

How do Students Need to *FEEL* in your classroom to *Want* to ENGAGE in your course and content?

Welcome everyone to another podcast episode of The EdTechEnergy Podcast. I'm our host, Dr. Melanie Wiscount, and I'm so excited to be with you today to talk with you about my #1 interest in the classroom: How to increase student engagement in our instruction, student learning activities, and assessments.

Today in this episode, you'll learn 15 different strategies to get your students to FEEL what they need to feel before they decide to ENGAGE.

Let's begin!

Engaging students in our instruction, their learning, as well as their assessments is a high priority for every teacher at every grade level with every student. And we find that our methodologies to engage students that work with one group of students, may be different from one class to the next.

Most times we think about the content of our instruction, student learning, and assessment, and if our students will deem it interesting enough to want to engage and do well.

However, I have found when teaching in my classroom as well as co-teaching and coaching in teachers' classrooms that if ***we appeal to the human nature in each student***, we have a higher probability to for most if not all students to WANT to engage in our classroom, course, and our content.

If I would narrow it down to three TOP feelings students need to feel to want to engage in our classroom, I would say they need to feel:

- 1. Capable,**
- 2. Confident, and**
- 3. Curious**

When students feel capable, especially at the middle and high school levels, they are more inclined to want to engage in our instruction, their learning, as well as their assessments. This feeling of capability is connected to the feeling of "pride" all humans want to feel in different environments and communities.

When are students feel capable to understand, make connections, do the work, and do it well, our students are ready and willing, since they feel “able” and “competent” in those different content scenarios.

The feeling of confidence is also aligned to our students’ feelings of pride. If they enter our instruction, their learning, and assessments feeling confident, they can do what we present to them, and do it well. The calming confidence they feel creates a comfort zone for students to start and engage in what we present to them in our classroom and content.

Confidence also feeds into a students’ sense of self-esteem. When students feel confident in their own worth and abilities, the dignity they feel about themselves is powerful when they are deciding to or not to engage in our classroom.

At a time when many students are feeling inadequate, not accepted, or not seen and heard on social media, those feelings of inadequacy, non-acceptance, and not mattering to others, may trickle into our classrooms when they are with their peers.

Doing what we can do as their teachers to show our students the support they need, along with that each student is seen, heard, and matters in our classroom is pertinent to their confidence levels in our classroom. Plus, when students feel a sense of belonging to our classroom community, it all helps get students in the right mindset and motion of feeling confident in our classroom, course, and content.

When are students are feeling curious about the subject matter, a student learning activity or assessment, that curiosity of wonder creates a natural willingness and want to engage. As teachers, we always intend to spark the curiosity in our students since for many of them, curiosity is where it may begin in making the decision to engage or not to engage.

The following strategies offer five ways you may encourage students and set them up to feel capable, confident, and curious in your classroom, course, and content.

Get students to feel capable by:

1. **Giving them opportunities to connect the new content with their prior knowledge.** When they feel that the content is not 100% new, this knowingness gives students the sense to feel they are capable to understand and do the work at hand.
2. **Use a strengths-based approach to instruction, student learning, and assessments.** Have middle school or high school students take [The VIA Character Strength Survey](#) for them and you to get to know their strengths.

- Then, plan ways students can interact with the content using their strengths inside the learning and assessment. Also mingling their interests in instruction, student learning, and assessment gives students a want to learn and do more.
3. **Support students in having high aspirations and expectations for themselves and believe in their potential for learning and progress inside your content.** You may provide this reinforcement in the supportive and pick-me-up feedback you give students during and after formative and summative assessments.
 4. **Create student-centered learning experiences and assessments where students feel empowered.** You can do this by creating summative assessments and projects where students are working inside a group and that each student has a role inside the teamwork of the group. Put students in charge of their roles inside the group and have them self-assess their performance and contribution.
 5. **Include student reflections after each summative assessment and project for students to thoughtfully review their learning experience inside the assessment or project process.** Asking students to share their triumphs and obstacles, and their solutions to combat and work around the obstacles is a fabulous way to make students feel they that they have the wherewithal to make it through and communicate your belief in what they can achieve, to get through to the other side of problems. This reflective practice is a meaningful way to create and celebrate a safe trial-and-error learning environment and culture in your classroom, course, and content.

Get students to feel confident by:

1. **Modeling confidence.** How you present yourself as the teacher plays an influential part in how students present themselves. Always strive to do your best; believe in you; walk tall and proud; and practice self-care. When you show students that you value yourself, they begin to see how they can value themselves as well.
2. **Be prepared when you teach.** This preparation can take many different forms: believe in what you teach, share with students why learning this content is important for their future and success, be organized in your classroom, doublecheck that links and media works before presenting to students, and have all the materials and printing done before class begins.
3. **Cultivate a trial-and-error culture and way to be inside your content.** When you admit to your mistakes, and find ways to get the solution, students see your example and manage themselves in a comparable way when they make mistakes. This type of ease that is encouraged and embraced in your classroom

- may be the #1 way to build students' confidence, since you've created a foundational comfort zone in which to make those mistakes.
4. **Praise, encourage, and affirm your students' successes.** Again, providing rich, supportive, and meaningful feedback to each student during instruction, student learning, and assessment is super powerful in increasing students' feelings of confidence in your classroom, course, and content.
 5. **Showcase your students' work.** When you highlight and display your students' work for others to see, whether it is in your classroom, on your class website or LMS course, in the parent's newsletter, or emails, or on your class social media, students feel a sense of pride, which transforms into confidence, when they are in your classroom doing your work. This staging practice is especially important when sharing your students' work online in your class social media and including the appropriate hashtags to draw in the right global audience, which then results in the audience posting positive comments on your students' work.

Get students to feel curious by:

1. **Using interesting hooks at the beginning of instruction, student learning activities, and assessments.** When you draw in a student's interest with a fun or appealing hook, you have their decision to engage right from the start.
2. **Including fun media to instruction, student learning, and assessment.** Whether you use video, gifs, animation, narration, memes, comic strips, jokes, or images to introduce and supplement the content, you get students' attention, which is again, an important first step to choosing to engage in your content.
3. **Integrate inquiry into bellringers, instruction, student learning, and assessment.** Using simple "What if" questions that offer no wrong or right answers get students curious about how they will answer given their own knowledge, understanding, experiences, values, and perspectives.
4. **Add mystery in your instruction, student learning, and assessments.** Ways to add mystery are using Escape Rooms, playing games, puzzles, treasure hunts, scavenger hunts, or guessing with the use of clues to add suspense and get students curious about what is inside, next, or behind "closed doors."
5. **Create "Curious Projects" by listing questions that pique their curiosity, and then have students research to find the answers.** Asking students to "present" their answers using role-playing, quick campaign ads, jingles, slogans, or T-shirt designs increases the fun and the creativity, which are both impressive results of curiosity.

Find ways to incorporate exercises, environments, and experiences that get students to feel capable, confident, and curious in your classroom. When students feel one or all these feelings, they choose enthusiastically to engage in your instruction, student learning, and assessments.

Let me know how you get your students to feel 1) capable, 2) confident, and 3) curious so they WANT to engage in your classroom, course, and content? Share your comments on social media and tag @EdTechenergy so I can read about your strategies.

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Also, Teacher Appreciation Week is less than two weeks away. Stop by my website, edtechenergy.org or visit me on social media on IG, FB, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube to see a special savings I'm offering teachers May 2-8, 2022 on my third launch of my 6-week EdTech Teaching PD online course, Engagement is the Name of the Gain.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for tuning in today with me. I realize how busy you are and are humbled by your choice to spend this time learning with me.

Take care everyone. Talk with you soon in the next EdTechEnergy Podcast.