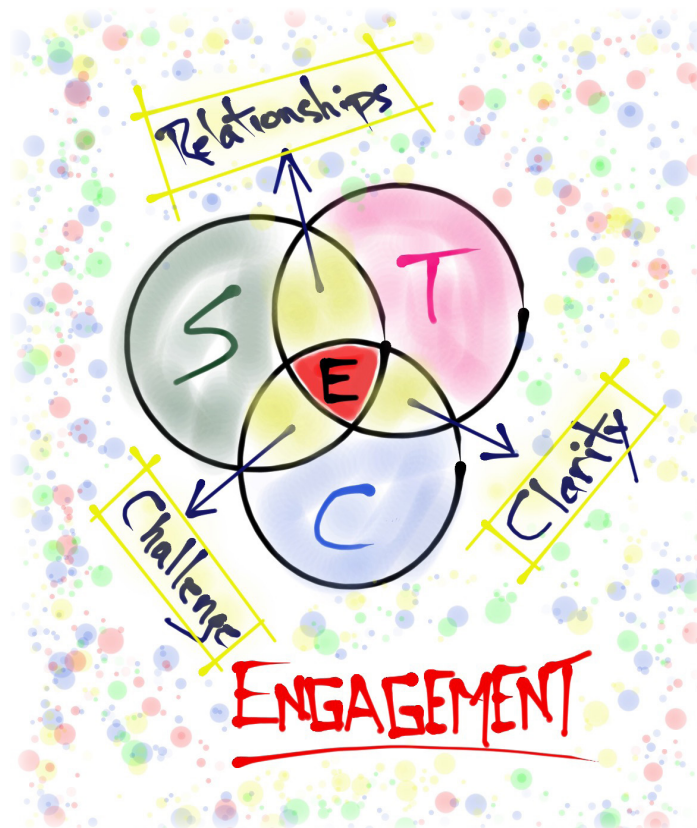


Teachers who are highly engaged in their own professional learning and development are likely to transfer that passion and excitement into pedagogical practices for their students in the classroom. This level of enthusiasm creates a learning environment driven by mutual respect and collaboration that is poised to be engaging. It is important to consider factors that promote engagement for teachers and students and ultimately how those factors affect learning and innovation. The Balanced Model for Engagement posits that there are three primary factors in every learning environment or situation that give rise to student and teacher engagement and ultimately academic and personal success that must work in harmony: the student, the teacher, and the content.

In any given learning environment, the student is there to gather, discover, process, understand, integrate—ultimately, to learn—the information conveyed by the teacher. The teacher shares, presents, guides, instructs, and/or facilitates this knowledge to that end; he or she needs to not only know content, but must possess the skills necessary to present that information in a format that is understandable and relevant to the students. The content represents the information that is to be learned and how that information is discovered and shared by both the student and the teacher.

**Balanced Model for Engagement**



At the heart of this model is when the connections among these three factors (teacher, student, content) promote, stimulate, and advance meaningful engagement. There are four intersections:

### **I. Student–Teacher (Relationships)**

*Relationships* are important and impact student learning. In this model, relationships are represented by the connection that exists between teacher and student. In this overlapping set, teachers should be doing all they can to develop strong, productive, growth-producing relationships with students. Teachers can choose their attitudes towards students and can purposefully work to develop positive relationships.

### **II. Student–Content (Challenge)**

*Challenge* reflects the connection between the student and the subject matter, including how it is delivered. Students appreciate a challenge, they are not interested in low-level, boring lessons. Students expect school to be a challenge, and they welcome the opportunity to rise to that challenge. Of course, a high level of challenge requires that teachers create appropriate tasks and that they hold high expectations for students.

### **III. Teacher–Content (Clarity)**

*Clarity* is the connection between the teacher and his or her knowledge of the subject area and pedagogical strategies. Teachers should know their content. They should not be teaching incorrect information or missing critical aspects of the content. They should let students know *what* they are supposed to be learning and *why*. Further, teachers and students should understand what success looks like. Teacher clarity—the combination of teachers knowing what they are supposed to be teaching, informing students about what they are supposed to be learning, and reaching agreements with students about the success criteria—has a strong impact on students' learning.

### **IV. Student–Teacher–Content (Engagement)**

According to the Balanced Model for Engagement, all learners (students and teachers) are most likely to reach the highest level of *Engagement* and reach their fullest potential when they learn in an environment with strong, positive student–teacher relationships, when students are interested in learning the subject matter because it is meaningful and relevant to them, and when teachers demonstrate expertise in both knowing and delivering the content. This creates a context for maintaining the rigor of the material and providing relevant challenges to students. When the components of student, teacher, and content come together, the lines between teaching and learning become beautifully blurred. Meaningful engagement develops and is perpetuated by trust, respect, and a shared responsibility for teaching and learning.

Adapted from: **Engagement By Design: Creating Learning Environments Where Students Thrive**  
by Fisher, Frey, Quaglia, Smith & Lande