

### Survey Question

### 19. Our class is busy learning and doesn't waste time

#### Australian Professional Standard

Professional Practice Domain

Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments

Focus areas:

- 4.1 Support student participation
- 4.2 Manage classroom activities
- 4.3 Manage challenging behaviour

#### What does this sound like in the classroom?

"There's no mucking around in this class. We're busy working from the minute we walk in the door. I like learning in this class; it just seems to run smoothly."

#### Why is this important?

Students need to be engaged in productive learning. Research has found that students may only be engaged in learning for about 40 to 50 percent of class time, and that there are great differences in the use of time between classrooms (Berliner, 1984; Hattie, 2009).

Time available for learning in a class can be categorized as allocated time, engaged time and productive learning time (Berliner, 1984). Allocated time is how much time a teacher schedules for a particular activity. A study observing primary school teachers found that there can be up to 70 minutes per day difference between how much time teachers allocate for reading instruction (Berliner, 1984). Effective scheduling of class time and tasks is an important part of planning to ensure learning time is maximized. This includes what content is covered, how much time is allocated to certain topics and pacing through the content (Berliner, 1984).

Simply allocating more time for a task does not necessarily mean students will learn more (Hattie, 2009). Students need to be engaged in the learning. Student engagement is difficult to define and measure but it does involve cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement (AITSL, 2013):

- Cognitive engagement is a psychological investment in learning and includes concentration, focus, dedication and commitment.
- Behavioural engagement is participation in learning and classroom activities. It includes good behaviour, following instructions, arriving on time, and participating in activities and group discussions.
- Emotional engagement involves relationships and an emotional bond between students and their teachers, classmates and school.

Strategies to increase engaged learning time are wide-ranging and relate to

a number of teaching strategies. Engaged learning is co-created, personal, connected and integrated (AITSL, 2014). Cognitive engagement can be increased through strategies to increase student motivation such as learning goals [link to related resource packs]. Emotional engagement can be increased through building effective student and teacher relationships [link to related resource packs].

Wasting time in class is usually associated with a lack of behavioural engagement. Time that students are behaviourally engaged can be increased through effective classroom management [link to related resource packs] to establish a safe, orderly and academically focused environment with high expectations for learning and minimal disruptive behaviours (Marzano, 2003).

Effective time management is also important to maximize engaged learning time. One study found that a teacher could use up 76 minutes a day on transitions between activities (start up/settling time, pack up time). Using even only 6 minutes of transition time per day adds up to half an hour of instruction time per week (Berliner, 1984).

It is important to note that students need to be engaged in productive tasks. Productive or academic learning time is the amount of time a student is engaged on tasks that actually improve their learning related to student outcomes. Increasing time on tasks without increasing productive time is unlikely to increase student performance (Hattie, 2009). Researchers like John Hattie (2009) and Robert Marzano (2003) have summarized which teaching strategies and tasks are more effective than others [link to related resource packs].

**What strategies have been shown to work in the classroom?**

Strategies that work in the classroom will generally involve consultative processes whereby the students and teacher work together to create an inclusive 'sharing' framework. Students can be more engaged when they see that their opinions are listened to, and used to transform pedagogical practices.

Fielding (2001) found that students will tend to adjust their behaviour depending on the context, and that the most disengaged students are least likely to raise their voices. For this reason alone it is important that strategies are employed in the classroom that provide opportunities for student voice, and the space for teachers to show that they care about student opinions. A meaningful discussion requires an environment where students are provided with:

- timely, positive, constructive feedback
- some expression of agreement, encouragement and appreciation
- challenging questions that encourage deep thinking
- the value of comparing and contrasting; everything is not right or wrong
- open praise of high quality work so other students can see what excellent work resembles

What three things can I try in my classroom tomorrow?

- opportunities to provide problem-solving responses as opposed to offering textbook definitions

1. Popsicle sticks. Each individual has their name written onto a popsicle stick, and as a teacher poses a question to the class, they draw a popsicle stick from the container. This allows each student to 'have a turn' and is a democratic approach to including all students.
2. Discussion tickets. Hand out one or two "tickets" to each student before a discussion starts. Once the discussion is underway, then every student who wishes to speak must first "pay" for the privilege by giving up a ticket. This exercise is useful for drawing out the comments of the more reticent students — and those who tend to speak most often begin to understand their pattern of conversation dominance (Blount & Napolitano, 2014).
3. Create a conversational space. Sometimes simply changing the configuration of seats can radically alter the flow of discussion in a class. If there is moveable furniture in a classroom, try shifting it around. Pay attention to the shape of arrangements, spacing (very important!), and the teacher's position within configurations. (Blount & Napolitano, 2014).

What opportunities are there for collaboration with my colleagues?

Ask a colleague if you can work with them to look at how time is used in your class. Surreptitiously assist them in timing start up/settling time, learning-focused time, time 'off task' for student/s, and packing up time. Together, you may be able to identify how much more time could be utilised for learning (if any). Share strategies for achieving this.

Where can I find out more?

Video:

- Teaching Channel: Laser pointer
- Teaching Channel: Roll the dice
- Teaching Channel: Engaging and motivating - student participation
- Teaching Channel: The Wingman

Referenced articles, books and other great reads:

- Berliner, D. C. (1984). The executive functions of teaching. In J. Osborn, P. T. Wilson, & R. C. Anderson, (Eds.), Reading education: Foundations for a literate America. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books. (Reprinted in L.W. Anderson, (Ed.) (1989), The effective teacher. New York: Random House.)
- Blount, M. & Napolitano, R. (2014) Leading Classroom Discussion. Iowa State University: Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. March 20 2014. Accessed 3 June 2015.
- Hattie, J.C. (2009), Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Relating to Achievement. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Hattie, J. (2013) Visible Learning for Teachers. Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Fielding, M. (2001) Beyond the Rhetoric of Student Voice: New Departures or New Constraints in the Transformation of 21st Century Schooling.
- Fielding, M. & Rudduck, J. (2003) The transformation potential of student voice:

Confronting the power issues, Conference paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association.

- Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET), (2007) Student Voice: A historical perspective and new directions. Accessed 12 May 2015.
- Mitra, D. (2004) The Significance of Students: Can Increasing 'Student Voice' in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development, Teachers College Record, Volume 106, Number 4.