



## IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDED INTERVENTIONS

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University of Delaware

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DE Positive Behavior Support Project – School Climate & Student Success

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## MODULE STRUCTURE

- Module series goal:
  - Provide information to schools that can lead to improvements in **school climate** and **behavioral outcomes**.
- Module narratives provide additional information to accompany PowerPoint Presentation.
  - Endnotes throughout slides correspond to the references in the module narrative.
- Gold star = Resource on Delaware PBS website

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## WHAT IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

- The extent to which students are actively involved in learning activities in school<sup>1,2</sup>
- Three types:<sup>3-6</sup>
  - **Emotional**
    - Feelings towards learning, school, teachers, and classmates (e.g., liking school)
  - **Behavioral**
    - Involvement in academic and school-related activities (e.g., following rules)
  - **Cognitive**
    - Motivation, especially intrinsic, and the desire to exert effort to learn



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## DELAWARE SCHOOL SURVEYS

- The *Delaware School Surveys* assess school engagement **school-wide** and engagement of the **individual student**.
  - *Student Engagement School-wide* subscale on the *Delaware School Climate Scale*:
    - Items assess teachers/staff's and students' perceptions of the extent to which students **throughout the school** are emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively engaged
  - *Delaware Student Engagement Scale*:
    - Assesses engagement of the **individual student** as reported by the student and by his/her parent or other adult at home
    - Three subscales: Emotional, Behavioral, and Cognitive

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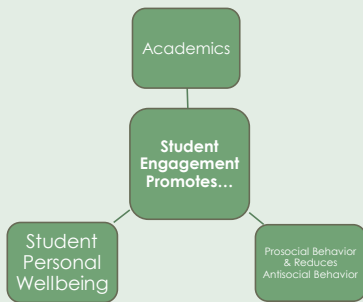
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## WHY IS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IMPORTANT?



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## IMPORTANCE OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT FROM A BROADER LENS

- Student engagement is commonly viewed as a critical component of school climate<sup>15</sup>
- It is also viewed as central to democratic education and citizenship in a democratic society
  - Through active engagement in schooling, students learn the value and skills for future citizenship



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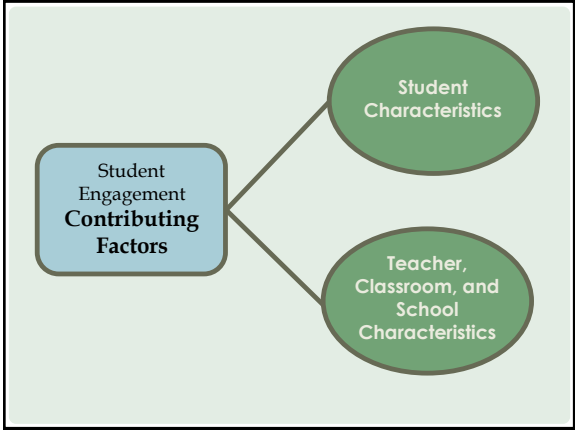
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**STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS  
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

- Students who are emotionally, behaviorally, and/or cognitively engaged in school tend to have:
  - Social, emotional, and learning competencies<sup>3,25-30</sup>
    - Responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness, self-management, and self-awareness
  - Absence of behavioral and emotional problems that interfere with engagement and learning
    - Antisocial and aggressive behavior,<sup>30-33</sup> depression,<sup>34</sup> stress<sup>35</sup>
  - Positive perceptions of school climate
    - Including teacher-student relationships,<sup>27</sup> student-student relationships,<sup>27,30,36</sup> fair treatment of students,<sup>37</sup> and school safety<sup>38</sup>
  - Parent support, and students' perceptions thereof, including parents being involved in their children's learning/schooling<sup>9,27,29,34,39</sup>

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**STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS  
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

- Although not malleable, other student factors influence student engagement and should be considered in prevention and intervention efforts:
  - **Age**<sup>11,28,40,41</sup>
    - As students progress from elementary to middle school, they become less engaged
  - **Gender**<sup>15,28,29,41</sup>
    - Boys tend to be less engaged than girls
  - **SES**<sup>30,42</sup>
    - Students from low SES tend to be less engaged

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**TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL  
CHARACTERISTICS  
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

- Two general characteristics of teaching maximize student engagement in the classroom:<sup>43</sup>
  - **1. Classroom management**
  - **2. Instructional strategies**
- Additionally, there are *school characteristics* that promote student engagement




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**TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL  
CHARACTERISTICS  
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

- **Classroom management**
  - Authoritative approach to classroom management, consisting of a balance of *structure* and *social support*<sup>3,11,26-29,43,45-48</sup>
    - **Structure** refers to practices such as: having clear routines and procedures, monitoring behavior, holding clear and high expectations, and responding to behavior problems immediately, consistently, and fairly
    - **Social support** refers to caring, respect, and responsiveness to students' psychological needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy
      - Support from teachers, administrators, parents, and peers is particularly important in student engagement
  - *The importance of teacher-student, student-student, and home-school relationships, including with respect to engagement, is highlighted in three other modules: Improving Teacher-Student Relationships, Improving Student-Student Relationships, and Improving Home-School Relationships.*




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**TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL  
CHARACTERISTICS  
CONTRIBUTING FACTORS**

- **Instructional methods** that have been shown to promote behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement in the classroom include:<sup>3,28,51-59</sup>
  - **Learning activities** that, *where appropriate and feasible*, have the following qualities:
    - Are matched with students' ability levels, interests, talents & goals
    - Are challenging (not too difficult or too easy)
    - Emphasize higher-order thinking skills, rather than memorization
    - Are stimulating, often novel & fun
    - Are quickly paced, with little down time
    - Allow for choice
    - Allow for & encourage collaboration with peers
    - Are authentic, emphasizing real-life applications
    - Encourage students to assume ownership of the activity's conception, execution & evaluation




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### TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Teachers who are most effective in engaging students tend to exhibit the following practices:

- Support student autonomy
- Use a variety of tasks and activities
- Provide peer-assisted activities
- Incorporate use of modeling (teacher, student, others) to highlight engagement-related behaviors
- Use praise and rewards strategically, providing effective feedback and reinforcing engagement-related behaviors

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### TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- **School characteristics** that help promote engagement include:<sup>38,51,60,61</sup>
  - Smaller classes and school size
  - Multiple opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, sports, and school governance
  - An environment that is safe and conducive to learning
    - Including the absence of bullying
  - Having a high proportion of teachers of similar race/ethnicity as the students
    - Particularly in schools with large numbers of racial & ethnic minority students of lower SES




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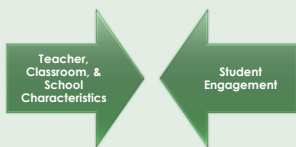
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### TEACHER, CLASSROOM, AND SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Important Notice

- The relations between engagement and many of the teacher, classroom, and school characteristics discussed here are **reciprocal**.<sup>63,64</sup>
  - For example, positive teacher-student and student-student relationships foster student engagement, but student engagement also fosters positive relationships




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**COLLECT AND EXAMINE DATA**  
**RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES: TIER 1**

- Examine engagement-related data, such as academic achievement, absences, truancies, office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, drop-out rate, & the number of students participating in extracurricular activities
- Student, teacher/staff, & parent surveys, such as the *Delaware School Surveys*, are also valuable data sources
  - **School-wide engagement** assessed on the *Delaware School Climate Scale*
  - **Individual student engagement** assessed on the *Delaware Student Engagement Scale*

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**COLLECT AND EXAMINE DATA**  
**RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES: TIER 1**

- Survey data can help answer:
  - *Do students and teachers/staff view students throughout the school as being engaged, and across grades, racial/ethnic groups and gender?*
  - *Are individual students engaged emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively across grades, racial/ethnic groups and gender?*
    - Reports of low engagement across groups of respondents would indicate need for interventions and related staff development
      - Examine specific grade, racial/ethnic, and gender groups
  - Compare responses across the emotional, behavioral, and cognitive subscales
  - Examine responses to specific items on all subscales
  - Additional data should be gathered and examined to help determine *why* low engagement is reported
  - Share results with focus groups




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## SAMPLE INTEREST SURVEY

- For elementary and secondary use
- Information gathered can help teachers get to know their students and relate academic material and activities to their interests and preferences

1. 3 words that best describe me:

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. 3 things I am good at:

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. 3 activities I like to do outside of school, such as a sport, music, dance, or hobbies:

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

4. 3 movies or TV shows that I really like:

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. My favorite book is:

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## CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO SET GOALS

### RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES: TIER 1

- Challenge students to identify and reflect upon their values and goals, and to choose engagement-related behaviors that are consistent with those values and goals
- Help students adopt challenging standards and methods for monitoring the progress toward achieving their value-oriented goals
- Challenge students to set short-term goals (for all ages), and long-term goals (especially students in higher grades).
- Throughout the curriculum, highlight how important values (e.g., altruism, family, etc.) are important and necessary for success in certain subjects/career fields
- Emphasize mastery goals over performance goals
- Emphasize mastery in external and self-evaluations




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## EMPHASIZE EFFORT & PERSISTENCE IN ACHIEVING GOALS

### RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES: TIER 1

Emphasize effort and challenge more than ability and adopt a growth mindset

Provide feedback that is frequent, substantive, and constructive

Make grade criteria clear and fair

Promote self-evaluation in meeting one's goals

Incorporate student self-evaluation into daily tasks and assignments




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## STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION OF GOALS

- Can be used daily or weekly to track progress towards meeting both short-term and long-term goals
- Will help encourage students to persist to meet their goals

**Self-Evaluation of Goals Sheet**

Write goal here \_\_\_\_\_

What have I done today/this week that will help me meet my goal?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What is something I learned today/this week?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What is something I did well/excelled at today/this week?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## IMPLEMENT AN EVIDENCE-BASED SEL PROGRAM

### RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES: TIER 1

- Use one that has been shown to strengthen social-emotional competencies, particularly those most related to emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement, or have been shown in empirical studies to improve engagement
  - Responsive Classroom Approach
  - Second Step
  - PATHS
  - RULER
  - Leader in Me
- See CASEL.org for a list of such programs and descriptions of each




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## LEADER IN ME

- Emphasis on developing students' leadership and life skills
- Principals, teachers, and parents perceive positive impacts of the program:
  - Increased student leadership skills
  - Improved school climate
  - Improved student attendance
  - Improved satisfaction and engagement
  - Improvements in behavior

From The Leader in Me  
[\(http://www.theleaderinme.org/\)](http://www.theleaderinme.org/)

**Evaluation of The Leader in Me in Two School Districts based on Teacher and Students' Perceptions, Learning, Application, and Overall Impact**

**90%** agree students acquired new knowledge and skills in the Leader in Me school and home

The RCI Institute was commissioned by Florida's Center to use their trademarked evaluation process to independently measure the impact of The Leader in Me within two school districts. The RCI Institute selected two school districts and measured four leader in Me schools with each district (eight schools in total). Available data from one leader in Me school within each respective district as well as an appropriate comparison for academic analysis. Many positive benefits related to implementing The Leader in Me are discussed in the report, leading to the conclusion that "The results from this evaluation effort indicate that The Leader in Me is successful and making positive impact in the schools where it is implemented."

RCI Institute | [www.rciinstitute.com](http://www.rciinstitute.com)

**Nationwide Assessment of Common Whole-School Improvement Programs based on Principals' Experience and Perceived Impact**

**92%** are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with The Leader in Me

Commissioned by Florida's Center, Education Director, various districts surveyed a random selection of 400 principals across the United States to determine the commonalities, challenges, and benefits of the implementation of the program.

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## Recommended Strategies & Interventions Students with Tier 2 & 3 support needs

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### STUDENTS AT TIERS 2 & 3 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

- Apply the strategies already mentioned as appropriate at the universal level and for all students
  - With greater frequency and intensity
  - More comprehensive
  - More individualized
- Provide additional social skills/SEL training
  - Targeting specific engagement skills
  - Universal curriculum or those designed more for Tiers 2 & 3




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### STUDENTS AT TIERS 2 & 3 RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with families
  - E.g., use a daily report card
- Where appropriate (e.g., Tier 3), develop a behavioral contract
  - Targeting specific engagement skills
- Consider implementing the Check and Connect intervention, or otherwise provide individual mentoring, especially that which offers support via a positive teacher-student relationship, monitoring, and guidance
  - Or adopt other programs shown to be effective in preventing dropping out (e.g., FUTURES program<sup>84</sup>)
- Arrange or provide additional intensive supports, resources, & changes as needed




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## DAILY REPORT CARD

- Teacher or teacher & student record how often the expected behavior was met during the specific time period/class activity
- Report card is sent home each day highlighting behaviors that need to be practiced and those that should be praised
- Teacher, student, and parent signs the report card each day

Dear Parents of \_\_\_\_\_

Here is today's Behavior Report Card. Follow you can see what is happening for each expectation and each class activity.

Today we did a "Check out" with yesterday's signed report card. \_\_\_\_\_ (parent) and we did a "Check out" with today's report card. \_\_\_\_\_ (student)

**Daily Behavior Report Card Grade**

date: \_\_\_\_\_

1 Always 100-60%  
2 Almost Always 75-60%  
3 Sometimes 50-40%  
4 Almost Never 25-20%  
5 Never 10-0%

Today I forgot to: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please talk to me tonight and practice with me.

OR

Today I did a great job: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please talk to me tonight and praise me.

Time Period	Expectation	1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5
		1	2	3	4	5

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Making a Plan  
Who is going to do  
what actions by  
when?

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## THANK YOU

- Based on areas of need identified by data, check out other modules and resources provided through the **School Climate and Student Success Module Series**.
- [www.delawarepbs.org](http://www.delawarepbs.org)
- Questions can be directed to Sarah Hearn  
• [skhearn@udel.edu](mailto:skhearn@udel.edu)




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## IMPROVING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

- **Lead Authors:** Dr. George Bear and Angela Harris, M.A.
  - University of Delaware & Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project
- **Research Narrative Reviewed by:** Dr. Michael Furlong
  - University of California, Santa Barbara
- **PowerPoint Developed and Reviewed by:** Angela Harris and Shelby Schwing
  - University of Delaware & Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project
- **Audio Recorded by:** Sydney Morales, M.A.
  - University of Delaware & Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project
- **Funding and Support from:** The Delaware Department of Education through the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project and the School Climate and Student Success Grant

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