

Lindsay Kenler
SEAQUAM SECONDARY

Student Engagement: Creating and Maintaining Engagement in a Rapidly Changing World

With the coming of each new generation there also comes new challenges and opportunities. In order for society to evolve and adapt, it is necessary that these challenges and opportunities be faced with an open mind and a willingness to change and learn. While learning does not begin nor end in a classroom, school is a place where the future leaders, thinkers and members of the world are heavily influenced and begin to develop policies that shape society. The pace of global change today is greatly increased compared to that of past generations. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that school be a place where students are engaged and actively learning.

Educators today have the chance to add their repertoire of traditional teaching methods because of the rapid advancement in technology. Educators and students can use this technology as an opportunity to connect, not only locally but also on a global scale. The use of technology as a means of connection and communication would be an excellent way to stimulate the interest of students while gaining the valuable insight of international peers. Electronic forums and discussion boards would allow students separated by thousands of kilometers to discuss global issues from various perspectives. Furthermore, connecting internationally would aid in the break down of social barriers that many, so often fall victim to. Students and teachers would have the ability to grow more culturally aware. As well, they would be able to alter and formulate new opinions through the exposure and debate of ideas presented by those of other nations.

In addition, educators can give students the option of presenting information in various multi-media formats. With guidance to develop critical thinking skills, students would have the opportunity of incorporating technology, art, media, performance and other aspects to creatively express themselves and their ideas. Students today have access to a wide variety of information from a multitude of sources, information that was much less accessible to those past generations. The media today is constantly bombarding society with opinions, statements and ideas. The media is also now accessible anywhere at anytime. Therefore, it is important that the students of today have ways of

manifesting their creativity in order to come to their own conclusions about the information they are presented with. A creative outlet for presentation of information allows students to challenge themselves by having to interpret and cross reference information from a variety of sources rather than just a single one. Students are also more educated and better equipped to develop techniques to form opinions.

Finally, many North American students today are in the unique position of possessing more knowledge about the latest technology than many of their teachers. This apparent role reversal is an excellent opportunity for students to develop leadership skills. If educators encourage students to share and present their knowledge in meaningful ways, it would help to technologically advance their peers and teachers at a much faster rate. Tapping into this pool of knowledge allows expertise to be recognized and fostered. Technological advancement in schools would also allow students and teachers of all ages to explore and discover information that had not previously been accessible. For example, a chamber choir of four in a school in Northern Canada could practice with a chamber choir of fifty in a school in Vancouver without being physically present. Students who taught would have the opportunity to demonstrate responsibility and educate others about material that they find interesting, while teachers and schools would be able to learn the necessary skills to advance technologically, and use technology to their advantage.

The world today is a drastically different and rapidly changing place. However, with each new challenge that has to be overcome there are also a multitude of new opportunities. Schools are places that manifest mental growth and responsibility, therefore, school should be a place where students and teachers are both engaged and committed. Embracing technology and technological advancement would revolutionize schools while simultaneously engaging and catching the interest of students. Students would have the opportunity to connect with others, creatively develop opinions, and share their expertise. Overcoming the challenges of change today will help to prepare this generation for further challenges faced in the future. ■