

Strategies for student engagement

Student engagement is a critical ingredient of learning and has been shown to improve achievement outcomes. One of our roles as instructors in higher education is finding novel ways to help our students engage with course content. This task has been particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic with most universities opting for either fully online or hybrid course delivery, with synchronous or asynchronous components. Here are some resources we found helpful for setting engagement goals, recognizing engagement, and identifying engagement tools. We acknowledge our university's Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching, and, in particular Dr. Elizabeth Schneider, for the course offerings and resources that they provided over the past year which have guided our learning about engagement in the classroom.

How do we set engagement goals? There are many strategies we can use to set student engagement goals. They can be activity based (e.g., students must participate in a specific type of learning exercise) or goal based (e.g., what you want the students to learn from the task). This link from [ABLConnect](#) is a searchable online database of curated learning activities that can help instructors identify engagement goals and activities.

What does engagement look like? We know as instructors that engagement may look different depending on the student, and on the delivery method. One area that we have thought about over the past year has been to [broaden our understanding of what engagement can look like](#). For us, this has meant shifting our expectations both about what we look for in an engaged student (e.g., students maintaining eye contact (or, at least, cameras on) and discussing content), and what we use to evaluate our success in connecting with students.

What are some strategies to encourage engagement? This link to a chapter on [differentiated instruction](#) offers some ways to engage a range of students, and suggestions for how to identify engagement (the example in this video of how doodling by one student was embraced stood out to us). Some tools that many are using for engagement include quizzes (e.g., [Kahoot](#)); venue to share ideas (e.g., [Padlet](#)); shared documents (Google's [Jamboard](#)); chat spaces (e.g., [Slack](#)); and options for students to audio or video-record assignments as an alternative to writing posts (e.g., [Flipgrid](#)). For those students who may benefit from individual connections, we creating space for one-on-one interactions (e.g., joining Zoom early, and staying online after class) may be appreciated.