secondary Education*. Vol. 41, No. 3.

“Student engagement does not exist in a vacuum; rather it is likely influenced by the interplay of adolescent development goals and the context of the high school classroom.” –Christopher A. Hafen. 2012. “The Pivotal Role of Adolescent Autonomy in Secondary School Classrooms.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. Vol. 41, No. 3.

“Perhaps the best definition [of engagement] comes from the work of Phil Schlecty (1994), who says students who are engaged exhibit three characteristics:

1. they are attracted to their work
2. they persist in their work despite challenges and obstacles, and
3. they take visible delight in accomplishing their work.”

–Richard Strong, Harvey F. Silver, & Amy Robinson. 1995. “Strengthening Student Engagement. *ASCD*. Vol.53, No. 1.

“Engagement consistently has been found to be a robust predictor of student performance and behavior in the classroom, an antidote to student alienation, and a precursor to long-term academic achievement and eventual graduation.” –Wolfe, Steinberg, & Hoffman 2013

“Control leads to compliance; autonomy leads to engagement.” –Daniel Pink. 2009. *Drive*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

“It is hypothesized that the strongest predictor of change in engagement will be adolescents’ perceptions about autonomy within the classroom, as adolescents are particularly prone to seek out and thrive in environments where they are afforded structured autonomy.” –Hafen 2012



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Students at the Center synthesizes and adapts for practice current research on key components of student-centered approaches to learning. Our goal is to strengthen the ability of practitioners and policymakers to engage each student in acquiring the skills, knowledge, and expertise needed for success in college and a career. The companion volume [Anytime, Anywhere: Student-Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers](#) (2013) is now available from Harvard Education Press. This Jobs for the Future project is supported generously by funds from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.



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