

keeping learning going...

how can we keep our secondary learners
motivated + engaged?



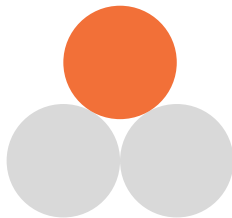
why is this important?

Motivation and engagement are paramount to achieving the best learning outcomes, but with such a variety of learners in every classroom, it's one of our biggest challenges.

In fact, research tells us that up to 70% of students don't think about a lesson again once it is over! In our classrooms we are highly skilled at knowing which students are not engaged in particular activities and in getting them back on track. Now we have the additional challenge of keeping our learners motivated and engaged in a remote learning environment. Whilst using the eyes all teachers have in the back of our head is harder when we're learning remotely, there are some great opportunities for designing and delivering engaging and motivating learning experiences.

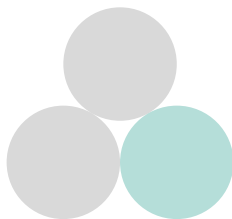
There is a lot of information available on student engagement and no doubt you already implement a bunch of successful strategies with your students. Below are some of the best tips we've used and come across.

key ideas in this kit



real-life learning

Making learning authentic and linking it to the lives of our learners.



gamifying learning

Taking all of the lessons from computer games and applying them to remote learning design.



self-directed learning

Handing ownership of the learning over to the learners themselves.

real-life learning

reflection

Great educators are always trying to connect learning to the lives of our students. We're usually armed with the answer to the inevitable teenage question, 'Why are we learning this?' but it's not always easy with a broad curriculum and lots of learning to cover. The best learning happens when students can dive deeply into a concept or skill and connect it to their experiences of the world.

How have you integrated real-life learning already in this period of 'Learning in the Time of Corona?'

tools

Here are some practical ways many teachers are ensuring that learning is motivating and engaging for secondary learners by linking it to the *why* and the real world:

- **Real world projects:** Whilst real world learning might be a little more challenging in a remote learning context, we can design learning that is linked to projects at home. We have seen some great authentic learning where students are taking on new tasks at home, like being challenged to cook a gourmet meal for their parents. Setting up a Masterchef audition can be linked to learning outcomes in Food Technology, Chemistry and Maths. The learning design doesn't need to be revolutionary, just purposeful. Engagement and motivation is enhanced through a real sense of purpose to the learning (and hey, parents are going to thank you for getting their teenagers helping around the house more!).
- **Current events:** Linking learning to the changing world and current events has never been more pertinent! With the news cycle rolling on most televisions across Australia and Spotify playlists being interrupted to tell us to wash our hands, young people are bombarded by COVID-19 media every day. Capitalising on this exposure and natural curiosity of our learners, we can use websites like Newsela to give us ideas about linking lessons and learning sequences to current events. Keeping our teenagers informed is important but we need to arm them with the skills to identify 'fake news' and the value of reading across two or three reputable sources. Set up a regular Fake News Discussion Group to discuss and debate the different things your students will be reading. There are loads of juicy conspiracy theories floating around and teenagers will love hacking into these if you give them structured time and the analytical tools to do it.

real-life learning

- **Serving the local community:** With coronavirus having an impact on some of the most vulnerable in our communities, there are some very authentic opportunities for students to engage in service learning. Try organising a Zoom call with someone from your local St Vincent De Paul and get your students talking to them about how they're keeping the homeless safe, or how they're delivering food packages to those who need them. Get students designing solutions to the local challenges they are seeing, like setting up an educational toy library for pre-school kids not at kindergarten, or systems for food deliveries for elderly neighbours. All of this can be linked back to the curriculum and to intended learning outcomes, especially if you have flexibility with your timetable and with integrating subject areas.

action

Take a moment to design a learning experience for your students this week that applies to some real life learning. Get them to send you a photo of the outcome, along with some feedback, to measure their level of engagement and motivation in the task.

gamifying learning

reflection

We all love games. Whether it is playing a board game with our family, Candy Crush on our phone or simply leveling up in a specific skill we are learning. Teenagers particularly love games - you just need to look at the lucrative gaming industry! When we gamify learning we can tap into learners' natural motivation and increase their engagement.

Think about the current games that your students love, and how you may be able to bring elements of gaming culture into your lessons.

tools

Gamifying learning to increase student motivation and engagement does not mean that you need to become a coder overnight, turning long division into a computer game experience. It simply means understanding why games are so engaging, and applying these lessons to our remote learning design and delivery. Here are a few quick tips and tools to gamify your learning:

- **Utilise the technology:** Not all of our students will have access to technology, but many will and will already be engaging in games on them (granted, not all of them productive!). Let's harness the power of technology to engage learners in games that lead to meaningful and impactful learning. There are millions of learning games and applications available to your students, many of which your school will have already engaged in (like Maths Pathway). Rather than signing up for the apps that dodge your email spam filter, decide on the outcomes you want your students to learn and then look for the games and apps that will help achieve those outcomes. Very specific Google searches can help you find some great learning tools. For example, don't just search for 'great education apps for students', search for 'the best critical literacy applications for year 9 and 10 students in Australia recommended by teachers' and make sure you scroll down past the paid adverts that come up first in the search. Finally, don't forget that using technology to personally deliver learning live that includes an element of games (just as you normally would play games with students in the classroom) is still one of the most effective ways to maintain motivation and engagement.

gamifying learning

- **Set targets and goals for teams and individuals:** One of the things that makes games so motivating is our desire to reach milestones, targets or goals. We love to get badges and to 'level up'. In your remote learning design, find ways to set clear targets and goals for the whole class, small groups and individuals. Once these goals are achieved, celebrate students' success. With no coding involved this might not feel like 'gamifying learning', but it is built on the gaming principle of being set a challenge, solving problems and achieving the final result. The more explicit you make the end goal and the reward for the students, the more motivated they will be to achieve it.
- **Extrinsic rewards and fostering intrinsic motivation:** Using extrinsic rewards and fostering intrinsic motivation helps to motivate and engage students in their learning. In remote learning, tools like instant and sincere praise (which, done well, leads to intrinsic motivation) and obvious extrinsic rewards (like canteen vouchers) are not as readily available. We have to get more creative. A good way to do this is to work closely with parents of your class to encourage them to give targeted sincere praise and the occasional extrinsic reward when warranted to keep the motivation going. Some extra time on HouseParty with their friends or an embarrassingly proud parental post on Facebook about their latest achievement (which teenagers will love to hate as long as it is shared with their parents' friends and not their own!). As teachers, we need to keep up the connection too. Many of our students look to us to give them the affirmation they need to stay motivated, so ensure you find as many ways as you can to maintain regular communication with your students. A great example we have seen of this recently is a teacher sending a postcard to all her students in the mail acknowledging something really great she had noticed about their work recently.

action

Find one new tech application that will promote learning. Test it out and if it is successful, share it with your colleagues or on socials along with a quick description of how it is improving learning, motivation and engagement for your students.

self-directed learning

reflection

Our goal, global pandemic or not, is to get teenagers to tap into their source of intrinsic motivation and self-direct their learning. Even when we're face-to-face and can use our most persuasive teacher superpowers, getting some teenagers to self direct their learning is a challenge. Learning from home provides even greater impetus for our students to take control of their education; the skills they learn over the coming months will set them up for life. And so we've compiled some tips for building these essential skills in teenagers.

Before you jump in, take a look at a unit you're due to deliver in the coming weeks. How many opportunities for self-directed learning are built in, and how could the remote learning environment be an opportunity to further students' self-directed learning skills?

tools

- **Let students follow their passions:** Whilst our teenagers might like to tell us they don't care about anything, everyone has something they're invested in. Beyonce, TikTok, Warcraft III: Reforged, Taco Tuesdays... There will be passions and interests in your class! One of the most engaging things we do as teachers is allow students to follow a learning journey that lets them explore their passions or at least link their passions to the learning experience. For example, if a student loves designing cars, you could get a Toyota graphic car designer to Zoom into a lesson and share the links between their work and Graphic Design, Maths and Physics. This could be a great hook to a series of project-based and self-directed lessons where students build their own car design, demonstrating their learning across the outcomes you've co-designed together. We are all more engaged and motivated when we are learning about something that we have a passion for.

self-directed learning

- **Formative assessment:** Students need opportunities and structures to check-in not just on what they've learnt, but also how they're learning. By becoming experts at thinking about their thinking, students will be able to adjust their learning process so that it becomes more effective, again, setting them up for life! There are some great examples of thinking routines you can use with secondary students at Harvard's Project Zero, and using Thinking Maps and the Habits of Mind have proved really useful for schools and students to clarify their thinking.
- **Learning Communities:** You'll be very familiar with Professional Learning Communities amongst teachers to drive through powerful changes in schools, hopefully you've been a part of some great teams! We can use a similar model with students. With teacher facilitation, students working in powerful small groups can be really motivating and inspire self-directed learning. There are lots of models out there to make this work. Key to all of them is a set of student-agreed values, clear roles for students with individual targets, and known milestones for student work. In a remote learning environment, their student group discussions will have to take place online, and it goes without saying the child protection implications are important to privilege in your decision making. We reckon it's a challenge worth tackling to encourage self-directed learning.



action

Maybe plan an activity in this week's learning that uses one of the strategies above to actively encourage student self-directed learning.

thank you for all you do to educate our children

the EC crew



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