



# Aspects of an Engaged Classroom

## Competency

The educator demonstrates an understanding of the value of student engagement in classroom management, promoting an environment conducive to learning.

## Key Method

The educator promotes and maintains an engaged student environment by designing instruction relevant to all in the classroom, differentiating instruction, encouraging peer collaboration, and integrating technology to support active learning.

## Method Components

Engaged students contribute to a positive and dynamic classroom by taking ownership of their learning. Those students also promote peer-focused collaboration among classmates and work to create a sense of community where all benefit.

To establish an engaged student population, educators should make content relevant and differentiated, and offer opportunities for learners to collaborate and use technology. Active learning is an important aspect, most useful when coupled with meaningful technology use.

At its core, the classroom places relationships first, fostering a safe and inclusive space where every student feels valued, understood, and empowered to reach their full potential. A sense of belonging is crucial to cultivating engagement; this requires student buy-in and ensures that all

learners feel accepted, seen, and heard. Engaging students in the classroom starts with embracing their cultural differences.

## Aspects of an Engaged Classroom

Engaged students actively participate in their learning and support their classmates' progress. This engagement thrives in classrooms that celebrate diversity and inclusion. Key types of student engagement include behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social.

- **Behavioral Engagement:** Active class participation, following directions, asking questions, completing work, and participating in extracurricular activities (for older students)
- **Emotional Engagement:** Positive feelings about the content, the teacher, and classmates
- **Cognitive Engagement:** Critical thinking, risk-taking, and seeking deeper understanding
- **Social Engagement:** Peer-to-peer discussion, collaborative learning, and creation.

When these four areas are implemented in the classroom, there is greater engagement, a lower likelihood of behavior issues, and increased academic learning.

Active learning is a teaching approach that fosters an engaged classroom. Active learning is where students are deeply engaged with the content rather than passively receiving information. Active learning puts students at the center of their learning experience. Instead of passively receiving information, learners engage with content through hands-on activities, technology, critical thinking, differentiation, and relevant connections.

These are critical characteristics of active learning:

- **Student-Centered:** Students construct their own understanding through projects, inquiries, and problem-solving tasks.
- **Variety:** Learning methods go beyond lectures and include:
  - **Younger Children:** Play-based learning, experiments, manipulatives, and role-playing
  - **Older Students:** Technology-driven gamification, simulations, debates, and project-based work
- **Reflection:** Students analyze their thinking and identify steps for improvement. (Example: Students write a reflection after a science

experiment, analyzing what worked, what didn't, and how they would adjust their approach next time.)

- **Collaboration:** Students work together peer-to-peer, whole group, and peer-to-teacher. Collaboration also includes the societal digital communication aspects of the classroom.

## Relevant Instruction

Relevant instruction goes far beyond memorizing information or answering facts on a worksheet. To ensure content connects with our students' lives, we should ask ourselves the following questions about our teaching and lesson content/design.

- How **applicable** is the content to students and their lives?
- How does the content **apply to students'** cultural and ethnic backgrounds?
- How can the content and required activities **be applied** in other areas of their life or learning?

These questions make instruction more engaging because they help students see the value of what they are learning, and the skills they use are transferable across a variety of situations.

## Differentiation

Differentiation is essential in an engaged classroom because it tailors lessons to individual students' learning styles, abilities, and readiness levels. This differentiation can focus on four key areas: content, process, product, and the learning environment. A teacher's understanding of their students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles is essential for guiding these choices.

Technology, including generative AI and machine learning, can be a fantastic tool for teachers, increasing efficiency and personalization in delivering these differentiated experiences.

As with all effective teaching, differentiation works best in a classroom where routines are established, different learning styles are welcomed, and expectations are clearly communicated. While student choice is a crucial part of differentiation, it thrives alongside clear expectations and a culturally welcoming environment.

Below are things to keep in mind as you differentiate the learning.

- Delivering instruction through a variety of means, including video, audio, demonstration, and/or hands-on activities. This delivery should be accessible in real time and at the moment of readiness.
- Frequently checking for understanding.
- Allow students options to demonstrate skill mastery through varied methods (including collaborative technology).
- Maintaining flexibility.
- Allow choice whenever possible.

Differentiation requires a lot of teacher finesse that balances student agency with the need for teacher clarity. The classroom is more successful when leveraging technology, prioritizing a positive, student-driven atmosphere, and adopting a growth mindset.

## Engaging and Meaningful Technology

Technology plays an essential role in all aspects of our lives, and it is no different in our classrooms or our students' lives. It enhances student and active learning in many ways, from real-world work environments to a fantastic way to collaborate and create. It is important to remember that technology supports learning goals, and an excellent guideline to achieve an engaged classroom is to follow the ISTE Standards for Students. As you learn about the ISTE standards, you will directly correlate to active learning and engagement. These are the primary standards:

- Empowered Learner
- Digital Citizen
- Knowledge Constructor
- Innovative Designer
- Computational Thinker
- Creative Communicator
- Global Collaborator

An innovation in education that allows for differentiation and engagement is generative artificial intelligence, often called AI. AI-powered tools personalize learning for our students, provide assistive technology, give immediate feedback to learners, gamify learning, and allow students to learn at their own pace. AI is no replacement for a teacher, and students must be taught to use even more critical thinking and questioning skills when using it. However, AI can enhance learning and the creation of the learning environment when

combined with a human-centered approach to teaching focused on positive relationships in a culturally responsive classroom.

## Supporting Rationale and Research

Bowden, J. L. H., Tickle, L., & Naumann, K. (2021). The four pillars of tertiary student engagement and success: a holistic measurement approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 46(6), 1207–1224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1672647>

Garrett, Tracey. "Motivation and classroom management." *Elementary Classroom Management: A Student-Centered Approach to Leading and Learning*, 43.1, no. 0749–4025, 2008, pp. 34–47, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452274973.n3>

Li J, Xue E. Dynamic Interaction between Student Learning Behaviour and Learning Environment: Meta-Analysis of Student Engagement and Its Influencing Factors. *Behav Sci (Basel)*. 2023 Jan 9;13(1):59. doi: 10.3390/bs13010059. PMID: 36661631; PMCID: PMC9855184.

Marzano, Robert J. and Debra J. Pickering. (2010). The Highly Engaged Classroom. Marzano Research Laboratories. [https://www.marzanoresearch.com/resources/tips/hec\\_tips\\_archive](https://www.marzanoresearch.com/resources/tips/hec_tips_archive)

Roehl, Amy, Shweta Linga Reddy, and Gayla Jett Shannon. (2013) "The Flipped Classroom: An Opportunity to Engage Millennial Students through Active Learning Strategies." *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences* 105.2: 44-49. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/daa3/b94cdc7b52b3381a7c7e21022a7a8c005f84.pdf>

UNESCO (2023, November 30). *How generative AI is reshaping education in Asia-Pacific*. Retrieved April 8, 2024, from <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/how-generative-ai-reshaping-education-a-sia-pacific#:~:text=Generative%20AI%20can%20adapt%20educational,those%20of%20students%20with%20disabilities>.

# Resources

## Aspects of an Engaged Classroom Readings

[10 strategies that promote motivation](#)

[20 Student Engagement Strategies for a Captivating Classroom](#)

[Active Learning: Engaging People in the Learning Process](#)

[Engaging Students | Center for Teaching Innovation](#)

[Generative Artificial Intelligence](#)

[Research Supports Collaborative Learning](#)

[To Increase Student Engagement, Focus on Motivation](#)

## Differentiation

[Key Elements of Differentiated Instruction](#)

[What is Differentiated Instruction? Examples of How to Differentiate Instruction in the Classroom](#)

[Providing Differentiated Instruction by Giving Students Choices](#)

[What Does Successful Differentiated Instruction Look Like in the Classroom?](#)

## Diversity and Cultural Competence

[7 Ways to Support Diversity in the Classroom \[With Examples\]](#)

[How School Culture Must Change, Post-Pandemic](#)

[How UDL Creates an Equitable Environment for Students](#)

## Relevance

[The importance of adding rigor and relevance to instruction](#)

[How to Make Learning Relevant to Your Students \(and Why It's Crucial to Their Success\)](#)

## Student Collaboration

[5 Strategies to Deepen Student Collaboration](#)

[10 Strategies to Build on Student Collaboration in the Classroom](#)

## Technology Use

[Lifting Student Engagement Through Smart Tech Use](#)

[ISTE | 1. Students](#)

[Embracing Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom](#)

## Videos: Student Engagement

[10 Strategies & Tips to Increase Student Engagement](#)

[Students need to lead the classroom, not teachers | Katherine Cadwell | TEDxStowe](#)

[The power of student-driven learning: Shelley Wright at TEDxWestVancouverED](#)

# Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

*To earn the micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.*

## Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

**Suggested word count: 350 – 500**

*Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Describe essential background information about your classroom to help the reviewer understand the learning environment. Please include the following:

- Grade level
- Subject area
- Cultural influences:
  - What cultural groups and languages are represented, or what community aspects should be considered?
- Relevant Characteristics of the Learners
  - Cultural, social-emotional, academic, linguistic abilities, diversity, behavioral, and anything else relevant

And

Considering the many types of engagement, choose one from the list below and describe what you feel you are doing well and why, along with ways in which you hope to grow.

- Relevance
- Differentiation
- Peer-to-peer collaboration
- Meaningful technology integration
- Emotional engagement (relationships)

### **Passing**

The educator's response addresses all required components as outlined in the overview section. The educator's writing is organized and easy to understand.

## Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following three artifacts to prove your learning.

*\*Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

## Artifact 1: Student Engagement Observation

Plan an observation. Prepare for it by creating an observation tool and ways to reflect on what you observed in the classroom.

1. **Identify a target classroom.** Choose a classroom within your school that is actively engaged in learning.
2. **Ask the classroom leader if you can observe** the classroom with a focus on student engagement. *It may be helpful to share the artifact instructions with the classroom leader and inform them of what you are observing.*
3. **Take time to consider what constitutes active student engagement.** Consider how the students are engaged in behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social aspects, as well as differentiation, relevance, technology, and collaboration.
4. **Create an Observation Tool.** Design a graphic organizer or note-taking guide with the following sections:
  - a. **Classroom Layout:** This can be a place where you sketch or describe the physical arrangement of the room—note areas designated for different activities.
  - b. **Teacher Strategies:** List specific actions, questions, or techniques the teacher uses to promote engagement.
  - c. **Student Engagement - Looks Like/Sounds Like:** Document specific examples of student behaviors, conversations, or responses demonstrating the different engagement aspects you've defined.
5. **Conduct the Observation:** Observe the target classroom with a **non-evaluative mindset**. Your role is that of a learner.
6. **Analyze student engagement** by reflecting on the following questions. Add as many details as possible from the method components.
  1. What were students doing to engage in their learning?
  2. What did the students do to make the learning collaborative?
  3. How did the students connect the relevance of the activities to their own lives?
  4. What is something you learned from the observation?

## Artifact 2: Lesson Plan

Design a lesson that shows the elements of an engaged classroom. The lesson plan should demonstrate at least the following elements:

- Relevance
- Differentiation

- Peer-to-peer collaboration
- Meaningful technology integration
- Emotional engagement

*Lesson Plan Format:* While you have flexibility in designing your lesson plan, it should include standard elements such as objectives, hook, standards, resources, procedures, accommodations for students with special needs, and assessment strategies.

### **Artifact 3: Lesson Analysis**

**Suggested word count: 350–500**

Teach the lesson to your students, then analyze its impact by reflecting on the following questions. In your answers, give specific details from your teaching.

5. How relevant was the instruction to students? Give specific examples of how you knew or did not know it was appropriate.
6. How did you approach diversity among your students?
7. What opportunities were there for students to collaborate, and how did they respond to or engage in the collaboration?
8. What systems did you implement to build relationships before the peer collaboration and ensure its success?
9. How did technology integration support student engagement? How would you use technology differently the next time you teach this lesson? Why?
10. How were the students emotionally engaged in the learning?
11. What data did you use to create the differentiation strategies for students?

## Part 2. Rubric

	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Artifact 1:</b> Student Engagement Observation	<p>The Observation Tool includes a classroom layout description or sketch, teacher strategies, and a description of what student engagement looks like and sounds like.</p> <p>The analysis provides clear, detailed responses describing what students were doing to engage in their learning, how they made the learning collaborative, how they connected the relevance of the activities to their own lives, and what the educator learned from the observation.</p>	<p>The Observation Tool includes at least one required component, but is missing others.</p> <p>The analysis addresses what students were doing to engage in their learning, how they made the learning collaborative, how they connected the learning to their lives, and what the educator learned from the observation, but the responses lack clarity or sufficient detail.</p>	<p>The Observation Tool is missing most of the required components.</p> <p>The analysis is missing one or more required elements, including what students were doing to engage in their learning, how they made the learning collaborative, how they connected the learning to their lives, or what the educator learned from the observation.</p>
<b>Artifact 2:</b> Lesson Plan	<p>The lesson plan clearly incorporates relevance, differentiation, peer collaboration, meaningful technology integration, and emotional engagement.</p> <p>These elements are intentionally designed and evident within the lesson structure.</p>	<p>The lesson plan incorporates relevance, differentiation, peer collaboration, meaningful technology integration, and emotional engagement, but these elements are not clearly developed or consistently evident throughout.</p> <p>The lesson plan includes standard instructional components such as</p>	<p>The lesson plan does not incorporate all required elements of relevance, differentiation, peer collaboration, meaningful technology integration, and emotional engagement, or these elements are minimally developed.</p> <p>The lesson plan is missing standard instructional components such as</p>

	The lesson plan includes standard instructional components such as objectives, standards, and assessment strategies.	objectives, standards, and assessment strategies.	objectives, standards, or assessment strategies.
<b>Artifact 3:</b> Lesson Analysis	<p>All seven reflection questions are answered with specific details that provide clear evidence from the lesson designed in Artifact 2.</p> <p>The analysis demonstrates thoughtful reflection and explains how teaching the lesson provides the educator with an opportunity for professional growth.</p> <p>The writing is well organized. Grammatical and mechanical errors are minor and do not interfere with understanding.</p>	<p>Six of the seven reflection questions are answered with specific details that provide evidence from the lesson designed in Artifact 2.</p> <p>The analysis demonstrates reflection and explains how teaching the lesson supports professional growth.</p> <p>The writing is organized. Grammatical and mechanical errors are minor and do not interfere with understanding.</p>	<p>Fewer than six reflection questions are answered with specific details from the lesson designed in Artifact 2, or responses lack sufficient evidence.</p> <p>The analysis provides limited reflection on professional growth.</p> <p>The writing lacks organization, and grammatical and mechanical errors interfere with understanding.</p>

## Part 3 Reflection

### **350-500 words**

Use the word count as a guide to write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

*Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

1. How can what you learned help you prepare more engaging lessons for students?
2. How might you share your discoveries with professional colleagues?
3. What are your next steps in incorporating more classroom engagement?
4. How will you ensure that your lessons are inclusive and reflect the diversity of all students in the classroom?

### **Passing:**

Reflection demonstrates that this activity has positively impacted educator practice and student success. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific, actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.