

Accelerated Learning Through

Student Engagement

Why Focus on Student Engagement?

Disengaged students are not learning. To accelerate learning, every minute of instructional time must be leveraged.

We know that the longer a student is engaged with content and the more deeply they are invited to think about it, the more likely they will be to retain it for future use.

Boudreau, 2020

... taking the time to provide patient, in-depth instruction allows for issues related to unfinished learning to arise naturally when dealing with new content, allowing for just in time instruction and reengagement of students in the context of grade-level work.

Council of Great City Schools, 2020

According to Charlotte Danielson, when students are engaged, “they are intellectually active in learning important and challenging content. The critical distinction between a classroom in which students are compliant and busy and one in which they are engaged is that in the latter students are developing their understanding through what they do. That is, they are engaged in discussing, debating, answering “what if?” questions, discovering patterns, and the like” (Danielson, 2011).

Now more than ever, schools must commit to accelerate students by providing them with “the most personalized and engaging instruction possible” focused on the essential skills for their grade level (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). This is “a time when social emotional wellbeing, agency, and engagement are more important than ever” (Council of Great City Schools, 2020). An instructional model built on a “mile-wide, inch-deep” curriculum will only serve to frustrate students who are already behind, further disengaging them from school.

Research on schools where students are engaged and learning have classrooms where teachers think of students as apprentices; focus on depth over breadth; and give up some control by allowing student some choice in what they learn and how they learn it (Tatter, 2019).

What is Accelerated Learning?

Too often students with perceived academic gaps are put into remediation classes. Their access to grade-level content is delayed until all their academic gaps are filled. Research has shown again and again that this does not work (Rollins, 2014). Instead, learning should be accelerated. Accelerated learning keeps students moving forward on their intended grade-level trajectories by strategically preparing them for success in current grade-level content.

Acceleration prepares students for new learning combined with “just-in-time” teaching of missing key skills and concepts in the purposeful context of current lessons.

Opportunities to accelerate learning rely on robust Tier 1 instruction that includes grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers who hold high expectations for students. This robust instruction should be enhanced with supports targeted to the skills and services students need to stay on grade level.

Getting Started with Student Engagement

Consider the Whole Child

When we think of a child having a caring and engaging learning environment, we need to look at the “whole child,” beyond the child as a student in our schools (Michigan Department of Education, 2019). One of the tenants in the whole child framework is “engaged,” meaning each child is actively engaged in learning. Indicators for student engagement include active learning strategies such as cooperative learning, project-based learning, and inquiry-based learning that deepen the understanding of what students are learning and why they are learning it (ASCD, 2021).

Leverage Educator Evaluation Tools

All educator evaluation tools used in Michigan have student engagement components. These should be used by districts to decide where and how to increase student engagement opportunities within their schools.

The Michigan Integrated Continuous Improvement Process (MICIP)

MICIP should be used by districts in planning for and implementing engaging learning opportunities for all students. Some questions to consider might include:

- Are there engagement indicators from the whole child framework that we might want to incorporate into our instructional model?
- Are we using the student engagement components in our educator evaluation tool to identify areas for improvement around student engagement?



Resources for Student Engagement

[10 Drivers of Student Engagement You Can Use Right Now](#)

This website describes 10 drivers of student engagement with links to resources to learn more about each of the drivers.

<https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/resource/10-drivers-of-engagement-you-can-use-right-now/>

[Rethinking Intervention - Instruction Partners](#)

The Rethinking Intervention project identified “6 big takeaways” following a discussion with 40 education leaders, researchers, and practitioners around rethinking intervention and accelerated learning. One of the takeaways is “Students engage and learn best from work that is challenging, relevant to their lives, and helps them understand and impact the world.”

<https://instructionpartners.org/2021/02/19/student-engagement-and-learning>

PBL Works

This website provides resources and training for getting started with project-based learning.

<https://www.pblworks.org/why-project-based-learning>

Sprocket | Project-based Learning

Sprocket is a free online portal for teachers to access project-based learning courses. It is also an online community where teachers can share ways to implement and adapt the courses. It houses a research-based curriculum that supports project-based learning implementation.

<https://sprocket.lucasedresearch.org>

The 12 Cs of Student Engagement

This blog post describes twelve techniques for engaging students.

<https://rewardingeducation.wordpress.com/2017/01/13/the-twelve-cs-of-student-engagement-edutopia-article-by-robert-ward-and-featured-by-the-u-s-department-of-education>

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