Why is student engagement the powerhouse to student learning?
Transcript

First, thank you for stopping in on my podcast today. I know you have a lot of places you can go for great information, and I am honored you chose to check out this week's episode.

On both my blog and podcast, I write and speak about student engagement in the classroom. The reason why I put so much emphasis into student engagement? I have found, in my eighteen years in the classroom either as a middle school or high school educator, or an educational technology instructional coach the past five years, if students are engaged in our instruction and their student learning activities, and assessments, student performance rises. It's a given.

In today's episode I'm going to share why student engagement is a powerhouse to student learning and why it makes sense to invest time that is intentional to building and encouraging student engagement in our classroom.

When I observe a student immersed in a classroom activity, the student chose to place the student's attention, focus, and activity inside the learning instance. And what usually happens as a result? The student either achieves a high score or a higher score compared to a learning instance where the student did not appear to be engaged in the learning episode.

As teachers, we have a lot to do, to be intentional about, to plan, to design, to deliver, and to observe, before and during our instruction and student learning in our classrooms. All these tasks cause us to make choices about what we need to do, when we need to do it, and how do we know it worked based on our goals, ideas, and hopes we have for the student learning happening in our classroom.

Since time is limited, and we are only one person to our average 16-student class, sometimes we need to place more time, focus, intention, and regency in specific tasks to see the best outcomes. These time-task decisions and dilemmas can be determined by our own held-hierarchy of these tasks and their need to do and finish, or we could apply the Pareto Principle, that states 80% of outcomes (or outputs) result from 20% of all causes (or inputs) for any given event (Investopedia.com). Or, when we think about teachers' to-do-lists, simply, 80% of results we want comes from just 20% of our actions (Forbes).

I 100% believe that student engagement results in 80% of high student performance. When I provide strategies to teachers on how to increase student engagement, it may seem like there is a lot to do and where is all the time coming from to get it all done. But I look at taking on these student engagement strategies with the 80-20 rule in mind.

If we teachers decide that student engagement IS KEY to all we want to see in our classrooms, high student participation, high student satisfaction, high student attendance, and high student performance and achievement, that would all definitely make up 80% of the results we want to see. If high student engagement does all that? Then it's smart to put 20% of our actions to encourage student engagement.

What student encouragement strategies best fit into your instructional style? Your content? Your students' learning styles? Your classroom culture? Your classroom learning space? Given that all these facets are unique to each teacher, especially when we mix them together, the 20% you place in setting students up for high student engagement is a personal choice, mixture, and blend.

One of the ways I used to finetune how I chose to engage my students was to gather student input around the topic of student engagement at the beginning of the school year or semester. I wanted to know what students needed to happen for them to choose to engage in what I gave them to view, hear, do, manipulate, create, or consider in my lessons as well as my formative and summative assessments.

To know this information, I asked my students to complete a student survey, which specifically asked questions about what students preferred to happen, have, heed, handle, hear, highlight, or help for them to feel confident, compelled, comfortable, curious, and competent to engage in what I presented to them inside my content.

I collected this feedback using an online student survey at the end of the first week of school and took the time over the weekend, to find trends, patterns, and relationships among students' submitted answers. Additionally, I kept students' responses separate for each class, since we all know, what works in one class may not work in another.

I also mixed student engagement questions with questions about students' interests, hobbies, extracurricular activities, parttime jobs, their family, and other personal information that helped me, 1) to get to know my students at the beginning of the school year, 2) give me the information to help me personalize instruction and assessments, and 3) helped me group students according to similar likes, in a way to nurture relationship-building among students at the beginning of the school year.

So, you can quickly use this strategy, I'll link to the Personal & Preferences Student Input survey I used in the show notes.

Why is it so important to know what engages our students? Research shows, if students are engaged, student performance increases, as well as student satisfaction, participation, and attendance.

Here is some of the research. I'll place links in the show notes if you want to read more about the value and power of student engagement and what it results in our classrooms.

You can access the show notes by going to edtechenergy.org/listen10 or melanie.education/listen10. I'll place the research links as well as my link to my Personal & Preferences Student Input survey for you to copy and use or tweak as your own.

Tom Loveless (2015), stated in his report, *Student Engagement*, "Student engagement refers to the intensity with which students apply themselves to learning in school." And he continued to point out that a student's curiosity, motivation, and enjoyment all are feeders to engage or not to engage. Motivation strengthens learning capacity, curiosity gets students' attention, and enjoyment is fulfilling and satisfying for the student to feel inside our instruction and their student learning and assessment. It's all a part of their human nature.

One definition of student engagement I have seen in many of my educational technology texts is "Student engagement is defined as "the student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (Newmann, Wehlage, & Lamborn, 1992, p. 12)

Another most recent definition is, "Academic engagement refers to students' active involvement in academic activities), such as studying, acquiring skills, exploring knowledge and even conducting research, as well as more informal learning interactions within academic communities" (Harrison, 2013).

Student engagement increases student satisfaction, enhances student motivation to learn, reduces the sense of isolation, and improves student performance in online courses.

Dr. Robert Marzano, a name familiar to teachers, ~~states in his book, The Highly Engaged Student,~~ "The more engagement and ownership of the learning, the more students will retain."

Dr. Salem GÜNÜÇ stated, "…a significant relationship was found between student engagement and the average academic achievement of a student.

Dr. GÜNÜÇ reported his study found, "cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagements had a strong relationship with academic achievement, and , "student engagement is considered necessary for learning, performance and achievement."

Let's define these three different engagements we see in our classroom.

Cognitive engagement is a student's investment in the student's learning. The value the students holds about the learning, the student's self-regulation, learning goals, and plans around the learning. When we talk about student self-regulation it is how a student controls, directs, and plans the student's mental abilities into student's learning tasks at hand. All these different considerations our student has on the learning the students are doing in the moment encompasses the student's cognitive learning.

When we think of cognitive engagement, we should also discuss Cognitive Load Theory. Cognitive Load refers to the demands put on a student's cognitive system when learning or performing a task. We teachers are the ones providing the cognitive load. Cognitive Load Theory states that the cognitive load needs to be appropriate for the student for the student to acquire and apply the learning. If the student feels overwhelmed, the cognitive load has surpassed a level that is conducive to that student learning the cognitive content we provided in the instruction, student learning, or assessment.

Emotional engagement is a student's responses to the teacher, classmates, content and to the class of peers. Emotional engagement also includes a student's attitudes, interests, beliefs, and values. This is one important reason why social-emotional wellness exercises in our lesson during virtual learning was so important to support student engagement in during that time.

Behavioral engagement is a student's attendance, participation, efforts, and compliance to classroom policies and procedures.

If you're multi-tasking, come back to me. Then next mention is important to hear!

To make a bigger impact on the importance of student engagement, last week (June 2021) Instructure, the company that offers the Canvas, Learning Management System released research on K-12 Education and how the Pandemic impacted U.S. Schools.

One of the six key trends the research showed was, the #1 priority for teachers is student engagement! The study continued to point out educators believe student engagement and student attendance are the two most important metrics of student success. We know, teachers found out very quickly during virtual learning, if we did not engage our students in live virtual classes, we lost them. Students weren't coming to our live virtual classes, or they came but were doing something else. And completing and submitting assignments got even harder to encourage students to do if they were not engaged in our assignments, or felt the assignments were not worth their time at home.

If we teachers think about student engagement in a more holistic way, planning, designing, and delivering instruction, student learning activities and assessments, students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement, with the three types of student engagement, we can observe what inspires students to engage and what turns off students to engage. Sometimes, it may have nothing to do with the lesson, learning task, or assignment. It may be more about a student's emotional state, or a student's behavior to stay on task.

When students feel they belong and are supported, then they feel interested and curious about what they are learning, and they have a class environment that feels safe no matter if the student is performing well or not performing well, students will be engaged to learn, thrive, and progress. When students are engaged, they want to learn and learn more, they want to participate with the group they feel they belong, and they self-regulate to keep it all in control, and they want to do well in our class. All these factors cause students to feel satisfied with their teacher, their peers, the content, the environment, their progress through the content.

If students are not engaged, not curious, motivated, or interested in the content (cognitive engagement), in the community (emotional engagement), or in the classroom culture (behavioral engagement), they don't have what they need to achieve, participate, or be satisfied. What results is there is no increased student buy-in to be engaged, complete and submit the work, participate, or attend school.

All three types of engagement, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral, are simply about how a student feels when they are learning in our classroom and the class community.

If heightened student engagement increases all what we want to see at high levels in our classroom, why not focus 20% of all we need to do in how to increase student engagement? According to Perato's Principle, we will see 80% of our results from

increased student engagement. Student attendance, participation, satisfaction, and achievement should all increase with our mission to increase student engagement.

The research on student engagement proves to us, it is the powerhouse of student learning. If we put 20% of our task time into building and encouraging student engagement, it should bring us 80% of the results we want to see in our classroom. It's a decision of task time extremely well-spent.

Please comment below— *What will you do to increase student engagement inside your 20% task time?*

Share your ideas in the comments below. Or share them on social media and tag @EdTechenergy. I would love to read all your technology integration magic!

You can access the show notes by going to edtechenergy.org/listen10 or melanie.education/listen10.

I have an EdTech surprise for you! I am offering an EdTech 5-video series titled, EdTech Musts for the 2021-2022 School Year, July 13-17, 2021. Each day I'm going to offer an EdTech training with a FREE GUIDE! Monday, learn about social annotation, Tuesday, it's about created augmented reality experiences in your classroom. Wednesday, learn how to create interactive weekly agendas and a syllabus. Thursday, create a class podcast, and Friday, learn how to create an escape room. If you are interested in getting all the videos and FREE GUIDES delivered to your email, go to edtechenergy.org/engage or melanie.wiscount/engage to get the link to register!

Thanks for listening. Make it a great week!

Next week's blog topic*: How can we use communication to engage our students?* Hear 5 strategies on how to do just this!

Outro