

Creating an Engaging Learning Environment

How can faculty and students create an engaged learning environment

Lightbulb Moments



Learning Outcomes

- Define student engagement and the three dimensions
- Examine the role faculty and students play in creating an engaged learning environment
- Recognize learner centered instructional practices
- Apply strategies and technology to develop an engaging class environment
- Reflect on personal actions to engage students

Reflection Exercise

Describe a class or instructor that was highly engaging.

Student Engagement Definitions

The level of academic challenge, time on task, and participating in other educationally purposeful activities directly influence the quality of student learning and their overall educational experience (Kuh, 2003).

The extent to which students actively engage by thinking, talking, and interacting with the content of a course, the other students in the course, and the instructor (Dixson, 2015).

Three Dimensions to Student Engagement

Behavioral Engagement

Students who are behaviorally engaged would typically comply with behavioral norms, such as attendance and involvement, and would demonstrate the absence of disruptive or negative behavior.

Emotional Engagement

Students who engage emotionally would experience affective reactions such as interest, enjoyment, or a sense of belonging.

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitively engaged students would be invested in their learning, would seek to go beyond the requirements and would relish challenge (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004)

	Positive Engagement	Non Engagement	Negative Engagement
Behavioral	Attends lectures, participates with enthusiasm	Skips lectures without excuse	Boycotts, pickets or disrupts lectures
Emotional	Interest	Boredom	Rejection
Cognitive	Meets or exceeds assignment requirements	Assignments late, rushed or absent	Redefines parameters for assignments

Benefits of Student Engagement

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Faculty's Role in Student Engagement

Expecting student engagement to happen on its own is wishful thinking. It doesn't happen on its own. As faculty we can create a learning environment that engages and motivate students. However, whether you are teaching in a physical classroom or a virtual environment, an engaged class is created not only by the teacher but the students as well. In fact, the more students are involved in establishing the classroom climate, the more ownership they will feel and the more responsibility they will assume to make the class conducive for learning (Weimer, 2013).

Instructor Centered vs Learner Centered Pedagogies

In instructor-centered pedagogies, teachers are central to the learning process and exercise authority and power (Major, 2015). Pedagogies such as lectures and demonstrations are often instructor led. Whereas, learner-centered pedagogies look to students to become active members of their own learning and provide opportunities for engagement.

Class Activities

- Kahoot! Quiz
- Group Break Out Activities

Establish Action Items

- 1.
- 2.

Self Reflection

Adapted from Stephen D. Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ).

1. At what moment in this session did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in this session were you most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (facilitator or peer) did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What action that anyone took this session did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about this session surprised you the most? (This could be about your own reactions to what went on, something that someone did, or anything else that occurred).

Learner Centered Teaching Practices

Creating an engaged classroom environment

The Best & Worst Classroom Climate Activity

Benefits

- Make students aware of relationship issues that affect classroom climates and influence their actions.
- Introduces students to the idea that teachers and students share the responsibility for the class atmosphere.
- Students become involved in developing classroom expectations.
- Provides insight into student perceptions on engaged teachers and their peers.

Write the following two statements on the board, “The best class I’ve ever taken” and “The worst class I’ve ever taken”. Beneath each header write “What the teacher did” and “What the student did”. Then ask students to answer the questions and write their answers underneath the headings.

Note: Tell students they should not name any course or particular instructor. Instead we are interested in learning behaviors that can help produce an engaging productive classroom environment.

When there is a pause from the students write a few things under “What the students did” in the best and worst classes you’ve had.

Conclude the activity by moving to the “best class” section and indicate “I want this class to be one of these best courses. However, I can’t make that happen without you. Can we work together to make this a class where we learn a lot and enjoy doing so?”

Then use the feedback to develop class and student expectations and/or classroom policies, or grading criteria.

The Learning Question

Benefits

- Helps students reflect what they are learning themselves as learners.
- Receive feedback on what the students are digesting in class.

Ask students a learning question after class events such as:

- *What did you learn by working with other students on a group exam?*
- *What did you learn about discussion from the forced debate we did yesterday?*
- *Did you learn anything about how you make inferences from your results on the critical inference test?*

Post the question at the beginning or end of class and ask students to reflect for thirty seconds. You can have them write down their answers and collect them.

Think about sharing some of the answers or insights with the class. The more ways and times this activity is used, the more effective it will become to reinforce the message: you are a learner with a set of skills that you can discover and develop.

Couse Discussion Policy Activity

Benefits

- Allow students to have a say in their learning.
- Share power between the teacher and the student.
- Engage students in setting discussion participation policies, norms, and expectations.

Write several questions on top of large pieces of paper and post them around the room. Have students go around the room answering questions such as:

- *The best class discussion I ever had, students*
- *The best class discussion I ever had, the teacher*
- *Class discussions are difficult to participate when ...*
- *What behaviors should count toward participation?*

Or divide the class into groups of four with each student given a different question. Next, divide all the students with the same question into a new group and have them share their responses.

Task them to construct a group answer that integrates the most common responses and other good ideas.

Have them submit their answers and respond the next period with a memo to each group raising questions and asking for elaborations. Use the students’ responses to prepare a draft policy and have the class discuss it further before they vote to accept or reject the policy.

Stop-Go-Change Mid-Term Evaluation

Benefits

- Offer students agency and show respect for their ideas.
- Provide students perceptions and improve end of term evaluations.

Distribute or post the questions below and give students 5 to 10 minutes to complete individually. Collect the responses and make notes. In the next class period hold a 15-minute class discussion and read some sample responses, explain common themes, emphasize different opinions, or take a vote among students to decide if things should be done differently.

Stop

What is something you don’t like? It can be about the professor, the class format, the material, your fellow students, yourself, etc.

Go

What is something you like? It can be about the professor, the class format, the material, your fellow students, yourself, etc.

Change

Tell me something about your own learning. What could be done differently to help you succeed in this class?

Source: Weimer (2003), Learner-centered teaching. Five key changes to practice.

Applying Technology to Engage Students

Create engaging activities or assignments in the classroom or online

Game or Quizzes

Have students engage in the content using an online quiz. Or divide students into groups and have them develop quizzes during class. Then have other students participate in the quizzes.

Kahoot! www.kahoot.com

Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform tool to administer quizzes, facilitating discussions, and collect survey data. You can host games in a live, interactive session or assign self-paced games for additional training.

Jeopardy www.jeopardylabs.com

This site allows you to create your own jeopardy games or offers games on a variety of subjects.

Online Bulletin Boards

Online bulletin boards can be used by students to post questions, brainstorm ideas, post opinions, or present content in a visual way. For example, students can use the boards to showcase their work, develop storyboards, or post course resources.

Padlet www.padlet.com

Padlet is an online bulletin board that you can use to help students collaborate by collecting ideas, brainstorming activities, etc. For example, students can create walls and add pictures, audio, videos, or links.

Pinterest www.pinterest.com

Pinterest allows students to post photos and videos that are related to a course to topic to discuss.

Blogging or Microblogging

Have students write a blog requiring them to incorporate images and other social media sources like YouTube, Gifs, blogs, etc. Then require their peers to respond to their post creating an engaging conversation.

Microblogging allows individuals to communicate using no more than 140 characters. Keep the class discussion going by tweeting a question outside of class and have students respond. Another idea is to have students create a hashtag about a particular subject and ask students to share their thoughts, ideas, and research on the topic throughout the week.

Medium www.medium.com

Medium is a powerful online publishing platform that allows students to post blogs. Also, its purpose is to share compelling ideas, knowledge, and perspectives.

Twitter www.twitter.com

Twitter is a microblog that allows you to send and receive short posts call tweets. They can be up to 140 characters long and links to relevant websites and resources can be linked.

References

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Group Activities

Group One

Review the Learner Centered Teaching Practices and Applying Technology to Engage Students. As a group discuss the following questions:

1. Focusing on **The Best & Worst Classroom Climate Activity**, how does this activity make the class environment more learner centered and engage students?
2. What concerns would you have with this activity?
3. What strategies or tactics could you use to help offset the challenges?
4. How could technology be used to conduct this activity?
5. Think of one class activity or assignment and redesign it to apply a learner centered approach and/or utilize technology.

Group Two

Review the Learner Centered Teaching Practices and Apply Technology to Engage Students. As a group discuss the following questions:

1. Focusing on the **Course Discussion Policy Activity**, how does this activity make the class environment more learner centered and engage students?
2. What concerns would you have with this activity?
3. What strategies or tactics could you use to help offset the challenges?
4. How could technology be used to conduct this activity?
5. Think of one class activity or assignment and redesign it to apply a learner centered approach and/or utilize technology.

Group Three

Review the Learner Centered Teaching Practices and Apply Technology to Engage Students. As a group discuss the following questions:

1. Focusing on **The Learning Question Activity**, how does this activity make the class environment more learner centered and engage students?
2. What concerns would you have with this activity?
3. What strategies or tactics could you use to help offset the challenges?
4. How could you use technology be used to conduct this activity?
5. Think of one class activity or assignment and redesign it to apply a learner centered approach and/or utilize technology.