

# I'D RATHER BE PICKING DAISIES ENGAGING THE DISENGAGED IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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## What does it mean for students to be engaged?

Engagement is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses students' sense of belonging and connectedness to their school, teachers and peers; their sense of agency, self-efficacy and orientation to achieve within their classrooms and in their broader extra-curricular endeavours' their involvement, effort, levels of concentration and interest in subjects and learning in general' and the extent to which learning is enjoyed for its own sake, or seen as something that must be endured to receive a reward or avoid sanction. Further, engagement is a variable state of being that is influenced by a range of internal and external factors including the perceived value or relevance of the learning and the presence of opportunities for students to experience appropriately-pitched challenge and success in their learning. As such engagement is malleable by the actions of teachers.

Gibbs and Poskitt (2010, p10)

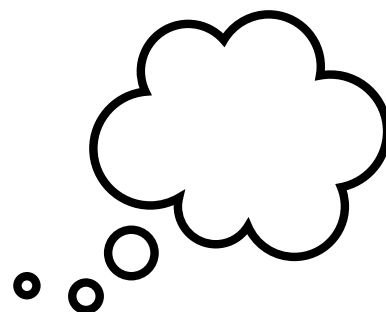
## Be a reflective practitioner who looks for opportunities to grow.

We can use student disengagement as an instigator for critical review on our practice, systems, and policies. Invite this as an opportunity to find ways to improve what you do and how you do it to provide better opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for your students.

- Reflect on you practice
- Reflect on your programmes
- Reflect of school systems

Ask yourself questions such as:

- Do I know why they are disengaged?
- What do I need to know to better meet their needs?
- What about my teaching approach do I need to change?
- Is my planning or school systems limiting my ability to provide the best opportunities for my students? What can I do about this?
- Do I need external support to help me create change?



# How can you engage the daisy pickers or the sideline standers in physical education?

**Connect with the learner** – ask them what games they enjoy playing and why. What are their favourites? Make time for these games and ideas to be a part of the learning, as this gives the learner voice and makes them feel heard.

**Be relevant** - find out what makes them tick and connect that with learning in physical education.

- Are they a book lover? Look for ways to use books and stories as the basis of your learning and game play, such as creating games based on familiar stories or exploring movements described in picture books.
- Are they into gaming? Look for ways you can gamify their learning by applying game principles such as point scoring, achievement badges or rules of play.
- Are they creative? Look for ways you can enhance opportunities to be creative in physical education, such as developing their own games, exploring a variety of equipment.

**Get them involved** – (particularly older students - Yr5+) ask them to be a part of the planning process so they can understand what their learning outcomes are and can contribute to what that might look like for them. Share the planning and learning outcomes with the students and ask them for games and activities that would help them to gain this understanding. At first, students may not be great at their selections, but allowing them to try out their choices and then evaluate how appropriate they were is all part of the learning process. The more they are a part of this, the better they will get.

**Use up to date contexts** – what are the fads or high interest topics that are circulating among your students? How can you use these in your teaching? Try using Tik Tok, music and short dance routines as a context for learning.

**Manage the competitive element in your physical education programmes.** Not everything has to be competitive. At times, using competitive play can be an effective way to meet learning outcomes, but when it is always used in physical education, students who are not naturally competitive are often disadvantaged. How can you use co-operative play, problem solving play or exploratory play to meet learners needs? Try this: spice up a traditionally competitive game, like netball, and reimagine it as a cooperative game, where students are working together to gain as many goals as they can in a certain time frame. You could add other challenges, for example, they cannot shoot in the same hoop back-to-back.

## Further reading...

Gibbs, R. & Poskitt, J.(2010). *Student Engagement in the Middle Years of Schooling (Years 7-10): A Literature Review Report to Ministry of Education*  
[www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications)



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