

## **Eight Tips to Engage Your Students**

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"We cannot use the excuse 'I've always done it this way,'" said speaker Laura Erlauer Myrah. In the session "Instructional Tips to Tell Teachers," Laura Erlauer Myrah provided eight tips for educators and teachers to engage their students and allow them to remember concepts taught in class. The eight tips cover categories such as the body and brain, movement, emotional environment, collaboration, relevant learning, enriched environment, and Net Generation learners.

In the first category, "body and brain," Erlauer Myrah referred to research that supported children needing oxygen and water so that their brains would not become dehydrated. She suggested that teachers open windows in the classroom, have plants in class, allow students to carry water bottles, and educate parents about the need for students to get adequate sleep. But students need more than proper sleep, hydration, and oxygen to remain engaged in the material.

Erlauer Myrah offered a tip on how to make a lesson that students can be engaged in. She provided research from Sheryl Feinstein, "Handling Specific Problems in Classroom Management" in *The Praeger Handbook of Learning and the Brain* (2006) as the basis for her tip on how to change the lesson plan to accommodate how the brain works:

Capture your students' attention in the beginning of a lesson. For example, when you begin class, instead of using the first 10 minutes to take attendance or review daily tasks, use that time to teach the most important concepts. This is the time that students are most engaged, according to Erlauer Myrah. For the next few minutes, allow the students to "pair and share" what they have learned with one another. Then, use the next seven minutes of prime time to teach some more concepts.

The four main takeaway points that teachers should want for their students are: know the concept, want to know more about the concept, know what was learned, and know how students can use and apply the concept.

A 1st grade teacher from Southern California enjoyed the session and felt that she could use the tips for her students. "What I really enjoyed about the session were the practical tips given," said Lisa Taylor.

Another member of the audience was also inspired by Erlauer Myrah's tips. "I loved the session. It was inspirational, motivating, practical, and respectful of the hardships and challenges within the education world," said Dr. Marcia Richards after she had finished dancing a two-step to Kool and the Gang's "Celebration." She also has hope that teachers will "continue to make a difference in children's lives."

This session suggested that in the 21st century, teachers should embrace the changes that are happening in the world and allow them to be available to the students. The old ways of teaching are of value, but if the students aren't engaged and learning anything beyond the classroom, they will not be prepared to thrive in this new world.

8 Tips that can be used in the classroom on the following page:

<http://www.ascd.org/conferences/annual-conference/conference-daily/2011-eight-tips.aspx>

# Eight Tips to Engage Your Students

## 1. Body and Brain

- Open windows
- Have plants in classrooms
- Allow your students to have water bottles
- Educate parents and students regarding the need for adequate sleep

## 2. Movement

- Ask your students to stand instead of raising their hands
- Questions around the room
- Clapping rhythms
- New location for important material

## 3. Emotional Environment

- Make every student feel unique and secure
- Meet and greet
- Give recognition
- Listen and show interest
- Expect respect from all
- Relationships transcend everything
- Emotions and memory

## 4. Collaboration

- Collaborative learning/projects
- Pair and share (tell students to talk to classmates and practice answers)
- Connections with other levels
- Connections with community

## 5. Relevant Learning

- Make the relevance obvious to students
- Make it interesting and fun through your delivery
- Experience learning

## 6. Enriched Environment

- Challenging problem solving
- Physical classroom
- You can play music during tests or writing
- Use of music: a. Primer; b. Carrier; c. Arousal/Mood

## 7. Assessment and Feedback

- Know it well
- Remember it always
- Use it readily

## 8. Net Generation Learners

- Youth don't see working, learning, collaborating, and having fun as separate experiences.
- They believe in, and want, these experiences occurring simultaneously in school and in future careers.
- This generation wants to problem-solve and innovate.

Related Links:

[The Brain-Compatible Classroom: Using What We Know About Learning to Improve Teaching](#) (ASCD, 2003).  
["Handling Specific Problems in Classroom Management."](#) The Praeger Handbook of Learning and the Brain (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

## **Back to Basics**

### **Lessons from the Past**

Maintaining Classroom Discipline (1947). Good and bad methods of disciplining inappropriate classroom behaviour. This was a very well made instructional movie for teachers. While there are new & different problems in the modern schools, the basic ideas of this film still holds. The opening messages are exactly what the best research on classroom behaviour tells us:

1. The vast majority of behaviour problems in the classroom involve minor breaches of discipline.
2. These incidents originate in the classroom situation itself and are within the control of the teacher.
3. Disciplinary problems in the classroom are symptoms of underlying weaknesses in total learning situation. BY CONTRASTING METHODS OF HANDLING THE SAME CLASS, TECHNIQUES ARE SHOWN FOR SECURING CLASS DISCIPLINE and STIMULATING THE INTEREST OF STUDENTS.

Producer: McGraw-Hill Films; Creative Commons license: Public Domain.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHzTUYAOKPM>

### **Maintaining Classroom Discipline by using Democratic Methods**

Practicing Democracy in the Classroom (1953). Points out that democratic techniques are more effective in teaching good citizenship than laissez-faire and authoritarian methods. This educator instruction film advocates the use of democratic principles within the classroom. Even today, so many classrooms based around teacher centred, autocratic methodologies, this is a timely message. This film displays many practices that are at the heart of progressive educational thought: student centred learning, authentic tasks, collaborative work, authentic assessment. This is all couched in the framework of bolstering democracy, which ironically it does, by promoting an independently thinking citizen that tries to gather facts and reason, rather than relying on talking head demagogues.

Producer: Educational Film Service. Creative Commons license: Public Domain.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yObnwkvh1o>

### **Democratic Classrooms**

Marcos Torres discusses the move from an authoritarian classroom to a democratic one.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGo39WDm3J4&feature=related>

### **Whole Brain Teaching Middle School**

This video of Sean Kavanaugh shows the introduction of class-yes, the 5 rules, and teach-okay for a Denver 8th grade science class. The students were not coached prior to the video and did not practice. This is WBT in its most raw, inner city form. For 1000s of pages of free downloads go to WholeBrainTeaching.com

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTmmkoJqOGA&feature=related>

### **7 days to a Great Classroom**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wx-BQT-V5Wg&feature=related>

### **AirTraffic Worldwide**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XBwjQsOEeg>