

PDS Student Engagement Subcommittee
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Subcommittee:

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Initial Context:

As the PDS embarks on a new year, both K-12 and teacher preparation programs are facing challenges on the state and national level. In an effort to forward the collaborative inquiry and learning model associated with a PDS, in light of these challenges, we commit to focused study for the benefit of student learning. Specifically, we agree to examine areas in teaching/teacher preparation linked to data results from the pilot teacher evaluation: (i) student engagement and (ii) use of data to forward instruction.

At the first PDS meeting in October, the governance board began a conversation regarding understanding and questions associated with student engagement. A subgroup of the larger committee agreed to meet to continue the conversation and develop ideas to be shared back with the whole in November.

Subcommittee Conversation:

We met for an hour sharing thoughts and resources about student engagement. The highlights are presented here, followed by a suggestion of how we might study this at both Cranford and Seton Hall.

- The best evidence for student engagement is what students are saying and doing as a consequence of what the teacher does, or has done, or has planned. And while students may be physically active (e.g., using manipulative materials in mathematics or making a map in social studies), it is not essential that they be involved in a hands-on manner; it is, however, essential that they be challenged to be “minds-on.” (Danielson Framework Rubric, 3C, p69)

⇒ Challenges to student engagement?

- (i) students may know how to “teacher please,” thus looking engaged but not mentally engaged;
- (ii) activities may make students look busy, but not always “minds on” as Danielson describes;
- (iii) teacher’s comfort and depth of understanding of content allows for the development of activities, groupings, materials, and pacing that support engagement as outlined by Danielson.
- (iv) knowledge of the learners is essential to development of groupings and questions that will challenge and support “minds-on” engagement.
- (v) teacher comfort with the “chaos” that can emerge as student’s work through a challenge effects the depth and possibilities of student engagement. (The path

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- to knowing and understanding is not always smooth; jumping in too soon with answers can disrupt what might yet develop with well-developed questions.)
- (vi) raising expectations for ALL learners...student engagement can be inhibited by not knowing our students (interests and abilities).

Questions raised by the group?

- What can we do to create more self-directed learners?
- How can we better model and include the role of reflection in learning for our students?
- How can we challenge ourselves to gain push past comfort to allow some chaos as part of the learning process?

How can we begin to look at student engagement? Within schools, across the district and at Seton Hall?

- ❖ Establish pairs or trios of teachers within schools/university that are interested in improving their knowledge and skill associated with student engagement.
- ❖ Using the Danielson evaluation, specifically the elements for 3c, the pair/trio will select one item within an element for study. (i) activities and assignments; (ii) grouping of students; (iii) instructional materials and resources, and (iv) structure and pacing.
- ❖ The pair/trio will discuss and create an objective and means of assessing the results within their respective classrooms. Assessment may include observational data, survey responses from students, and quantitative measures.
- ❖ Timeframe: (i) Establish pair/trio and focus element for study by December 20th. (ii) Develop objective and approach to study by January 20th. (iii) Carry out study during February (iv) provide reflective write up by March 15th
- ❖ Looking across the pairs/trios, what elements were studied? What was learned about teacher and student behaviors to inform more student engagement? What was learned about developmental levels and student engagement?