Project Inclusion | Projet sur l'inclusion

Educator modules on disability, accessibility, and inclusion

Module 3 Record

Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Module 3 Record: Enabling engagement in choices, goals, and plans

Learning outcomes

1. Consider what meaningful engagement might look like for students with disabilities.
2. Describe the benefits of engagement for students with disabilities in developing their abilities to make choices, indicate preferences, and participate in activities related to self and classmates.
3. Apply at least 1 strategy that promotes engagement of students with disabilities in the classroom.
4. Know where to locate resources to promote engagement in making choices, goals, and plans.

Key message 1: Meaningful engagement enriches all students' educational experience.

Lived experience: Makumbu

Lived experience: Makumbu	Comments:
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Lived experience: Tristan

Lived experience: Tristan	Comments:
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Lived experience: Jonah

Lived experience: Jonah	Comments:
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Definition of meaningful engagement

Meaningful engagement in the academic context can be described as "meaningful student involvement throughout the learning environment."

(Martin and Torres, 2016)

Three key elements of engagement

- Others (e.g., peers, educators, EAs)
- Environment
- Curriculum

Strategies when students aren't engaged

- Student-centred approach
- Scaffolding student learning
- Supporting self-advocacy

Strategy 1: Using a student-centred approach

Use this approach to find out about a student's needs and how to support them to be successful.

This entails getting to know the student and asking what is the best way for them to learn new things and participate.

1. What helps you when you're learning new things?
   (Use a prompt: "What helped you when you learned "X"?")
2. How do you like to receive instructions?
   (Strategy options: Is it best when I tell you the instructions? When they are

written down for you to read?)

3. What is one thing you want me to know about how to best support you?

4. What helps you do your best work? What helps you feel better if you get tired or frustrated?

Talk to family, community resource organizations, or other resource people who are actively supporting the student.

Strategy 2: Scaffolding

You have used a student-centred approach resulting in a good conversation between you and the student. The student was engaged in the conversation and wanted to share strategies that work for them, and one of them is as follows:

One of the ways the student describes that they are most successful is when they have help to learn a new task or information. They tell you that if someone (a teacher, EA) can repeat the information and do the new task with them, and then check their work, they will eventually be able to do the new task mostly on their own.

Scaffolding is a strategy that can be used to support a student's learning and participation. This support can be offered by a teacher, an EA, a peer, family member, or others. The support is provided to the student while they are learning new material or participating in new activities.

Scaffolding uses what a student already has learned (concepts or material that they understand) or done to support them in learning new concepts or participating in new activities or challenges. The new elements can be explicitly linked to what the student already knows, thereby expanding the student's knowledge and experience base.

Strategy 3: Supporting self-advocacy

As students learn about themselves and about what enables their full engagement, adults can support them to share that information proactively when it would be helpful.

There are a number of great resources for supporting students in the development of self-advocacy skills. For example:

Ontario Teachers' Federation Self-advocacy-skills
School Mental Health Ontario and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario Self-awareness and sense of identity / Assertive communication
The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario LD@School
Fostering Advocacy for Students with LDs
LD@School includes information about "self-advocacy" cards.

Lived experience: Bryan

Lived experience: Bryan	Comments:
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Reflection/Discussion

What are you currently doing or what have you done in the past to increase your students with disabilities' engagement with:

- the curriculum
- each other
- the larger school environment?

Are there changes you could make that would contribute to the meaningful engagement of a student with a disability? (Consider things like physical space set-up, individual and group time activities, and expectations.)

Write your comments below:

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Key message 2: Provide developmentally appropriate decision-making opportunities.

Lived experience: Tristan

Lived experience: Tristan	Comments:
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Lived experience: Julia

Lived experience: Julia	Comments:
	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Reflection/Discussion

Think of a time in elementary school when you were asked to make a decision.

- What helped you make the decision?
- Who helped you?
- What strategies helped?

How about in high school?

Decision making is important for meaningful engagement

Developmentally appropriate choices provide opportunities for students to engage with:

- the person offering the choices (e.g., a teacher, an EA, family members)
- others involved in the choices (e.g., classmates)
- content of the choices (e.g., what is the student choosing between)

Some students with disabilities may not be able to participate in making choices; instead look for cues (physical, verbal, and behavioural) that indicate what their preference is.

Engagement in developmentally appropriate choices provides students with practice and skill-building so that they are able to engage in increasingly complex decision-making situations.

Supporting decision making

Students need to have a clear understanding of the scope of any decision that they are being asked to make. To facilitate engagement in making decisions, educators can support the student by checking the student's current understanding of the situation.

Then, if needed, discuss or facilitate the student's thinking about:

- choices
- likely outcome of those choices
- how the outcome could affect them / their classmates (if applicable)
- providing an opportunity to ask questions before making the choice

Reflection/Discussion

What types of choices and decisions naturally occur in your role/setting for the students you work with?

What barriers or challenges may students with disabilities face in engaging in these same decision-making opportunities?

Write your comments below:

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_____

Key message 3: See collaboration as vital and set clear expectations.

Lived experience: Clovis

Lived experience: Clovis	Comments:
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Strategy 1: Building a 3-way partnership

- Collaborate with parents/guardians as appropriate to create shared strategies for success that can be used at school and at home.
- Students are likely to be more successful with a single/similar approach across their environments because it reinforces learning and provides multiple opportunities to practice.
- This collaborative approach acknowledges that it is not one person's expertise or responsibility to encourage and scaffold participation and inclusion of students with disability; there are multiple stakeholders that have bigger/smaller roles to play.
- Consider having parents define how they would like to engage and the scope of their engagement.

Ideas

How do you build a strong partnership?

Consider these ideas:

- **Honest communication:** Students are experts in their own lives.
- **Engage others**: Leverage what others know about the student (e.g., ask the family and student what others would say are the student's strengths, qualities, and skills).
- **Get support:** Reach out to colleagues and other experts as needed (e.g., ask other teachers what strategies they have used in the past to build strong partnerships with families and students).

Resources

Parent engagement
Parent engagement: Working with families/Supporting student learning

Lived experience video: Amira

Lived experience: Amira	Comments:
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Lived experience video: Aaliyah

Lived experience: Aaliyah	Comments:
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Strategy 2: Setting expectations

Educators and school board staff know that clear expectations foster meaningful engagement and optimal learning.

- Don't be afraid to have expectations of students with disabilities.
- Be clear about rules, behaviours, targets.
- Start by setting small expectations. As the student gains mastery of skills or tasks, you can adjust the expectations to continue to push them forward.
- Remember that expectations can be academic, about things like peer interactions (taking turns), or even self-management, like asking for breaks when feeling frustrated.
- Collaboration between home and school helps to build students' ability and development of personal and learning skills.

Tips for setting expectations

Here are some tips for setting expectations:

- Together, clearly define the learning expectation(s).
- Ensure they are realistic—within the student's abilities but scaffolding on existing skills and knowledge.
- Make directions explicit for the student. Also, be clear about who they can ask for help.
- Ensure students who need an IEP have or get one.
- Break an expectation into smaller, achievable steps.
- Provide a way for students to let you know they need a break or a change in activity. Having this option can minimize frustration when faced with feelings of being overwhelmed.
- Set a plan for check-ins with the student on the larger expectation and smaller steps that have been assigned.
- Fade check-ins as the student's independence increases.

Consideration

Consider this:

You have a full class that includes students with and without disabilities.

Your expectation is that everybody is "ready to learn" once the class begins.

But what does "ready to learn" mean?

So many small tasks become second nature to us that we do not consider how much we are actually doing to prepare ourselves to do the activity. Some students with disabilities will benefit from breaking down the preparatory tasks so that they know what is required to be "ready" and "ready to learn."

Examples

Consider posting or providing a copy of what "ready to learn" means.

For example:

Step 1: School bell rings. Line up to go inside.
Step 2: Put personal items away (in your locker/cubby).
Step 3: Ensure adaptive aids or any other supports needed are ready to use.

Reflection/Discussion

Think of an experience you have had that brought one or more of the concepts illustrated in this module to life.

What enabled that to happen?

What difference did it make?

_____
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What is a simple action you can take to promote engagement of students with disabilities in choices, goals, and plans that will make a big difference? Write your comments below:

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Thank you for engaging in this learning. We would like to know about your experience with the module. Please take 5 minutes to do a short survey.

https://redcap.link/projectinclusion

Credits

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Module 3 Links and Resources

Links

Links are listed in the order in which they appear in the key messages. Where appropriate, we have included links to other resources mentioned in the module.

KM 1	User's guide and toolkit for the surveys of student engagement (Martin & Torres) Self-advocacy skills Self-awareness and sense of identity / Assertive communication Fostering advocacy for students with LDs
KM 2	To engage students,give them meaningful choices in the classroom
KM 3	Parent engagement Parent engagement: Working with families/Supporting student learning

Resources

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