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

Engaging students in today's society has become one of the greatest challenges for an educator. With an ever-growing and even more interconnected globe, the challenge of occupying interest in an educational sense increases astronomically. With so many distractions like the internet, game systems, the cell phone, Blackberry, and more, it is easy to see why keeping the attention of a group of students who are technologically advanced can be difficult. In a world where one is able to connect with someone on a completely different continent in mere seconds, there are many tools that may help teachers in their pursuit of student engagement. Educators are discovering a variety of ways to meet student's needs. Some examples of these methods are adapting education to the learning styles of the student, embracing technology as an educational tool versus a form for demise, and moving away from standard teaching methods into a more creative approach.

As a visual learner, I know from experience how difficult it can be to simply copy down notes all day from a teacher or listen to them verbally discuss matters without class inclusion. All students learn in different ways, for example some are auditory, some visual, some must teach to learn and so on. No two students are exactly the same. For an educator this fact can create quite a predicament in the classroom. That is why, in my opinion, it is essential for an educator in today's busy world to blend various teaching techniques in their educational plan. During my final year in secondary school, I encountered a teacher to whom, at the beginning of the course, asked the students what kind of learners they were. The majority of students at a secondary level have begun to comprehend how they learn and this can be useful for a teacher to discover as well. The teacher then geared her lessons to match that of the classes' understanding but also made students feel as though they were in charge of their education. Including verbal discussions where students are encouraged to voice their own opinions on any given subject is also another exceptional way to address the disparity in a classroom. As teenagers, students in a secondary school certainly do not have a problem telling authority how they feel! This also engages the student to form an idea, a sentence, and an opinion on a topic and stand behind their decisions. Throughout high school, despite the fact I am a visual learner, having the option to speak about my own ideas on a professional level with staff has made me more experienced, more worldly and more interested in global matters over all.

Although, the increasing numbers of students answering their cell phones during class is a bit overwhelming and also frustrating for all parties involved, this does not mean that all forms of technology should be banned in a classroom. The number of students acquiring laptops at a young age has increased as well. With such a large portion of the student body interested in technology and accustomed to the many benefits attached to it, it seems to be important to mould

the way educators teach to this as well. Technology does not have to be a burden in the classroom! Although, text messaging to friends about the latest party should not be tolerated, the use of technology for educational purposes should be promoted in the classroom. In a world that uses technology at an alarming rate, it is important that students learn to work with the latest programs so that they are able to function in the world when they leave the sheltered atmosphere of high school. Many careers in the job market today are in fact dependent on knowledge of technology. Therefore, it is vital to integrate technology into classrooms. Who would have imagined twenty years ago that today most students would be able to type an average of sixty words per minute? The world has changed in most ways for the better concerning technology and it is up to the education system to embrace these changes and learn from them.

With so many options available today, creative methods are necessary to gain enthusiasm about learning for youth. It is, in my opinion, up to the teacher to think of interesting project ideas, for example a video project or power point, that demonstrate the same amount of knowledge about the given topic for the student. By doing so the student becomes more actively involved in their learning and often does not realize the research needed to produce an "A" worthy project, is the information the teacher is required to instruct. When students accomplish a more creative project it again gives the student the ability to develop their ideas fully in a creative manner. For example, I have done blogging in my English classes that has made the subject interesting for me. The universities in BC have started moving away from depending on standardized testing as well. In the past, often a very detailed curriculum required teachers to cover a large amount of information in class to ready students for standardized testing. This was a wonderful idea to keep an eye on the high level of education that is strived for in British Columbia; however, with so much more to cover it was difficult for teachers to develop a deeper meaning to their lessons. Moving away from standardized testing is a valuable way to bring out the creativity in students because it enables the teachers to delve into deeper discussions about a topic. This ultimately makes a well rounded learner that is able to think critically.

The education system today, although ahead of many areas in society regarding development, can most definitely undergo some modifications that will make it more compatible with the rapidly changing world. By adapting teaching styles to the many different learners out there, taking advantage of technology and its benefits and by taking a more creative approach to learning, the teachers tomorrow will be able to grow and learn with the world and all of its students. It is important for all students who have an interest in becoming an educator to consciously consider worldly issues and to think about the effects these issues have on humanity now and in the future. ■