

Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement

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Time Frame 60 minutes

Essential Question(s)

- What does positive classroom culture look like?
- How can we modify and scaffold strategies to support meaningful learning experiences?

Summary

In this professional development, participants explore elements of student engagement and examples of positive classroom culture. Next, they participate in a variety of engaging instructional strategies as learners and gain experience modifying and/or scaffolding these strategies to support their own students' needs. Finally, participants reflect on the relationship between classroom culture and student engagement.

Learning Goals

In this session participants will:

- Describe indicators of student engagement.
- Connect student engagement to positive classroom culture.
- Adapt instructional strategies to support student engagement.

Attachments

- 30-Second Expert—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.docx
- 30-Second Expert—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.pdf
- Always, Sometimes, Never True—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.docx
- Always, Sometimes, Never True—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.pdf
- Presentation Slides—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.pptx
- Strategy Harvest—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.docx
- Strategy Harvest—Instructional Strategies to Support Student Engagement.pdf

Materials

- Presentation Slides
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True handout (attached; one per participant)
- 30-Second Expert handout (attached; one per participant)
- Strategy Harvest handout (attached; one per participant)
- Poster paper (optional)
- Scratch paper (optional)
- Markers
- Sticky notes

Engage

Use the attached **Presentation Slides** to follow along with this PD. Begin the session by introducing participants to the essential questions and session objectives on **slides 3-4**.

Go to **slide 5**. This slide is animated to display prompts one at a time. Ask participants to discuss with a small group their answers to the question: *How would you describe your classroom culture?* Depending on the size of the groups, give participants 3-5 minutes to discuss.

Teacher's Note

Distribute markers and poster or scratch paper to participants before the activity begins.

Reveal the next bullet point on the slide and ask participants to complete the Painting a Picture strategy to illustrate what classroom culture looks like, based on their small group discussion. Ask for volunteers to share their drawings with the whole group.

Reveal the last bullet point on the slide. Ask participants to share out ways in which they build classroom culture.

Explore

Teacher's Note

Before the activity, select specific statements from the Always, Sometimes, or Never True you would like to highlight during the discussion.

Go to **slide 6** and distribute the **Always, Sometimes, or Never True** handout. Ask participants to complete the activity independently. After they have had time to respond to each prompt, have them discuss their answers with a small group.

Next, bring the whole group back together to discuss their responses. Rather than going through the whole list, only focus on the few prompts you selected in advance. Ask the participants to share out by a show of hands whether they chose always, sometimes, or never for each statement, then have a few volunteers from each response share out their reasoning. In the interest of time, it may be most efficient to focus discussion around the sometimes responses or the response represented by the fewest participants.

Teacher's Note

This group debrief can also be facilitated by using the Magnetic Statements strategy. In this case, identify a place in the room for each option and ask participants to physically move to those locations to indicate their answer. If you choose this strategy, it is helpful to add into the presentation and display a slide for each statement for which you are asking participants to respond.

Before moving on, highlight any meaningful alignment between the Always, Sometimes, or Never True reflections aligned with the ways participants described positive classroom culture and their approaches to building it.

Explain

Continue to **slide 7**. Tell participants that positive classroom culture supports the broader experience of students within their schools. Then play the video The Power of Positive School Culture. After the video, ask participants to volunteer any thoughts they have about what they just watched, especially as it relates to the work they do in their classrooms.

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=zb3JRvOoMGs

Go to **slide 8** and give participants a moment to read the prompt: *How does classroom culture support strategies and activities that go outside your students' comfort zone?* Ask for volunteers to share out their reflections. Tell participants that the way we scaffold and modify strategies to support the specific learners in our classrooms helps reinforce positive classroom culture.

Extend

Go to **slide 9** and tell participants that they will now explore some specific modifying and scaffolding strategies that can support and are supported by positive classroom culture. In each activity, they will participate as a learner, so they can later reflect on what they might need to account for when facilitating students in their own classes.

Commit and Toss

Provide participants with sticky notes and move to **slide 10**. On a single sticky note, ask participants to answer the question: *What is the most effective way to group students for collaborative work?* After they have all written their response, participants should crumple up their sticky and throw it across the room. (Adjust the specifics of where you would like them to throw the stickies based on the size and arrangement of your facilitation space.) Have each person pick up a sticky note and silently read the response. Ask for several volunteers to share out these sticky notes with the group.

Point out to participants that a common shortcoming of group work they may have experienced is students getting off-task. Teachers often assign group roles to address this, but frequently they default to procedural roles (e.g., timekeeper, scribe, etc.). A more effective solution is to assign roles which are intellectually stimulating and hold students accountable to the conversation, not just a task. Go to **slide 11** to display the non-comprehensive list of meaningful roles for students in groups. Either give participants a few minutes to review the slide themselves or briefly summarize each for them.

Fold the Line

Go to **slide 12**. On the slide is an "Anticipation Guide" with a series of opinion statements for participants to agree or disagree with. Select one of the statements and ask participants to arrange themselves in a line from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree based on their opinion. Then have participants fold the line in half so that the person at the "strongly disagree" end of the line is now paired up with the person from the opposite "strongly agree" end, and so forth down the line. With their partner, ask participants to discuss the reasoning behind their answers. If time permits, ask the participants to move down the line 2-3 people, so that each is now paired up with someone new, and discuss their responses again.

Ask participants to return to their seats and go to **slide 13**. Before showing the video, explain that this is a high school ELA class, and the students have already lined up in the same order the participants did (strongly disagree to strongly agree). Then, play the clip from 13:35-15:35, which shows students folding the line and beginning their discussion. You can continue playing beyond 15:35 if you want to show more of the discussion itself, but this is not necessary.

30-Second Expert (optional, time permitting)

Go to **slide 14** and distribute the **30-Second Expert** handout. Group participants into pairs. In each pair, one participant will read a brief illustrated article and the other will watch a 2:00 minute video. Give the participants about 5 minutes to review their material and fill in the left side of their handout with what they think are all of the steps in the process of screen printing. Next, participants will take turns being the expert for 30 seconds, during which time they will explain what they read/watched. While they share, their partner should add into the right side anything they didn't already write down. After the first partner finishes, they will swap roles.

After completing the strategy activities, go to **slide 15**. Present participants with the two prompts and give them a few minutes to reflect. Then ask for several volunteers to share out their thoughts and questions. Highlight responses which connect back to the previous discussions of classroom culture.

Evaluate

Distribute the **Strategy Harvest** handout and display **slide 16**. To wrap up the professional development, tell participants they will now have some time to reflect on the strategies they experienced in the session. Up to this point the conversation has been primarily about how the strategies fit into a positive classroom culture, but this is their opportunity to consider how to facilitate them effectively. Ask participants to consider their experience engaging in the strategies and determine what modifications or scaffolds they might need to build into the activities to be effective in their classrooms.

Teacher's Note: Example Scaffold

One example of a scaffold for Fold the Line would be to ask students to line up number by number rather than having them sort themselves as an entire group (i.e., all the strongly disagrees line up, then the disagrees, etc.)

Give participants time individually or in small groups to fill out the Strategy Harvest. Consider asking for a few volunteers to share out their ideas before wrapping up the session.

Ask participants to complete a session evaluation if applicable.

Research Rationale

Behavioral engagement is defined and measured as a student's effort in learning and participation in school activities (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Lam et al., 2014). Students who maintain their schoolwork and partake consistently in extra-curricular activities are deemed as having high behavioral engagement (Lam et al., 2014). These students are continuously motivated to do well because of positive feedback from their teachers and peers through these activities (Miller et. al, 1996). Classrooms best-suited to achievement are organized and well-structured (Poysa, et al., 2019) but at the same time allow space for student autonomy (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). Teachers can strike a balance between structure and autonomy by communicating in noncontrolling and informational ways, getting to know students and acknowledging their different perspectives. Offering clear and detailed expectations, instructions, and feedback for improvement are also important (Jang, et al., 2010; Martin & Collie, 2019).

The 21st-century student needs opportunities to critically think, collaborate, problem-solve, and relate knowledge to experiences outside the classroom (Lombardi, 2007). It is unreasonable to expect students to develop necessary 21st-century skills in a traditional classroom because, typically, lessons designed in these environments do not create opportunities for students to practice high levels of critical thinking, collaboration, or problem-solving, nor do they allow practice in connecting new information to experiences outside the classroom setting. By using instructional strategies that promote authentic and inquiry-based teaching, students can gain more autonomy and meet high expectations for learning.

Resources

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