

## **Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility**

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### **Three Types of Engagement**

JOHN ALMARODE: Back in the '70s, Robert Berliner, who was a faculty member at Arizona State, said that engaging students in relevant content is something for which there is no substitute. And so engagement is actually one of the primary things we aim for in classrooms. If we want them to learn something, they have to engage in what they're learning, otherwise, they're going to learn something else, because that's where their attention, their focus and their minds are.

So one of the mistakes and one of the challenges we have in the classroom is treating engagement as a single idea. We often walk into classrooms and say the student is or the student isn't engaged, when, in fact, engagement is much more complex. So engagement, as a concept, has three main components. So an individual can be emotionally engaged. How do they feel about the content, and how do they feel right now? Did they have a bad morning? Did they have a good morning? Did someone pick on them on the school bus? Did they remember a test? Are they getting ready to learn something that fascinates them? So how they feel at this moment.

The second aspect of engagement is cognitive engagement. What is that we ask them to think about? And the cognitive principle behind that is, we only remember what we think about. And so if learners aren't thinking about what we want them to learn, and they're thinking about something else, then guess what they're going to remember? The something else. So once we get them thinking about it, the next step is behavioural engagement. That's where they're motivated, or prompt to action. They either are or they aren't going to engage in the task or the activity in front of them. That's going to be based on what they're thinking, and how they feel.

So student engagement has three main parts; emotional, cognitive and behavioural engagement. And they actually fall in that order. How we feel determines what we think about, and what we think about prompts us to action. Sometimes that's inactivity if the student decides to disengage. But we'd like it to be activity, because they are thinking about the content and they're engaging in the tasks that we designed for them.

So well-being ties directly to engagement. If the student's emotional and social and psychological well-being is not addressed, is not taken care of, you know, we kind of go back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs; it's an oldie, but goodie. If their psychological needs, if their emotional needs, if their safety needs aren't met, then it's going to be very hard to get them to think about long division. It's going to get

very difficult to ask them to read pieces of literature, if they don't feel safe and comfortable in whatever environment they find themselves in. So well-being at the social, emotional and psychological level has a strong influence on what happens in our classrooms when we then move to cognitive well-being. So they all fit together.

In fact, some of the biggest predictors on whether kids will or won't grow in their learning are actually psychosocial or social emotional factors. So if we don't pay attention to those first, long division becomes a distant second. So how they feel is real. It's the link to how they think.