

Engagement takes root when schools ensure that students and staff are deeply involved in the learning process, showing enthusiasm and a desire to learn new things, as well as a willingness to take positive, healthy steps toward the future.

Over the past decade, education systems have increasingly caved to narrow definitions of teacher success, prescribing learning through pacing guides and course sequences, and compartmentalizing professional development into predetermined and impersonal modules. What has been lost in the shuffle is the understanding that teachers should be, first and foremost, lifelong learners. Continually gaining new knowledge is at the heart of the profession. Just as is expected for students in the classroom, learning must be engaging for teachers.



*The unique needs of teachers must be considered, as every group of teachers represents a diverse range of needs and ambitions for continued learning. What is the best way to determine how to best meet teachers' specific needs? The most straightforward approach—ask them. Engaging professional development needs to honor and evolve from teacher voice. Professional development opportunities should be driven by conversations with teachers about student work and learning, shared case studies and curiosity, and the individual and collective needs of teachers. It should be an ongoing exploration of the art and science of teaching, conducted in a manner that meets the needs of the teachers in attendance. Incorporating teacher voice is the most effective way to ensure engagement for teachers and an immediate impact in the learning environment they share with students. The most powerful resource for determining effective professional development resides within teachers themselves.*

There are three Conditions that foster high levels of Engagement: Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, and Spirit of Adventure.

## **FUN & EXCITEMENT**



Truly engaged teachers experience Fun & Excitement on a daily basis. Teachers who exhibit this Condition are self-confident, open to new ideas, and prepared and willing to meet the challenges of the day. It is not uncommon for people who are so engaged in topics and activities that interest them to lose track of time and space (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Just think of how teaching and learning would be so different if, on a regular basis, both the teachers and students lost track of time and space because they were so engaged in the subject matter. The Condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by inspired teachers who are actively engaged and emotionally involved not only in their classroom, but also with the entire community.

## CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY



Teacher Engagement is nurtured in a school that promotes Curiosity & Creativity. Teachers need opportunities to learn, explore, and create. Otherwise, their practice can become stagnant. Ninety-nine percent of teachers report that they enjoy learning new things, yet only 71% say they are encouraged to be creative at school (QISVA, 2019). Teachers must actively seek out opportunities to exercise their natural Curiosity and Creativity. This can happen through in-service training opportunities, learning communities, social media, and conversations with colleagues (both within the school and from other schools). For Curiosity & Creativity to be fully realized for teachers, they must be proactive, enthusiastically explore new ideas, and revise their practices based on the information they have learned. Not only does this ward off stagnant practices, but it also serves as a model for students, encouraging them to do the same!

## SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE



Learning should be a perpetual journey for adults and students. A high percentage (97%) of staff say they challenge themselves to do a better job every day; however, around one in 10 is afraid to try something if they might fail (11%), 14% fear peer resentment if they are too successful, and only 77% report that staff are supportive of each other (QISVA, 2019). For teachers to embrace the Condition of Spirit of Adventure, they must be willing to try new things in their classroom and take on challenges within the school community. Spirit of Adventure occurs in schools where colleagues support one another and celebrate their learning and progress—inclusive of lessons learned from successes and failures. Spirit of Adventure is about seizing opportunities to explore and learn, for the sake of the experience, without fear of failure or success.

### References:

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