

Summary of strategies to improve engagement, effective teaching practices and achievement

Based on the modelling work in this Learning Curve, the following summarises the strategies that the research evidence identifies as most effective for improving engagement and achievement in Years 7-9.



Strategies to encourage positive behaviour

- Create a positive learning environment with well-managed classrooms
- Adopt teaching strategies that incorporate positive discipline techniques to enable students to develop their own strategies for self-discipline
- Actively engage students and promote positive behaviour rather than focussing only on reactive discipline strategies such as punishment
- Develop structure and routines for the classroom and explicitly teach these through discussion and practice
- Foster positive relationships between teachers and students and among peers
- Establish and maintain clear expectations and rules for student behaviour in the classroom and at school
- Reinforce appropriate behaviour and respond consistently to misbehaviour
- Adopt school-wide positive behaviour support programs that communicate and teach rules (and reward students for following them)
- Encourage social and emotional learning that promotes self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making
- Use these strategies in conjunction with policies that recognise the need to manage inappropriate student behaviour when it impacts significantly on learning.



Strategies to improve attendance

- Set expectations for attendance and establish improvement goals
- Analyse attendance rates to monitor trends and patterns in the data
- Listen to students' perspectives: students' views on their reasons for non-attendance may give insight into ways to improve school attendance
- Promote social and emotional engagement, ensuring students feel connected to school and have a positive sense of belonging and connection with others
- Promote positive relationships with teachers with a well-structured learning environment: students should believe that their teachers care about them and will have high, clear and fair expectations of them
- Increase collaboration with families, for instance, through involving parents in school decision making; increasing parental participation in classroom activities; and establishing a contact person at school for family members to communicate and work with.



Strategies to increase interest and motivation

- Give students feedback on their work and their level of effort, and help them develop their own strategies for learning
- Encourage students to believe they can perform a task; this will increase their levels of effort and persistence
- Provide students with opportunities to set goals for performance improvements that are achievable and worthwhile
- Adopt approaches that build students' sense of autonomy, for example, listening to students; asking questions and responding to questions; acknowledging students' perspectives; and giving them opportunities to work through problems on their own, when they have a sufficient knowledge base.



Strategies to promote high expectations

- Be clear about what is expected of students and follow-up on expectations
- Make it clear to all students that they must work hard to succeed
- Encourage students to do better, for instance, through personal best goal setting (that is, a student's attempt to improve on or match his/her previous best standard of performance)
- Provide feedback that explicitly identifies the next learning steps and the skills necessary to improve
- Expect homework to be done on time.



Effective teaching practices

- Organise lessons well
- Tell students what they will be learning and be clear about the purpose of tasks
- Pay particular attention to how important ideas are taught and help students understand their significance
- Require students to demonstrate mastery, especially of difficult ideas
- Allow students to ask questions, ensuring responses are clear and have been understood
- Ensure students are given time to engage with the learning process and receive clear and timely feedback
- Encourage positive relationships between teachers and students for engagement and learning, with a balance between academic and social engagement.