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Student Engagement

Students today are having trouble getting engaged in their school topics. One reason is that some teachers still use teaching methods that were used fifty years ago. Students today are very different from students fifty years ago. If a subject does not grab their attention they will start texting or tune into their iPods and drown out whatever the teacher has to say. Fifty years ago, there were no computers, let alone cell phones or iPods to distract students in class. Teachers have to come up with new methods to keep students engaged.

In all subjects students will lose interest once in a while, but it happens more often in subjects that students do not need for graduation. In subjects like Principles of Math 12 or Chemistry 12 the students are taking the course since they plan on going into a career, which needs Principles of Math 12 or Chemistry 12, so they tend to focus more. In elective courses like band or media arts, or even some academics like History 12, students are sometimes taking them just to fill their time table.

Technology and lack of interest in the subject to begin with, are reasons why students do not get engaged in a course. To create student engagement, teachers have to start at the beginning of the course otherwise the students will have already tuned out when you try to get them engaged. If the students are engaged in the course, they are less likely to turn to texting and dozing off in class. The teacher themselves can also either turn students onto or off of a course. Involve students while teaching the course. In history and English courses do not stand up at the front of the room and lecture, engage the class in a discussion on the topic and ask for their opinions and ideas. In science and math courses, apply what you have taught in labs and activities. In my Principles of Math 12 class this year we built K'Nex Ferris wheels after we learned about sinusoidal functions. We then measured the amplitude, period, horizontal shift, and vertical displacement of the Ferris wheels. It made what we learned in class relevant to everyday life.

Projects are another way to engage students in the course. If the guidelines are open enough, it can enable students to do what they excel at while incorporating the learning outcomes of the course. After reading *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller in English 11, our teacher let us do a final project on the book. The only guideline was that it had to reflect the book. I am not a strong English student, but I love film making. With this project I was able to make a news broadcast of the events of the book. Know-

ing that I would be able to film engaged and held my interest. I ended up getting 100% since I was able to incorporate something that I excel at.

Involving students in discussions, applying their knowledge of the course, and allowing unique projects will all prepare students for the challenges of tomorrow. With class discussions students learn to express their views in an educated manner and to debate a subject while respecting other people's opinions. Applying students' knowledge of a course helps them to understand where that knowledge can be used and what it can help solve. Allowing projects in class will help students with teamwork, if it is a group project, or will build their creativity and discipline, knowing that no one will do the project for them. All of these skills will help students with the challenges of tomorrow.

Students today have many more opportunities than their counterparts fifty years ago. There is a wider range of subjects offered, as well as some first year university and advanced placement courses. A wider range of courses allows for a better rounded student. These courses can reflect the culture of BC like; Punjabi 12, Japanese 12, Mandarin Chinese 12, and BC First Nations Studies 12, which can help students understand the history of different cultures on our province. Some courses like Calculus 12 can be counted as first year university math course. This allows students to skip the cramped auditoriums of 300 students of first year university and instead learn in a class of 25 with help from the teacher.

Students face many challenges in our constantly changing world. Some courses are continuously changing, like science and history, with new inventions, discoveries and world events occurring every day. This can be frustrating for students since there is constantly more information for them to learn and memorize. Some students will lose interest in the course because of an overload of information. If teachers can keep student engagement then the students of today will have the information to be the great leaders of tomorrow.

Every student is interested in different subjects and learns differently. A teacher cannot cater to all these different needs but should try to use a variety of teaching methods. There are new distractions coming out for students to play with in class but making the courses interesting and manageable will help to keep students engaged. The world is constantly changing and so are the ways in which to engage students in subjects. ■