

Q3

My online learning in this class keeps my attention

Understanding student engagement and wellbeing is critically important to supporting effective learning. Pivot's actionable data can help you identify what adjustments can be made to improve student engagement and connection and the first two pages of this document are specifically targeted to remote teaching strategies. Whether you have moved to a distance teaching and learning environment or still in the classroom, our **question resources** (for our regular Student Perception Survey) are an excellent source of pedagogical support for all teaching professionals.

Why it's Important in a Distance Learning Setting

Helping students to pay attention to the learning at hand is a primary concern of educators shifting to a distance learning environment. With a multitude of other digital distractions readily available to online students, capturing and maintaining attention is of paramount importance.

What it might Look Like when Learning Remotely:

Teachers:

- Reconsider which elements of lessons to keep, tweak or discard in a distance learning environment. A steep but interesting learning curve presents itself for all educators as we explore what online pedagogies work for us as individuals.
- Provide clarity around expected milestones for students to work towards. Ensure students have access to and can report back regularly to you on progress.
- Maintain high expectations for all students to be challenged and extended in their learning.
- Consider using the Pulse Check surveys to engage with students on a regular (weekly or fortnightly basis) to gather data on which activities or sessions had been most engaging for students. Free text questions can also be included to capture student suggestions.

Students are able to:

- Explore ideas and topics they are interested in
- Collaborate with their peers regularly, as this may be their only opportunity for social interactions
- Access a forum (live or static) to ask questions or contribute to discussions

What three things can I try in my virtual classroom tomorrow?

- 1 **Inject some fun and play into your online delivery.** Consider commencing each class with a **short online quiz**, a **spot the difference** or a **predict what happens next** in this story activity. Answers can be easily shared in a 'chat' function or perhaps even be completed collaboratively in a smaller group.
- 2 **Design it yourself!** This is the perfect opportunity for students to design their **own research or inquiry tasks** that are relevant and engaging to them as individuals.
- 3 **Mix it up and be kind to yourself.** Don't feel that you need to provide a 1 hour lesson online simply because that's your timetable allocation. **A shorter, more engaging** 30-minute session that uses emotion, visuals and conundrums with follow-up activities for students to complete on their own or in small groups will be much more powerful. Provide students with the opportunity to ponder and revisit what has been covered.

Strategies to Engage Students

- 1 **Student collaboration.** Students will be more engaged in their learning if they are able to collaborate with their peers. Where possible, set up virtual breakout rooms within online meetings or build tasks where each student performs a specific research role.
- 2 **Target the learning.** Ensure that the relevance of the learning tasks is appropriate for students. Ascertain prior knowledge where possible, and target student interests and level of challenge.
- 3 **Take a virtual field trip.** There are many museums and other locations that are offering **free virtual tours** and field trips right now. You could also try a **Google Lit Trip**.
- 4 **Participate meaningfully.** This may seem obvious, but the more involved you are in the course, the more involved your students will be. Give students prompt and detailed feedback on their work, respond to their discussion board posts, and touch base with students individually.

Strategies for Collaborating with Colleagues

Work with your colleagues to create interactive online lessons or an inquiry task that you can use with your students. Work together to find online resources that will support different lessons or objectives that you can use.

Ask a colleague to sit in on a virtual lesson and give feedback on the strategies that revealed greater engagement, and activities that need more refining.

Literature Review

Keeping a student's attention online can be difficult because students and teachers are not together while learning is taking place. This can make some students feel disconnected and can make the course feel depersonalised. For a student to gain a deeper understanding of what they are learning in the course, the teacher needs to provide them with activities that help students relate what they are learning in the course to the real world. (Hersman & Schroeder, 2017)

Students also need to feel like they are getting to connect with other classmates. Give students the opportunity to discuss topics using discussion boards. This can be a set of required discussions or a set of enrichment discussions that students are allowed to participate in. Give students more chances to connect by being involved in the course. When students are emotionally engaged they have positive relationships with their teachers and their peers. Being emotionally engaged can lead to students being more engaged in the content of the course.

References

- Hersman, B., & Schroeder, N. (2017). Strategies for designing engaging online kinesiology courses based on the community of inquiry model. *Quest*, 69(4), 480-493.

Q3

This class keeps my attention.

Why it's Important

Research shows that when students are engaged in learning they take ownership of it, they become more interested, and student achievement increases. The question is, how do we achieve student engagement in our classrooms? While you cannot force students to be engaged, you can make classroom content and delivery as relevant and interesting as possible. Helping students make connections and interact with their learning will not only increase engagement in the classroom and keep their attention, it will also enhance student learning.

What it Looks Like in the Classroom

Teacher:

- Is interacting with students on an individual level, helping them with their specific needs
- Uses a variety of instructional methods, such as project based learning, cooperative learning, and direct instruction when appropriate
- Is clear about expectations for the students and for him or herself, ensuring that each lesson is purposeful and meets necessary objectives in a meaningful way.
- Maintains a high expectation for all students
- Differentiate instruction based on student needs and preferences

Students are able to:

- Able to connect what they are learning in their classroom to the world around them
- Exploring ideas and topics that they are interested in
- Seeking opportunities to explore new ideas
- Choosing from a variety of learning activities based on how they learn best
- Productive - spending their class time engaged in meaningful learning activities
- Responding to questions enthusiastically and eager to offer their own input

What three things can I apply to my classroom tomorrow?

- 1 **Follow the 10-2 method.** For every 10 minutes of instruction, give students 2 minutes to stop and reflect on what they have learned. This will give students a chance to stop and think about what they are learning and keep them engaged.
- 2 **Incorporate movement.** Get students up and moving throughout the class period. Have a practice activity that you want them to complete? Break it up and set up stations throughout the room and have students rotate through the stations to complete the assignment.
- 3 **Make it interesting!** Look at what you're teaching in the next few days. Where can you bring in real-world examples or relate the topic to something that you know your kids are interested in?

Additional Strategies to Improve Your Practice

Based on your level of mastery, you can find more strategies below:

	LEVEL 1 Developing	LEVEL 2 On Target	LEVEL 3 Exceeding Target
Incorporate Activating Strategies	When students first enter your classroom or when you start a new lesson on a new topic, don't just dive right in. Give students a chance to think about what they are going to be learning about by asking a probing question or having students do a warm-up question.	Before starting a new topic or the lesson for the day, help students build a bridge from what they have already learned or something that they may know about in the "real world" to what they are going to learn in the new lesson. This will help them see how their learning builds on each other and relates to the world around them.	When starting a new activity have students work together to think about what they already know. One way to do this is walk-around interviews. Have students walk around the room and interview at least three other classmates about a topic. When they have completed the interviews, have students come back together and put together a graphic organizer that represents their responses.
Cooperative Learning	Allow students to work with each other on certain assignments. This could be on a review activity, a lab, or even a project. Give each group member an assigned role and have them work together to complete the activity.	Start incorporating group work more regularly. Allow students to work with others based on common interests.	Arrange your lessons and units around allowing students to work together to finish a project or a task. Try project-based learning where students work together to solve a problem while learning about a topic.
Use Technology	Look at your lesson plans and find ways to incorporate technology on a small scale, whether this is doing research or having students participate in an online survey.	Find interactive online tutorials or activities that your students can complete that go along with what you are studying in your class. There are many online resources at every level.	Make technology a staple in your classroom. Move from using it to supplement your lessons to utilising it as a tool for differentiation by creating digital lessons that students can complete while you circulate to keep students engaged and ask questions. Differentiating lessons keep students engaged by making their education personal.

Additional Strategies to Improve Your Practice

Based on your level of mastery, you can find more strategies below:

	LEVEL 1 Developing	LEVEL 2 On Target	LEVEL 3 Exceeding Target
Give Choices	If you have more than one activity for a particular topic, give students the choice on which one they complete.	Work towards having at least one “choice” activity in each unit or each week. One way to do this is through menu activities. With a menu activity, you give students a variety of activities to choose from on a menu and they get to pick. You can even categorise activities and “entrees,” “main course,” or “desserts” and have them pick a combination of each.	Along with offering choice activities each unit or week, make assessments largely choice-based. Give students a variety of choices of how they would like to show you how they have learned a specific objective or skill.
Make Lessons Interactive	Give students the chance to get up and move during lessons. One way to incorporate this is by taking a resource that you already have created and split it up into “stations” allowing students move from station to station to complete the activity.	Come up with ways that students could act out a part of your lesson. Ask for volunteers to help you act out these objectives. Giving the students a chance to participate will help them remember the topic and keep them engaged.	Incorporate games within your lessons. Games get students involved in their learning and get them interested in what’s going on in the classroom. You can take a simple game, such as catch phrase, charades, or apples to apples and make a version that works with what you’re teaching.

Professional Actions You Can Take

In order to set goals, track action steps, and promote positive change, return to the Pivot platform and complete the following (highly recommended):

- Identify a focus area based on the outcomes from your survey data. A Focus area may be incorporating movement into your lesson or Using games.
- Set a measurable goal related to this focus area. For example “I’m going to use one movement strategy, such as a brain break, in each lesson this term” or “I am going to take on learning goal for this unit and turn it into a game/ask the students to turn it into a game”
- Outline specific action steps that you will take to achieve this goal.
- Select an achievable timeframe to complete the action steps related to this goal.
- Highlight success indicators to be evaluated within the timeframe allotted.
- Return to the platform regularly to review your goals and track your progress.
- Share your goals with a colleague.
- Request colleague observations that will allow for outside feedback specifically related to the goals that you have set for yourself.

Strategies for Collaborating with Colleagues

Ask a colleague to observe your class and how the students respond to opportunities for comment. This may be as simple as giving your colleague a copy of your class roll on which they can ‘tally’ the number of times each student is either:

- 1 Actively involved in answering questions (puts hand up voluntarily)
- 2 Passively involved in answering questions (answers a question when asked by the teacher)
- 3 Asks questions of the teacher
- 4 Actively working on classwork or participating in an activity
- 5 Appears interested in the lesson and ready to learn

They may be able to identify students who are engaged in the learning activities and safely contribute to discussion. They also might note any patterns of disengagement (e.g. at certain times of the day, during certain subjects), which can help identify if the cause of disengagement is a learning difficulty or an environmental issue. You may wish to ask individual students after class to ascertain why they are reluctant to contribute and seek to work with them to remedy this.

Teaching Standard Alignment

Australian Professional Standard

Professional Knowledge Domain

Standard 1: Knows students and how they learn

Focus areas:

- 1.2 Understand how students learn
- 1.3 Students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds
- 1.5 Differentiate teaching to meet the specific needs of students across the full range of abilities
- 3.1 Establish challenging learning goals

Research

Student engagement and school connectedness underpin effective student learning. (DEECD, 2013) Engagement is complex internal process, and it has been challenging for researchers to pin down exactly what interventions increase student engagement, and how student engagement impacts learning outcomes. Student engagement has thus been notoriously difficult to 'measure' in the classroom, but can be defined as three interrelated components: behavioural, emotional and cognitive. (Fredericks et al, 2004)

When students are cognitively engaged, they are “not just students doing things but it is something happening inside their heads”. It is the perfect storm for students, where they concentrate, focus on achieving goals, are flexible in their work and cope with failure. Behavioural engagement refers to the students' participation in classroom and learning activities, as well as punctuality, attendance and adherence to classroom rules. Behavioural engagement often leads to cognitive engagement. It can be the easiest type of engagement to observe and measure in the classroom, as it is quickly detected as being 'on/off task'. Emotional engagement is the relationship between students and their teachers, classmates and school. (Frederick and McColskey, 2012).

The three aspects of engagement are intricately linked. When students like the way they learn, they are usually engaged in all three ways. Government focus on student engagement has been heavily weighted towards behavioural engagement, and attendance often deemed synonymous with engagement. By this measure, almost all Australian primary school students would be deemed 'engaged'. In the classroom, teachers can infer concentration and enthusiasm for a task by observing students' facial expressions and posture, reaction time and verbal utterances. (AITSL, 2014) There may also be other key markers to observe, such as persistence on task, attention to detail, and level of satisfaction with the coursework and enduring understandings. A recent study estimates as many as 40% of Australian students are unproductive (consistently disengaged) in a given year (Goss, Sonnemann & Griffiths, 2017). While a 2017 Gallup poll found that only 49% of all students in the US are engaged in their classrooms (Calderon & Yu, 2017).

What Strategies Have Been Shown to Work in the Classroom

AITSL (2014) states that there is a striking lack of evidence on the impact of various learning and teaching strategies on engagement, but some studies have shown that engagement is increased through flexible, individualised teaching in a supportive learning environment. Project-based learning is one method that allows students to 'own' their task, as they can pursue a topic of interest or personal passion. Flexibility to explore and research something that is relevant to the student may develop cognitive engagement. Peer tutoring can improve student engagement as well as learning outcomes, particularly if coupled with appropriate teacher guidance such as questioning frames (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017).

Strong classroom management and student-teacher relationships have a significant impact on engagement and achievement. (Hattie, 2009) Strong student-teacher relationships ('emotional engagement') create a classroom where students feel safe, respected and engaged. Ongoing, close monitoring of student progress combined with targeted feedback can go some distance to ensuring students are engaged in the classroom.

Work-related difficulties and student misunderstandings can also have an impact on student engagement (Montuoro and Lewis, 2015). Students may become disengaged if they cannot complete the task given to them. The length, pacing, explanations, instructions and difficulty of certain tasks might need to be adjusted for some students (IES, 2008)

Working with colleagues is essential to learn how to engage students and identify disengaged students. Professional collaboration, observation of practice, feedback and appraisal can be important ways for teachers to learn from one another about how to engage students. (AITSL, 2014)

See also Resource Pack 4, 8 and 19 for related information

Additional Resources

- [Cooperative Learning Strategies](#)
- [Student Engagement Resources](#)
- [Making Lessons Engaging and Fun](#)
- [5 Strategies to Keep Class Interesting](#)
- [How to Measure and Increase Student Engagement During Reading Instruction](#)
- [20 Strategies for Increasing Student Engagement](#)
- [15 Actionable Strategies for Increasing Student Motivation and Engagement](#)
- [Increasing Student Engagement with Technology](#)
- [Engaging Students in Learning](#)

Referenced articles, books and other great reads

- [AITSL \(2014\) Engagement in Australian Schools background paper](#)
- [Department of Education and Training \(NSW\) \(2006\) School is for me: Pathways to student engagement, accessed 16 April 2013](#)
- [Education Endowment Foundation. \(2017\), Evidence for Learning Toolkit and Australasian Research Summaries for Peer Tutoring, accessed 2 December 2017.](#)
- [Fredericks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C. and Paris, A. H. \(2004\) 'School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence', Review of Educational Research, 74\(1\), p 59-109](#)
- [Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., & Griffiths, K. \(2017\). Engaging students: creating classrooms that improve learning. Melbourne: Grattan Institute.](#)
- [Jensen, B. The Grattan Institute. \(2014\) Turning around schools: It can be done, accessed 20 July 2015.](#)
- [Institute of Education Sciences. \(2008\) Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom, US Department of Education.](#)
- [The Innovation Unit and Learning Futures. \(2012\) The Engaging School: A handbook for school leaders. Published by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Accessed 12 July 2015.](#)
- [Montuoro, P. and Lewis, R. \(2015\) "Student perceptions of misbehaviour and classroom management". Handbook of classroom management, Second Edition. Eds. E. Emmer and E. J. Sabornie. Routledge.](#)
- [Calderon, V and Yu, D. \(2017\) 8 Things You Need to Know About Students](#)