**<http://www.angelamaiers.com/2008/04/engagement-alph.html>**

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**Student Engagement Alphabet**

So, here it goes: **26 Keys to Student Engagement.**

**Authenticity:** We hear it all the time, "Why do we need to know this stuff? When will I ever use this?"There is no doubt that successful learning is directly related to its relevance, purpose and authenticity. We are more [motivated to learn](http://headrush.typepad.com/creating_passionate_users/2005/03/motivated_to_le.html) if we see a clear connection to the purpose and use. If our desire is for students to engage, the work they do must be significant, valuable, and real.

**Brain**: The brain is intimately involved in and connected with everything educators and students do at school. Any disconnect is a recipe for frustration and potential disaster. Every school day changes the brain in some way. We can influence and ignite that change when we [understand the way the brain learns](http://advancedorgcomm.blogspot.com/2007/09/metaphor-on-move-organization-as-brain.html), and act accordingly.

**Collaborative:** Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult materials prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter in life. Students are valuable resources for one another. If they have opportunities to engage and explore topics, assignments, and [content in a collaborative way](http://www.stevehargadon.com/2008/03/web-20-is-future-of-education.html), understanding and engagement are natural outcomes.

**Disengagement**: Students are sometimes labeled as lazy, unmotivated, off-task, and disrespectful. These behaviors can and often are a direct result of disengagement. When learning involves wondering, dreaming, playing, interacting, communicating, exploring, discovering, questioning, investigating, creating – the disengaged become engaged.

**Environment:** Just as architects create the environments in which we live and work, we teachers create the place and space that become home to learning. The decisions we make — from the arrangement of furniture to the feeling students experience — greatly influence conditions of learning.

**Feedback**: Feedback is a powerful force. It can be a stimulating motivator or a suffocating inhibitor. Feedback that is specific, non threatening, and frequent changes performance, attitude, and behaviors. So, the next time we say, "good job", we must follow that with, "…and here’s why!"

**Generative**: Learning is about the creation of meaning, value and action on the part of the learner. Learning is not something you ‘absorb’, it is something you create for yourself – mentally or physically. Generative learning is the active process of process of linking, sharing, re-creating, and co-creating.  Engagement comes about when we encourage learners to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways by providing experiences and learning environments that promote active, collaborative learning.

**Habitudes:** You may have observed that the most successful individuals in life are not necessarily the ones who got the best grades in school. Successful people learn to be successful because they develop specific attitudes and behaviors to ensure their success in all aspects of life.  We can teach students the specific habits of preparedness, mindfulness, and persistence to use and apply when engaging in any task, challenging or otherwise.

**Joy**: Children are learning machines and have untold hours of play and joy… until… they are "educated"  – educated to behave otherwise. If we want a better class of thinkers and innovators — people with explosive curiosity and creativity, we need to bring FUN back into our classrooms. We need giggles and laughter, enthusiasm and excitement. School can become a place remembered for the love of learning, if for no other reason than it feels joyous!

**Kaizen:** Kaizen is the Japanese term for "continuous improvement", a concept we should take to heart if we want students to achieve their personal and professional best. Small changes, if done every day,can make a big impact over time.By creating an environment of Kaizen, reflection becomes part of the daily work and conversations. Continuous improvement an only be achieved, with continuous reflection.  And [with continuous reflection, students will become more and more engaged](http://texasedequity.blogspot.com/2006/10/harmonious-learning-for-whole-child.html) in their growth and learning.

**Listening:**Both learning to listen and listening to learn are critical to literacy in the 21st century. Listening is a powerful and essential means of developing and mastering both old and new literacies. Listening is not only part of the engagement process, it’s the first step. In any culture or community, listening first will earn the right to be listened to.

**Motivation** [Motivation is essential to learning](http://www.articulate.com/rapid-elearning/motivate-your-learners-with-these-5-simple-tips/) at all ages. Students have the primary responsibility to own their own learning, yet we have a shared responsibility in the task. The environments we foster, the cultures we contribute to, even the aura of a classroom, all make a difference.

**Networks**:  One of my mantras is Together we are Smarter. Students are connected to friends and family outside the classroom; creating a network inside the school makes sense too: schoolmates can become brain mates. With tools like blogs, wikis, and [YouthTwitter](http://www.youthtwitter.com), networking in school can be as easy and engaging for them as doing it at home! In fact, there’s reason not to do it.

**Outside**: To really engage students, we must bring and **allow some of the their outside into the classroom** (don’t groan!). Every student we teach has something in their lives that is engaging – something they do well AND love. If we can identity the engaging and creative ways they do their work outside of school and find ways to bring that into the classroom, students may start to see that school is not such a bad place after all.

**Participatory**: Students have come to depend on us for learning to happen – sometimes. IN reality, most know they can rely on each other these days. They are becoming a community of learners. If we’re smart about it, [community begins within ourselves](http://www.successful-blog.com/1/connecting-by-being-connected/). Encouraging participation fosters engaged student body. Engaged learning is active; it is hands-on, minds on, eyes on, and demands participation at all levels.

**Questions:** Questions that stretch student minds, invite curiosity, provoke thinking, and instill a sense of wonder, keep students engaged. **Successful student engagement requires a classroom culture that invites mutual inquiry**, gives permission to investigate open-ended and suggestive questions

**Relationships**: To grow ‘em you must know ‘em. Knowing our students seems obvious, yet many students claim that we do not "get" them. **Students want and need a relationship with us**. They work harder and smarter when they know that their learning matters to us. When students feel valued, honored, and respected, there is an interest and energy in the process of learning that reaches far beyond the content we teach.

**Self Efficacy:** Self efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one’s capabilities
to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments,and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious students also recover quickly from setbacks, and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals.

**Teacher** (as student). Students see the teaching part of our persona every day. We stand before them telling and showing them how wise and passionate we are about the topics we teach. But, do we stand before them as learners? What would that do to engagement, if we shared with students how we came to know, how we faced and conquered learning challenges, and most importantly how we can help them do the same. Teachers who stand before their class as learners first, are more successful teachers because of it.

**Understanding** A wise saying we’re familiar with goes, "seek first to understand and demonstrate that understanding before seeking to be understood." How do we demonstrate to our students that we understand and value them; in our words, with our actions, and by our expectations?

**Variety:**Variety adds spice to life and to our teaching. We must use a variety of teaching methods. No matter how gifted a teachers you are, using the same method to teach each class can become monotonous- for you and the students.

**WWW:** Theinformation super highway. It is not only the pathway learners in the 21st century seek out and locate information. It is a place where we engage in the creation, and co-creation of content and understanding.

**Xtra:** I have heard educators say that there is no time for engagement, there is too much content to cover. Giving kids time to collaborate, create, talk, and reflect is just Xtra work.  Can we turn "Xtra" into "Xpectation", so engagement is no longer an option, it becomes an expectation.

**You**. This alphabet list of student engagement from A to Z will only become alive if you take these thoughts and ideas and put them into practice — did you notice the only thing missing from the Corporate Alphabet picture at the start of this article was “U”? **Engaged learning requires leadership**. Our leadership reflects the research and philosophies we believe in and promote: a team of educators engaging and supporting one another. As a leader, U can coach, model, mentor and support our colleagues in the process of creating and sustaining engaging classrooms.

**Zeal:** Energy and enthusiasm are contagious. One of the best compliments I ever received from a student, "I did not really like the topic you were presenting on, but you were so excited, I couldn’t help but pay attention!" When we show kids our zeal and passion for what we believe in, we welcome them to share their own. **Love what you do, and present it with zeal everyday!** Even if it is the 100th time you have presented it, remember it is the first for these students!