

Engaging Students

Presented to the Commonweal Foundation's Leadership Forum

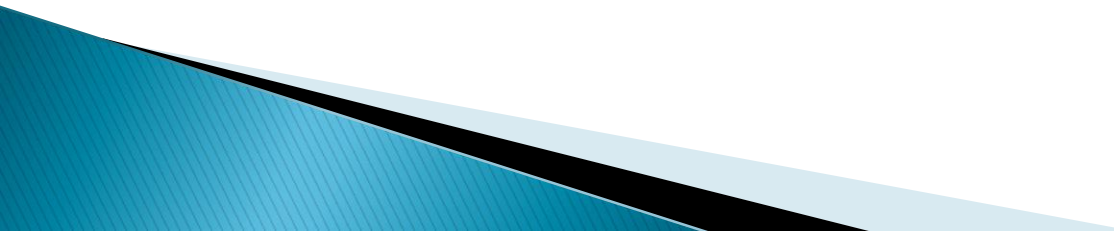
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Child Trends

Our Mission


Child Trends *seeks to* improve outcomes for children by providing research and analysis to the people and institutions whose decisions and actions affect children:

- Programs that serve children and families
 - Policy makers
 - Foundations and philanthropists
 - The media
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What We Do

- Track & analyze trends and identify emerging issues
 - Evaluate programs and policies
 - Provide data-driven, evidence-based guidance on policy and practice
 - Design, field, and analyze surveys
 - Design and conduct qualitative studies
 - Summarize, synthesize and communicate research literature
 - Help inform the nation's research agenda for children
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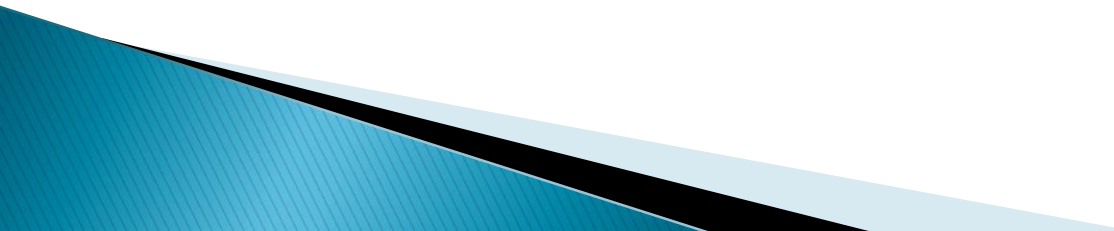
The Problem

- ▶ Two out of three HS students are bored at least every day in class (High School Survey of Student Engagement)
 - Lack of interest and relevance of material
 - Level of difficulty of material (too easy or hard)
 - Inadequate interaction with teacher
 - ▶ 20% of HS students think about dropping out
 - ▶ Engagement is declining, especially among boys
 - ▶ It declines as students age
 - ▶ Students disengage from contexts that do not meet their needs
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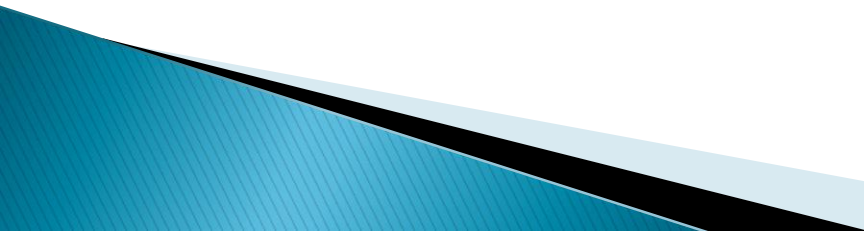
Why is Engagement Important?

- ▶ Disengaged students have:
 - Low academic achievement
 - Poor attendance
 - Behavior problems
 - Poor emotional, social, and mental health
 - Higher risk for dropping out
 - Higher risk for early sexual activity and substance use and delinquency
 - ▶ Improving student engagement may be the best way to close the achievement gap
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Ways that Students Engage

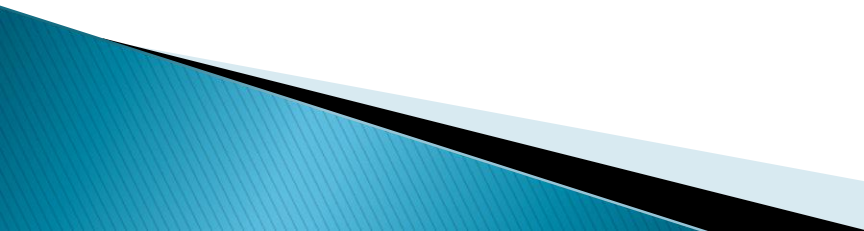
- ▶ Behavioral engagement
 - ▶ Emotional engagement
 - ▶ Cognitive engagement
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What is Behavioral Engagement?

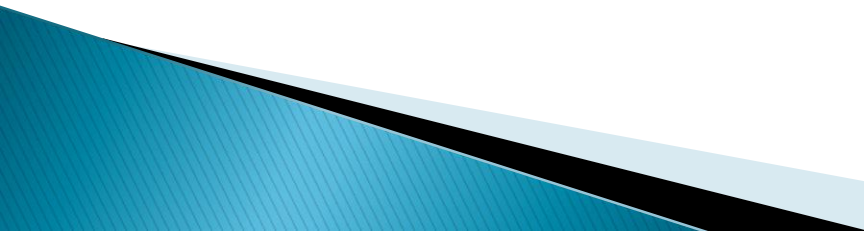
- ▶ Good attendance
 - ▶ Coming to class prepared
 - ▶ Doing homework and class work
 - ▶ Positive conduct/not disruptive
 - ▶ Participating in class
 - ▶ Participating in after-school activities
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- ▶ Students who participate in class, complete coursework and participate in activities, particularly service learning, have higher attendance and test scores, and higher rates of graduation
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What is Emotional engagement?

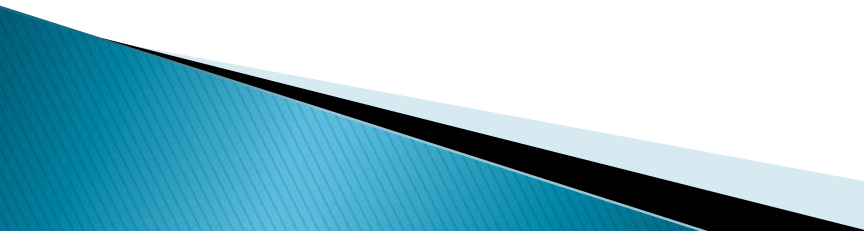
- ▶ Liking school
 - ▶ Being a student identity is an important part of who they are
 - ▶ Feeling connected to school through positive relationships with other students and staff

 - ▶ Emotional engagement is related to higher motivation, confidence, attendance, grades, test scores, and fewer suspensions
 - ▶ Students who fail or dropout report feeling disconnected from teachers and peers
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What is Cognitive engagement?

- ▶ Interest in subject matter in and out of school
 - ▶ Working hard to do well
 - ▶ Mastery motivation
 - ▶ Self-regulation to complete work
 - ▶ Going beyond basic requirements
 - ▶ Thinking highly of their academic abilities
 - ▶ Setting goals for academic success
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- ▶ Cognitive engagement increases achievement and graduation and supports life-long learning
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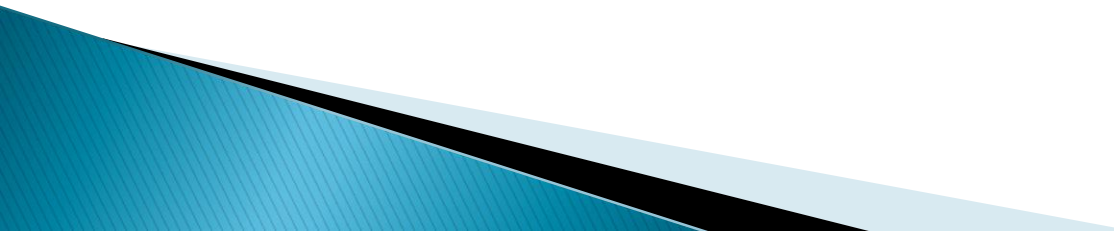
How Can Engagement be Improved?

- ▶ What can students do?
 - ▶ What can teachers do?
 - ▶ What can other school staff do?
 - ▶ How can school climate help?
 - ▶ What can parents do?
 - ▶ How can connections to work help?
 - ▶ How can connections to community help?
 - ▶ What programs work to improve engagement?
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Students

- ▶ Healthy habits: sleep, nutrition, exercise, safety, bathroom breaks, avoid drugs and alcohol
 - ▶ Age appropriate autonomy and choice
 - ▶ Students centered learning–identify interests
 - ▶ High standards, expectations, and goals
 - ▶ Understand steps to reaching goals
 - ▶ Respect for teachers and other students
 - ▶ Character development and social/emotional learning skills
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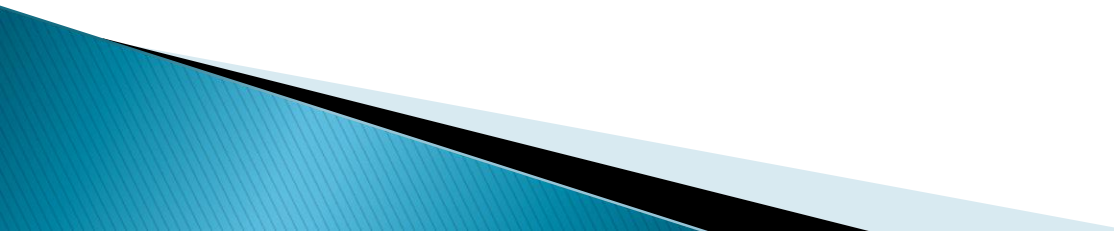
Student Participation

- ▶ Group/team learning
 - ▶ Participate in class and after-school activities
 - ▶ Participate in community service
 - ▶ Peer support for studying, participating in class and activities
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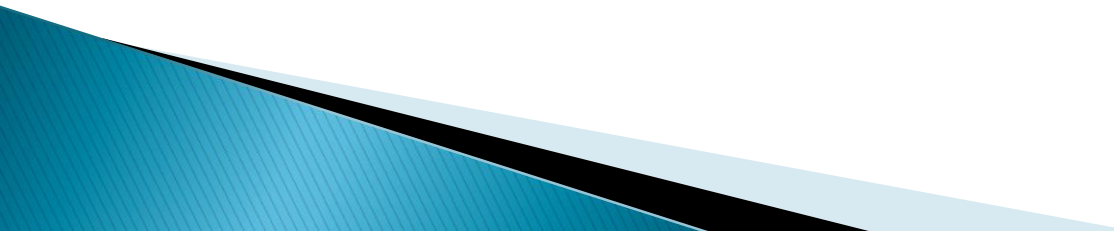
Teachers

- ▶ Create interesting, relevant, challenging curricula centered on student interests
 - ▶ Connect curricula to the world of work
 - ▶ Set clear and consistent goals
 - ▶ Support and reward student effort, not grades
 - ▶ Invite participation in class and decision-making
 - ▶ Create interactive and group learning opportunities and avoid lecturing
 - ▶ Teachers as coaches, facilitators
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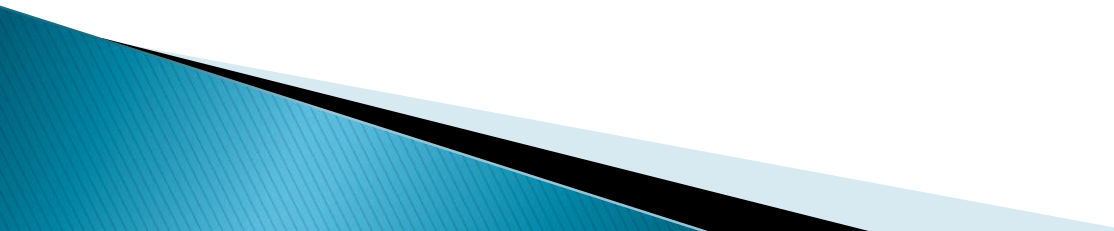
...and other school staff

- ▶ Restorative Justice, not punitive
 - ▶ Learn child development
 - ▶ Honor and mirror the whole child: background, culture, physical, emotional, cognitive and spiritual strengths
 - ▶ Develop positive, supportive, trusting relationships with students and each other
 - ▶ Model good character and social skills
 - ▶ Encourage family involvement
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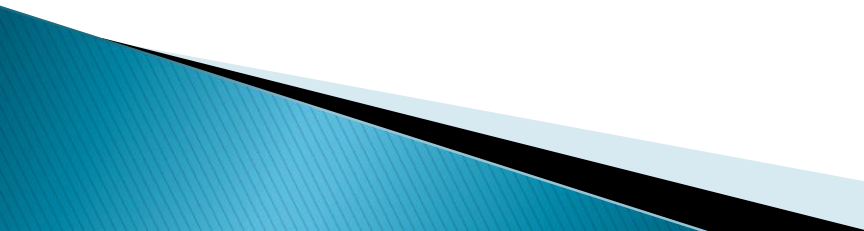
School climate: Engaging

- ▶ Caring community
 - ▶ Respect for all students
 - ▶ Community of learners with high expectations for all
 - ▶ Mentoring
 - ▶ Tiered interventions: individual, groups, and whole school (PBIS)
 - ▶ Access to services for those in need
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School Climate: Safe

- ▶ Proactive physical and emotional protection
 - Foster emotional support
 - Prevent hate speech/bullying
 - SEL and character ed programs that teach conflict resolution, anger management, positive communication rather than metal detectors
 - ▶ School-wide effects of violence, bullying, substance use
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School Climate: Positive Environment

- ▶ High quality and personalized instruction
 - ▶ Academic support for struggling students
 - ▶ High expectations
 - ▶ Collective responsibility for promoting achievement and discipline
 - ▶ Clear, fair, consistent discipline and restorative justice
 - ▶ High teacher satisfaction
 - ▶ Good teaching materials and conditions
 - ▶ Clean, comfortable environment
 - ▶ School-wide celebrations of success
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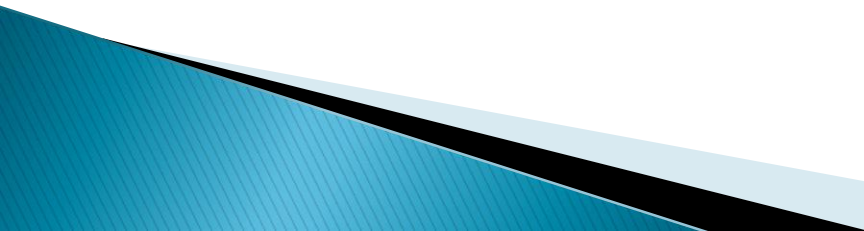
Parents

- ▶ Take interest in school work
- ▶ Reinforce academic, social, and emotional lessons at home
- ▶ Provide time and materials for school work
- ▶ Model doing math and reading
- ▶ Take child to activities related to school work
- ▶ Get involved in school
 - Attend school-wide meetings
 - Help with discipline policies
 - Attend parent-teacher conferences and keep in contact
 - Hold staff accountable
 - Show up when child performs
 - Volunteer and fundraise

Workplace connections

- ▶ Go beyond job fairs
 - ▶ Provide linkages to employers and employment
 - ▶ internships
 - ▶ Mentorships
 - ▶ Field trips and visits to schools by professionals
 - ▶ Link class content to occupations
 - ▶ Organize several classes around work themes
 - Example: environment
 - Make it REAL!
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Community connections

- ▶ Community service increases engagement in school
 - ▶ Develops skills such as leadership, teamwork; accountability, compassion, social skills, working with diverse groups
 - ▶ Positive feedback...appreciation...giving is the gift
 - ▶ Seeing immediate results
 - ▶ Learning about one's own gifts to develop
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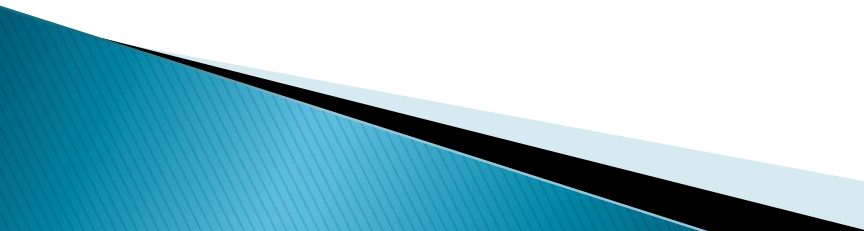
Evidence-Based Program Examples

- ▶ **Building Assets–Reducing Risks**
 - Builds social competency and positive relationships
 - Increases student engagement
 - Prevents substance abuse
- ▶ **First Things First**
 - Small learning communities of students/teachers
 - Family and student advocate system
 - Engaging and rigorous instruction

Evidence-Based Program Examples

- ▶ **Caring School Community**
 - K-6
 - Builds community
 - Strengthens student connectedness
 - Increases student motivation and achievement
 - Reduces violence, drug use, delinquency
- ▶ **Big Picture Schools (HS)**
 - Taps student interests and community needs
- ▶ **Diploma Plus (HS)**
 - Competency based and real world projects/internships

Evidence-Based Program Examples

- ▶ Career Academies
 - Schools within schools offering career-related curricula and work experience
 - ▶ Career and Technical education (CTE)
 - Keeps students engaged with hands on training
 - Pathways to work and postsecondary ed
 - ▶ Transfer schools
 - Blended GED programs and intensive career exploration, counseling and workforce readiness
 - ▶ Dual enrollment and early college initiatives
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Resources

- ▶ CASEL <http://casel.org>
- ▶ Child Trends LINKS database
<http://childtrends.org>
- ▶ IES what works clearinghouse
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks>
- ▶ National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence
 - <http://promoteprevent.org/publications/ebi-factsheets>
- ▶ Safe and Supportive Schools TA
- ▶ <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov>



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