



REAL CHALLENGES REAL SOLUTIONS *Hand in Hand* WITH TEACHERS

ROB DEAN
International Teacher Trainer

STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is an essential part of the learning process. A lack of engagement, especially among teenagers:

- creates classroom management and potential discipline problems,
- can also affect others and make life difficult for the rest of the class,
- can become permanent and can be a barrier to progress.

1 CHALLENGE 1: Affect and attitude

This issue relates to the way the teacher relates to the members of the class. Disengagement can arise if the teacher doesn't show an interest in the individual class members.

SOLUTIONS

- Get to know and use the students' names as quickly and as often as possible.
- Memorise one fact about each member of the class and refer to it in the lessons.
- Show professionalism as a teacher – be fair and consistent.

2 CHALLENGE 2: Teenage relevant topics

Students will not express enthusiasm for something that they cannot already relate to in some way in their everyday lives.

SOLUTIONS

- Ensure that there is a strong connection between the topics we use in the classroom and the contexts that students are already interested in outside school.
- When working on language skills, begin with the known – a familiar and interesting topic – and use that as springboard to move into the new.

3 CHALLENGE 3: Activities relevant to students' interests

A lack of variety, personalisation, interactivity or enjoyment will create boredom and a lack of engagement among the class.

SOLUTIONS

- Provide a clear sense of purpose in the activities you use. Students need to know why we do what we do.
- Personalise activities whenever possible. Make sure the classroom activities reflect how we use language in our everyday lives.
- Ensure interactivity in the classroom. Students need a frequent change of energy levels to maintain interest in the lesson.

4 CHALLENGE 4: Agency

Allowing students to have some influence on the lesson and the learning process. Students can become disengaged if they feel their ideas and input to the lesson are being ignored.

SOLUTIONS

- Give learners an element of control over certain aspects of the running of the class. Allow students to take the role of the teacher occasionally.
- Give choices, i.e. by recording and memorising vocabulary in the way that best suits their own learning style.

REMEMBER about the four areas to ensure students' engagement:

- **affect and attitude** – taking an interest in your learners and ensuring fairness and consistency at all times.
- **topics** – bringing into the classroom the contexts that students enjoy in their everyday lives.
- **activities** – with purpose, personalisation, interactivity, and variety.
- **agency** – allowing students an element of involvement and choice in the way the classroom is run and in the way they learn.