

ALWAYS, SOMETIMES, OR NEVER TRUE: DISCUSSION GUIDE

As the facilitator, your role is to guide the discussion around the categorization of these statements. Since there may be varied responses for each of these statements, this guide provides some research and conversation stems for each statement in the lesson.

“Always, Sometimes, or Never True” Statements

1. **Student engagement describes a student's willingness to attend and participate in class, submit required work, and follow directions.**

This statement may appear in the “always” or “sometimes” categories. It describes what a student may look like if they are behaviorally engaged. However, it is important to note that non-disruptive behavior does not necessarily mean students are cognitively or emotionally engaged in learning. Obedience or compliance can oftentimes be mistaken for engagement. This statement is useful to revisit after learners have read about different types of engagement. As a facilitator, guide learners to think about different indicators of engagement and what additional evidence is needed to know if students are truly engaged in learning and school, such as a love of learning, positive academic outcomes, and active participation in activities and events.

2. **A supportive environment with the inclusion of different learning approaches will increase student engagement.**

This statement may be placed in the “always” or “sometimes” categories. Learners may reference learning styles or student-centered learning as evidence. While research shows students may be more cognitively engaged during certain learning activities, offering different learning approaches alone does not guarantee improved student engagement. The effectiveness of these approaches depends on multiple factors. As a facilitator, when revisiting this statement, draw connections to classroom culture, teacher-student relationships, and how learning approaches are implemented to determine whether this statement is always, sometimes, or never true.

3. **Students who feel like they can trust their teacher learn more from them.**

See research and conversation stems for this statement after #4.

4. **Students don't learn from people they don't like.**

Statements #3 and #4 both relate to teacher-student relationships. Research shows that these relationships are crucial for student engagement, with trust playing a key role. Learners may categorize these statements as “always” or “sometimes” true, noting differences between “trust” and “like.” Some may categorize #4 as “never” true based on the use of “like.” As a facilitator, lead discussions on the distinctions and similarities between

“trust” and “like” and how they influence student engagement. When revisiting these statements, facilitate a discussion on how learners' understanding of these terms may have evolved and how these two statements connect to emotional and affective engagement.

5. Engaged students work harder.

This statement may be categorized as “always” or “sometimes” true. A common misconception is that students who are visibly compliant are more engaged. Facilitate a discussion on what “working harder” entails and how it may or may not relate to learning or enjoyment of school. When revisiting this statement, discuss what type of engagement “working harder” represents (behavioral) and how this does not always indicate that students are experiencing positive outcomes or are emotionally engaged in school.

6. Involvement in extracurricular activities yields higher engagement in academics/school.

This statement may fall into the “always” or “sometimes” categories, reflecting the belief that participation in clubs or sports leads to positive school outcomes. While research supports that extracurricular activities can improve engagement for some students, it is not universally true, and success in extracurriculars does not necessarily equate to academic success. Revisit this statement to discuss how involvement in extracurricular activities (behavioral and emotional engagement) can combine with students' self-perception (affective) and classroom learning (cognitive) to improve overall outcomes. It may also be appropriate to discuss the various ways students can be engaged in school.

7. Engagement in schooling is the same as engagement in learning.

This statement could be categorized as “always,” “sometimes,” or “never” true, depending on how learners define “schooling” and “learning.” Facilitate a discussion on these definitions during the Engage session. Schooling can be defined as “the structured processes of education, including instruction,” while learning can be defined as “the acquisition of knowledge or skills.” When revisiting this statement, discuss how engagement levels can differ in the broader school context versus individual classroom settings.

8. Teacher-student relationships are the number one contributor to student engagement.

This statement is closely related to #3 and #4. While #3 and #4 focus on trust and likability, this statement focuses on relationships. Research has repeatedly shown teacher-student relationships are one of the most important factors in student engagement. Research has also shown that strong, positive relationships with teachers can mitigate more negative relationships with other teachers. When you return to this statement at the end of the lesson, it may be appropriate to discuss how teacher-student relationships are related to each of the four types of engagement. You could use the strategies at the end of the

research brief to start conversations on how teachers can work on relationship building and supporting students in all four areas of engagement.

9. Group discussions increase participation.

This statement relates to statement #2 and may be placed in the “always” or “sometimes” categories. During the Explore session, discuss what “participation” means and how it relates to “engagement.” Use guiding questions such as, “Are participation and engagement the same?” or “Can a student participate but still be disengaged from learning or school?” Discuss how the effectiveness of strategies like group discussions depends on factors such as implementation, culture, and relationships. Revisit these definitions at the end of the lesson to explore any shifts in understanding and reinforce the distinctions discussed.