**MULTIPLE MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT**

**Affect** represents a crucial element to learning, and **learners differ markedly in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated to learn**. There are a variety of sources that can influence individual variation in affect including neurology, culture, personal relevance, subjectivity, and background knowledge, along with a variety of other factors. Some learners are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers. In reality, **there is not one means of engagement that will be optimal for all learners in all contexts**; providing multiple options for engagement is essential

**Information that is not attended to, that does not engage learners’ cognition, is in fact inaccessible.** It is inaccessible both in the moment and in the future, because relevant information goes unnoticed and unprocessed. As a result, teachers devote considerable effort to recruiting learner attention and engagement. But learners differ significantly in what attracts their attention and engages their interest. Even the same learner will differ over time and circumstance; their “interests” change as they develop and gain new knowledge and skills, as their biological environments change, and as they develop into self-determined adolescents and adults. It is, therefore, important to have alternative ways to recruit learner interest, ways that reflect the important inter- and intra-individual differences amongst learners

**Optimize individual choice and autonomy**

In an instructional setting, it is often inappropriate to provide choice of the learning objective itself, but it is often appropriate to offer choices in how that objective can be reached, in the context for achieving the objective, in the tools or supports available, and so forth. Offering learners choices can develop self-determination, pride in accomplishment, and increase the degree to which they feel connected to their learning. However, it is important to note that individuals differ in how much and what kind of choices they prefer to have. It is therefore not enough to simply provide choice. The right kind of choice and level of independence must be optimized to ensure engagement.

* Provide learners with as much discretion and autonomy as possible by providing choices in such things as:
	+ The level of perceived challenge
	+ The type of rewards or recognition available
	+ The context or content used for practicing and assessing skills
	+ The tools used for information gathering or production
	+ The color, design, or graphics of layouts, etc.
	+ The sequence or timing for completion of subcomponents of tasks
* Allow learners to participate in the design of classroom activities and academic tasks
* Involve learners, where and whenever possible, in setting their own personal academic and behavioral goal

# Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity

Individuals are engaged by information and activities that are relevant and valuable to their interests and goals. This does not necessarily mean that the situation has to be equivalent to real life, as fiction can be just as engaging to learners as non-fiction, but it does have to be relevant and authentic to learners’ individual goals and the instructional goals. Individuals are rarely interested in information and activities that have no relevance or value. In an educational setting, one of the most important ways that teachers recruit interest is to highlight the utility and relevance, of learning and to demonstrate that relevance through authentic, meaningful activities. It is a mistake, of course, to assume that all learners will find the same activities or information equally relevant or valuable to their goals. To recruit all learners equally, it is critical to provide options that optimize what is relevant, valuable, and meaningful to the learner.

* Vary activities and sources of information so that they can be:
	+ Personalized and contextualized to learners’ lives
	+ Culturally relevant and responsive
	+ Socially relevant
	+ Age and ability appropriate
	+ Appropriate for different racial, cultural, ethnic, and gender groups
* Design activities so that learning outcomes are authentic, communicate to real audiences, and reflect a purpose that is clear to the participants
* Provide tasks that allow for active participation, exploration and experimentation
* Invite personal response, evaluation and self-reflection to content and activities
* Include activities that foster the use of imagination to solve novel and relevant problems, or make sense of complex ideas in creative way

# Minimize threats and distractions

One of the most important things a teacher can do is to create a safe space for learners. To do this, teachers need to reduce potential threats and distractions in the learning environment. When learners have to focus their attention on having basic needs met or avoiding a negative experience they cannot concentrate on the learning process. While the physical safety of a learning environment is of course necessary, subtler types of threats and distractions must be attended to as well; what is threatening or potentially distracting depends on learners’ individual needs and background. An English Language Learner might find language experimentation threatening, while some learners might find too much sensory stimulation distracting. The optimal instructional environment offers options that reduce threats and negative distractions for everyone to create a safe space in which learning can occur.

* Create an accepting and supportive classroom climate
* Vary the level of novelty or risk
	+ Charts, calendars, schedules, visible timers, cues, etc. that can increase the predictability of daily activities and transitions
	+ Creation of class routines
	+ Alerts and previews that can help learners anticipate and prepare for changes in activities, schedules, and novel events
	+ Options that can, in contrast to the above, maximize the unexpected, surprising, or novel in highly routinized activities
* Vary the level of sensory stimulation
	+ Variation in the presence of background noise or visual stimulation, noise buffers, number of features or items presented at a time
	+ Variation in pace of work, length of work sessions, availability of breaks or time-outs, or timing or sequence of activities
* Vary the social demands required for learning or performance, the perceived level of support and protection and the requirements for public display and evaluation
* Involve all participants in whole class discussions