

Remembering the Core Principles of the Collaborative Classroom

Categories: Professional Learning

The Collaborative Classroom has Four Core Principles:

1. The social and academic curriculum carry equal weight and are interdependent.
2. Fostering caring relationships and building inclusive and safe environments are foundational practices for both the student and adult learning community.
3. Classroom learning experiences should be built around students constructing knowledge and engaging in action.
4. Honoring and building on students' intrinsic motivation leads to engagement and achievement

One of the principles that really resonates with me is "Honoring and building on students' intrinsic motivation leads to engagement and achievement."



As I reflect upon this principle it makes me think that in order to educate the students' brain, an educator must first educate the heart. As a teacher it is essential to understand how the student operates, their likes and dislikes, their opinions, and their background. If we are to connect with the students then it is critical for us to understand what makes each student tick as an individual.

Once we know what motivates and drives each student we can build upon that intrinsic motivation and truly engage students more in their own learning, which can lead to higher achievement.

Engaging students means having them be active in their own learning by talking to their peers, tracking their progress as a learner, and reflecting upon their learning. Having students complete self-assessments and work with peers allows them to do the work and engage more in the learning process.



In the past, as a second- and third-grade teacher, I worked with a student who always puzzled me. I couldn't easily detect what motivated him. He was well liked by his peers but struggled academically. When working on difficult tasks he often got frustrated, gave up, and began crying out of frustration. It was like clockwork. His self-esteem as a student was low and he often gave up. Finally, one week, I sat next to him and explained to him that I was going to sit in a chair next to him. I didn't care how long it took him to finish the task, I would be right there willing to provide guidance and encouragement. I told him I believed in him and knew he was a hard worker. He needed someone to go above and beyond and to show him how much they cared. He needed to have someone that believed in his capabilities. It wasn't overnight that his achievement levels increased, but over time his willingness to engage in the work and persevere through difficult tasks became stronger.

Upon reflecting on the four core principles, and especially focusing on the fourth principle, I wonder how do you get to know your students? In what ways do you honor and build upon their interests? How does knowing their interests help their engagement and achievement throughout the school year?