How to Evaluate the Quality of Your Interaction with Students

Maximizing Outcomes for Students

Question: Does the Quality of your Staff-to-Student Interaction **affect learning**?

Challenge: Building Connection through Relationship

Arguably the most difficult aspect of teaching virtual learners. The loss of the bricks-and-mortar captive audience benefit requires us to set building relational quality and connection as one of the primary tasks for virtual programs.

Basic Psychological Needs of At-Risk Youth

Feelings Essential for Effective Learning

- Competence
- Belonging
- Usefulness
- Potency
- Optimism

Characteristics of Discouraged Learners

- Low self-confidence
- Avoiders
- Distrustful
- Pessimistic
- Think of themselves as 'dumb'
- Fragile homes
- View success as a matter of luck not achievement

Think about how your communication could either support feelings for effective learning or the feelings discouraged learners experience.

Cox, J., & Sagor, R. (2004). *At Risk Students: Reaching and Teaching Them* (2nd ed.). Routledge, New York.

Creating an Inviting Environment for Learning*

Trust - *Optimism* - *Respect* - *Intentionality*

Intentionally Inviting**
- Consistently Positive
- Communicates a Growth Mindset
- Purposeful
- Sensitive to Student Needs

The Student's Perspective

Intentionally Uninviting**
- Dismissive
- Alienating
- Harsh
- Vindictive

Student Excels

Student Struggles

Building Trust

- Cooperation and collaboration

- Building relationships

- Showing a personal interest

- Having relational conversations

Demonstrating Optimism

- Believing in the potential of students

- Encouragement

- Positive advocate

- Reflective conversations

Creating Respect

- Reliable and Consistent Follow-up

- Realistic but Challenging Goals

- Shared Responsibility

- Providing helpful feedback

- Appreciating Uniqueness

Practicing Intentionality

- Collaborative benchmarks

- Deliberate and planned activities

- Scheduled meetings

- Predictable structure

- Providing regular feedback

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**Source: Adapted from *Better than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management* (p. 23), by D. Smith, D. Fisher, and N. Frey, 2015, Alexandria, VA: Copyright 2015 by ASCD

*Source: Purkey, W. W., & Stanley P. H. (1991). Invitational teaching, learning, and living. Washington DC: National Education Association Library

Key Strategies for Engaging Students in Virtual Learning Environments

Research Questions:

1. *What strategies do teachers of virtual courses employ to engage students?*

2. *What student engagement strategies do teachers of virtual courses believe to be most effective?*

3. *How do teachers of virtual courses develop relationships that nurture student engagement?*

Findings:

Relationships

- Communication
- Feedback
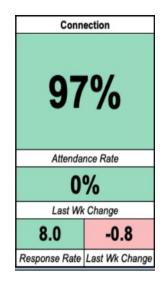- Appealing to students' interests
- Humanizing
- Synchronous meetings

Harrington, C. & DeBruler, K. (2021). *Key strategies for engaging students in virtual learning environments*. Michigan Virtual University. https://michiganvirtual.org/research/publications/key-strategies-for-engaging-students-in-virtual-learning-environments/

Question: Can the quality of interaction be **measured** and **evaluated?**

Quantifiable Metrics Indicating Connection Quality

Staff Member #1

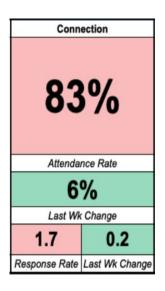| Connection	
97%	
Attendance Rate	
0%	
Last Wk Change	
8.0	-0.8
Response Rate	Last Wk Change

Attendance - % of students regularly attending class - used as a measure of **environmental quality**

Student Response Rate - The average number of times the staff member and students talked - used as a measure of **relational quality**
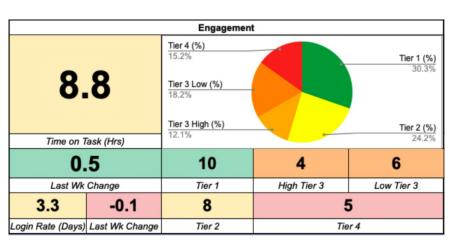
Staff Member #2

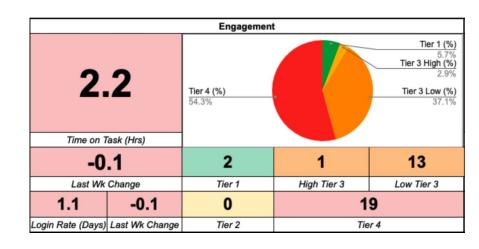| Connection	
83%	
Attendance Rate	
6%	
Last Wk Change	
1.7	0.2
Response Rate	Last Wk Change

Can you predict which staff member will have better outcomes?

Student Engagement Results

Staff Member #1

Staff Member #2

Note: Dashboards provided by Pulse Software- www.accountabilitypulse.com

Question: Can staff be trained to **improve** their interaction with students?

Qualifiable Communication Characteristics
Scale: 1 Ineffective - 4 Highly Effective

Description	Ineffective	Highly Effective
1. <u>Positive</u> - language is honest and uplifting in nature. It is important to identify and celebrate student actions that get them closer to achieving their goals. Does the language demonstrate a 'with' approach that shows the educator as a partner in the learning process?	Uses **negative** tone. Language uses **fear, shame, and/or threats** to attempt to get the student to complete work. When negative consequences of a student's lack of engagement occur, the staff member uses **negative reinforcement.**	Uses **encouraging, warm** tones and words consistently. Language is consistently **clear and direct,** with a focus on positive reinforcement and a message of belief in the abilities of students. The staff member engages students when negative consequences from a lack of student engagement exist, but consistently with a **positive expectation** of the students abilities.
2. <u>Relational</u> - language should reflect a relational context - does it appear that the staff member is authentic and showing a personal and individual interest in each student? Does the log content demonstrate a depth of knowledge of the student's life situation, and a caring attitude?	No follow-up communication is happening on **personal items** of interest or concern to the student. Communication appears to be '**all business**' and primarily one sided. The majority of messages appear to be template messages and there is **no sign of personalizing** communication or response from students.	Conversations reflect a **continuing personal knowledge** of students' life situations, and a sensitivity of the challenges students are experiencing individually. These conversations are consistently **individualized** and happen frequently and naturally. Mass messages are only used for informational purposes.

Qualifiable Communication Characteristics

Scale: 1 Ineffective - 4 Highly Effective

Description	Ineffective	Highly Effective
3. <u>Intentional</u> - Does the language demonstrate an educational intent? When the staff member reaches a student and has a conversation, does it eventually result in reconnection to an educational goal or purpose? Does the staff member create scaffolding goals for the student in time-on-task, log-in-rates, activities, or other student-centric measurements?	**Mass progress messages** are the primary means of establishing expectations with students, which show a total lack of individualized goal setting. Responses **do not relate** to a previous statement and demonstrate listening. No specific goal setting has been done with students. There is little to no communication about student weekly schedule or any direction given on what is expected of students and how they are doing. Parents/Guardians are totally disregarded as a viable support.	Uses very specific language with students that is **individualized.** Responses **relate** to a previous statement and demonstrate listening. **Goals are identified** and specific steps are shared to reach that individualized goal. Staff intentionally ask about **student schedules** so they can create a plan together to be successful that week. If the student is not responding then staff intentionally implore the help of **parents/**guardians.
4. <u>Reflective</u> - Does the language demonstrate an encouragement for the student to reflect on efforts, outcomes, and benchmarks established from prior conversations and goals established with the staff member?	The staff member does not encourage students to reflect on students' contributions to either positive or negative outcomes. Outcomes are not in reference to previously established expectations, and they do not discuss goals, set achievements, and determine next steps.	Staff member **encourages the student to reflect** on how they contributed to either positive or negative outcomes regularly. **Outcomes are in reference to previously established expectations, and they regularly discuss goals, set achievements, and next steps on a daily basis.**

Conclusion

"Good communication practices are essential to getting and keeping students engaged!"

- Things to consider
- Next steps in your own journey
- Questions
- Software we use to track our statistics:
  - www.accountabilitypulse.com