



Student Engagement Strategies during Hybrid Learning: Understanding Teachers' Experiences

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Introduction

- ❑ Student engagement is linked to grades, standardized test performance, and high school graduation rates, which, in turn, have been associated with high rates of seeking post-secondary education and employment (e.g., Reschley & Christenson, 2012).
- ❑ Thus, it is critical to target efforts to improve student engagement.
- ❑ In Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures across most states in the United States (Education Week, 2020), during which teachers had to deliver instruction in virtual/hybrid formats.
- ❑ A major challenge experienced by teachers was effective engagement of students.

Current Study

- ❑ Developed an intervention: created the Student Engagement Toolbox
- ❑ Each week in April, 2021, via newsletters, teachers and staff were provided strategies falling in the following categories:
 - Ideas for Rewards
 - Instructional Strategies
 - Games to reinforce Content
 - Relationship Building Strategies
- ❑ **Aim of current study:** Understand teachers' experiences using the strategies

Method

Approach: Qualitative focus group

Participants:

- Recruited from an elementary school in the Mid-Atlantic region in June 2021
- Consisted of 5 teachers and 2 school counselors
- Ranged in age from 25 to 50 years ($M_{age} = 37.86$; $SD_{age} = 10.66$)

Measure: Used a structured interview protocol consisting of 9 questions with the aim of:

- Understanding teachers' experiences with using the strategies
- If they found the strategies and the format of receiving the information helpful
- If they had recommendations for improving the toolbox and its distributions in schools

Data analysis: Used thematic analysis methods

Results

Theme I: All participants found the format (engagement strategies provided via the newsletter) and the process (via email once a week) of receiving the engagement strategies helpful.

- Easy to read
- Convenient
- Visually appealing
- Amount of information conveyed was the right amount and not overwhelming

“I thought it was helpful that one [newsletter] was sent out each week. So, it's not like you're being like bombarded and it's just like it was a quick text to go along with the PDF that was sent just saying here's a quick, like engagement strategies newsletter that you can try out for the week.”

Theme II: Engagement strategies falling under the category of rewards and relationship building were used most frequently, and were found to be most helpful.

Most participants stated that the strategies falling under the category of **rewards** were most helpful and came at the right time.

“See the one I used the most was the rewards just because you know, I, at the end of the year, I was kind of out of ideas for reward cards, especially in the hybrid format. So, that was really helpful. I also think the one about relationships was relevant. The ones that had to do more with the content and the instructional strategies, I used less just because [name of school district] has such a robust curriculum that they already have so many different things in their content that we're supposed to be using.”

Participants found several strategies to be **effective in improving student engagement.**

“I saw {name of colleague} use some movement strategies for her kids to respond to different prompts, and then I saw {name of another colleague} do the secret student a few times and I would say, from being in her classroom they were very engaged and they really liked it, so it definitely worked.”

Results

Theme III: Timing of receiving specific categories of strategies is important.

- Relationship building strategies: beginning of the year
- Instructional strategies and games to reinforce content: middle of year
- Rewards: Throughout year, but most towards end of the year

Theme IV: Suggestions for improving intervention for future iterations

- Making time during existing team meetings for teachers to go over the material, try the strategies, and share experiences with the group at following meetings
- Have all the strategies listed in one document that they could use a one-stop-shopping resource
- Have an expert come to class to demonstrate the strategy, or create a video of the strategy and link it with the respective strategy in the Engagement Tool Box.

“I like the idea of watching someone do it, like observing or something, because I never even went and observed anybody like teaching or anything. So, I think that's kind of cool. Or even if somebody like was willing to like make a video of them and, like block down child's face or whatever it is, you know, and then they are like demonstrating it in the video, I think that would be cool.”

Discussion

- ❑ One of the first studies to examine teachers' experiences with engagement strategies during the pandemic.
- ❑ Findings were promising: helped improve student engagement.
- ❑ Engagement strategies can be adapted for in-person learning as well.

Future directions and Implications:

- ❑ Build on existing toolbox by incorporating participants' suggestions
- ❑ Teachers are overwhelmed; school psychologists can support teachers by providing them with engagement strategies, and in turn, support student learning
- ❑ Need to replicate the findings with a larger sample
- ❑ Adapt strategies for middle and high school children

- To access the Student Engagement Toolbox, please click on this [link](#)!
- Questions: mazneen@umd.edu