For the classroom

Applying engagement strategies in a daily lesson

Build Relationships: Always start by meeting your students at the door with a smile and genuine enthusiasm. Before students can be excited about learning, a teacher must be excited about teaching. Remember, you may have to overcome many trapdoors or skeletons students bring to the classroom. Talk to your students, get to know them, care about them as people as much as you care about them as students. Create a classroom that is a safe, nurturing environment for everyone. And never forget, be a person. Laugh and love teaching!

Set Up Structure: Routines and strategies must be implemented to maintain order and structure so that active instruction can take place and students are engaged in learning. Begin class by stating your behavioral and academic expectations. Students need to be told how you expect them to interact while they learn, which may be different depending on your learning activity. Arrange the classroom to maximize student learning. Use cooperative learning groups and allow students to talk and interact. Plan your lesson, including a time line and a variety of activities. See yourself as the facilitator rather than the teacher, and have a target that students do about 80% of the talking in class. Maintain pace. Do not rush, and avoid “dead time.” Reward on-task behavior through genuine praise and positive reinforcement while using simple cues and prompts to gently address minor situations such as inappropriate talking and fidgeting.

State Relevance: Before students engage in learning, they need to understand why what they are learning is relevant. Begin class by stating your academic objective and specifically tell the students why it is important to learn what you are teaching. Be sure to make this an active, engaging discussion. Use data to differentiate instruction for your below-grade-level and above-grade-level students. Be sure to set personal goals and have students track personal growth and achievement using a scale.

Have Fun: Make your lesson fun. Laugh and enjoy. Simply put, teachers should love teaching, and students should love learning. Along with collaborative groups, use facilitative teaching strategies that promote student independence, leadership and exploration so that students talk more than the teacher. Novelty and variety are important. Use games and student challenges, and always celebrate success!