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ENGAGEMENT IN SIMULTANEOUS LEARNING



In this section:

- ❑ WHAT IS MEANT BY *ENGAGEMENT*?
- ❑ A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT ENGAGEMENT
- ❑ MOTIVATION AND TASK DESIGN
- ❑ DESIGN A SCHEDULE TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT
- ❑ CHALLENGING, BUT POSSIBLE AND POTENTIALLY REWARDING

When it comes to student learning, the primary finding is this: *Student time spent engaged in relevant content appears to be an essential variable for which there is no substitute* (Rosenshine & Berliner, 1978, p. 12). Yet, this is a real challenge in simultaneous learning for many of the reasons we have hinted at in the previous chapters. For Ms. Lewanowicz, Ms. Marquez, and the teachers of Sanchez ISD, fostering, nurturing, and sustaining engagement is a daily challenge. Looking first at distance learning, we consider that there are multiple variables that can and do influence the level of engagement and persistence in what we want them to learn. For example,

- ➔ Do our learners have access to a stable and reliable internet connection?
- ➔ Do they have the necessary technology to access our distance learning classroom and required materials (e.g., digital tools, textbooks)?
- ➔ What distractions are in their learning environment?

For learners in our classrooms, we also have to ensure they have access to the necessary materials and manage the distractions. What differs between these two groups of students is that we have the benefit of immediacy in a face-to-face setting. Walking a glue stick or graphic organizer over to a Roomie that does not have their supplies is not a luxury we have with our Zoomies. Likewise, when two Roomies are distracting each other during a mathematic lesson (e.g., using the manipulatives for something other than solving the problem), we simply address it on the spot. However, if Zoomies will not turn on their cameras, unmute their microphones, or even log in to class, engagement in relevant content is not just a challenge but a problem. This is one of the striking differences between face-to-face and distance learning. Together, in simultaneous learning, this is more apparent than ever. So, what are we to do?

WE MUST DIRECT THE BULK OF OUR ENERGY TO ENSURE THAT OUR SIMULTANEOUS LEARNERS HAVE RIGOROUS AND ENGAGING TASKS WHEN THEY ARE WITH US OR LOGGED INTO CLASS.

Let's take a step back a minute and first direct our energies toward something we, as teachers, have immediate control over: the nature of our learning experiences and tasks related to what Rosenshine and Berliner (1978) refer to as relevant content. While working alongside our instructional leaders, school social workers, school counselors, and parent/guardian advocacy groups, we should strive to get the necessary technology and support in the hands of our learners. However, we must direct the bulk of our energy to ensure that our simultaneous learners have rigorous and engaging tasks when they are with us or logged into class. What we have discovered is that in simultaneous learning the fostering, nurturing, and sustaining of engagement is the same for our face-to-face learners as it is for our distance learners. Again, we do not have to double our efforts but adapt the learning experiences and tasks that we design to be compatible in both environments.

Notice that the three bulleted items above only addressed the “nuts and bolts” of learners engaging at a distance in simultaneous learning. The list did not move beyond the logistics, paying no attention to the actual learning experience and tasks. That is the main idea of this chapter: In simultaneous learning, fostering, nurturing, and sustaining student engagement in the most relevant content, skills, and understandings is the same for our face-to-face learners as it is for those learning from a distance.

WHAT IS MEANT BY *ENGAGEMENT*?

We do not believe that we are alone in stating that student engagement is one of those ideas that is very difficult to define, but we know it when we see it. For the purposes of teaching and learning in a simultaneous learning environment, recognizing what is and is not engagement will suffice. Let's look at a specific example. A student sitting at their desk staring out the window could easily be pegged as a disengaged student—well, disengaged in what we have identified as relevant content. They clearly are engaged in whatever is happening outside or in their mind. This is where we have to be very careful in our assumptions. This learner may actually be thinking about their experiences and the experiences of the main character, Starr Carter, in the 2017 novel *The Hate U Give*. Similarly, a learner may have their video off and microphone muted because they are simply logged on and then off to play video games. This student may also simply want to avoid you and their peers seeing what their home looks like. Our point is this—defining and recognizing student engagement in simultaneous learning as a single concept is hard, maybe impossible.

So, to navigate simultaneous learning, we must think about student engagement, not as a single concept but as a multidimensional event. One way to explain the multidimensional nature of engagement is to look at student engagement as the combination of emotion, behavior, and cognition. Whether face-to-face or from a distance, students potentially engage in learning in three ways that include their

1. Personal feelings about the content, material, and learning task
2. Behaviors or actions while in the classroom or logged in to Zoom
3. Thinking while engaging in the learning experience or task

Student engagement can be considered across a few dimensions:

1. **Emotional engagement:** how the student feels
2. **Behavioral engagement:** the behaviors or actions of the student
3. **Cognitive engagement:** what the student is thinking

How we as teachers set up our face-to-face and virtual classrooms has a major influence on both the type and level of engagement of the students on a daily basis. Too much emphasis on behavioral engagement (e.g., rules, procedures) and learners won't like being in the classroom or on Zoom (emotional) and will think about other things when they are supposed to be engaging in the learning associated with the learning intentions and success criteria (cognitive). Turning all attention to cognitive engagement, consider that behavioral disengagement ensues and learners once again don't like being in the classroom. In simultaneous learning, this is commonly seen in Zoom fatigue, where our Zoomies spend six hours logged in to class. For our Roomies, this comes from trying to squeeze an entire curriculum into two days of face-to-face learning (e.g., A-B model and split day model). Finally, while high levels of emotional

WHEN LEARNERS ARE A COLLECTION OF RECTANGLES ON A SCREEN, HOW DO WE NOTICE, MAKE SENSE OF, AND RESPOND TO THESE THREE WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT ENGAGING?



engagement lead to great fun, the fun can lead to chaos and limited thinking. Furthermore, when learners are a collection of rectangles on a screen, how do we notice, make sense of, and then respond to these three ways of thinking about engaging?



A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

OUR FOCUS MUST SHIFT BEYOND WHETHER OR NOT THE STUDENTS COMPLETED THE TASK, LOGGED ON TO ZOOM, OR LOOK LIKE THEY ARE PAYING ATTENTION.

Working with Roomies, or any face-to-face interaction with learners, allows us to “read the room” and make immediate adjustments about what to do next. Standing within six feet of a student in Ms. Marquez’s classroom or joining Ms. Lewanowicz on the carpet gives us access to real-time data that is not as easily accessible when those learners are logging in through Zoom. At Sanchez ISD, they must adopt a different way of thinking about engagement beyond emotional, behavioral, and cognitive. Amy Berry (2020) interviewed teachers about the conception of engagement, and most often they saw engagement more in terms of their observable outcomes. In simultaneous learning, our focus must shift beyond whether or not the students completed the task, logged on to Zoom, or look like they are paying attention. In simultaneous learning, we need more than participating, and we may not have access to real-time data about emotional and cognitive data. Of course, we can have observable cues of students engaging in doing tasks. Berry called this *participating* but noted in her survey that many teachers wanted more. This led to her model with three forms of engagement and three of disengagement (see Figure 5.1). According to Berry, students can move between these forms. Naturally, we all want to help students move from participating or “doing” to investing and driving their own learning.

5.1 A NEW MODEL FOR THINKING ABOUT LEARNER ENGAGEMENT

ACTIVE ← ————— PASSIVE ————— → ACTIVE

Disrupting	Avoiding	Withdrawing	Participating	Investing	Driving
Distracting others Disrupting the learning	Looking for ways to avoid work Off-task behavior	Being distracted Physically separating from group	Doing work Paying attention Responding to questions	Asking questions Valuing the learning	Setting goals Seeking feedback Self-assessment
DISENGAGEMENT			ENGAGEMENT		

Source: Berry, A. (2020). Disrupting to driving: Exploring upper primary teachers’ perspectives on student engagement. *Teachers and Teaching*, 26(2), 145–165. doi:10.1080/13540602.2020.1757421

Therefore, the experiences and tasks that we design and implement in simultaneous learning should motivate and scaffold both Zoomies and Roomies in their journey to investing and driving their own learning. We have had a lot of success using the continuum of engagement to have conversations with students about what each level looks like in this specific class. Students can record their ideas on a shared document and be asked to reflect on their level of engagement following a class session. Some teachers provide time for students to do this daily or weekly, asking students for evidence to support their self-assessment. Every time we change the format of school, we should revisit the engagement continuum and invite students to name actions and behaviors that would be considered in this format of school.

MOTIVATION AND TASK DESIGN



How a student perceives a learning experience or task strongly influences the degree to which they engage (e.g., active disengagement, passive disengagement, passive engagement, active engagement). For example, whether face-to-face or at a distance, a learner will make an internal assessment about the relative usefulness of a particular experience or task. This, in turn, influences their willingness to raise a hand or use the chat feature to seek help, to exert effort in the breakout rooms, and to manage their feelings of anxiety about completing the task. In simultaneous learning, motivating students to engage and persist in our learning experience or task can be based on four components of the perceived value of the learning experience or task by students (Eccles, 2005):

1. **Interest.** This refers to the level of enjoyment a student has or gets from engaging in and persisting through the experience or task. How do you design tasks so that they tap into student interests? In what ways can you place core experience and task into a context that would appeal to your learners (e.g., narrative writing is undertaken through the eyes of a journalist, a book talk is done as a literary critic, exponential growth is modeled using the role of an epidemiologist)?
2. **Utility value.** Students have short-term and long-term goals. How can we leverage this through our learning experiences and tasks? For example, we can use the information we gain about our learners to not only build strong, positive student–teacher relationships but also to help them find utility value in what they do in both face-to-face and distance learning.
3. **Attainment value.** We can enhance the attainment value by incorporating student goals into our simultaneous learning. We will look at examples of this in later chapters. Given the role of asynchronous learning in almost all models of simultaneous learning, explicitly teaching goal setting in reading, mathematics, or any other content area magnifies task value by linking the task to one’s sense of self and either personal or social identity.

**WHETHER FACE-TO-FACE
OR AT A DISTANCE, A
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4. **Cost.** Finally, learners internally evaluate what may be given up by choosing to engage in a specific learning experience or task. For example, logging off of their online gaming platform to join your trigonometry class is a real dilemma. Furthermore, how do we ensure that their time logged in to class or in our classroom does not have any negative experiences associated with it? For example, requiring them to turn their cameras on may jeopardize their emotional safety and make the cost of this task too high.

Here are suggestions for ensuring that your task design is inclusive—engaging **all** learners in your simultaneous learning environment.

Videos

- Use closed captions for your presentations and videos.
- Offer copies of the transcripts of the chat boxes to all learners. These can be posted on your learning management system (LMS) to reduce the need for paper.
- Make videos readily accessible if possible so they can be watched again for those who may benefit from experiencing content more than once.

Images

- Aim for representation in your use of images and videos. One way to enhance task value and a sense of inclusion is to make sure learners can “see themselves” in your images and videos.
- Ensure the color and font on your slides, the writing utensil you use with the document camera, and the lighting allow learners to comfortably see the images.
- When learners are expected to view the image and take in essential information, do not talk or provide audio while they are observing the image. Give them time to just look at the image.
- Provide digital copies of the images on your LMS so that learners can revisit them during their asynchronous time or pull them up on their own devices.

Printed Materials

- Use readable PDFs, not scans of texts. You can check the readability of a PDF by trying to copy and paste individual words. If you can do that, a screen reader will be able to detect text; otherwise, the screen reader will simply interpret it as an image.
- Clearly define special terms or jargon to help support and build toward understanding for multilingual constituents for whom English may not be a native language.
- Provide electronic versions of any printed material.

Face-to-Face Experiences and Tasks

- Ensure that emotional safety is secured before engaging learners in social interaction. Initially, vary activities so that Roomies and Zoomies have the option to not just partner or engage in collaborative/cooperative learning, but rather have time for individual work.
- Preassign groups to ensure the individual dynamics of the group or team are conducive to learning (see Fisher, Frey, & Almarode, 2021).
- Establish and model norms for experiences and tasks that require a great deal of social interaction. Provide channels for all simultaneous learners to communicate with you and share feedback about their experiences in a confidential way.

Although the research on student perceptions of task value is interesting, translating those four components of task value into practice is another thing altogether. Are there guidelines, suggestions, or even specific strategies that might help us enhance student interest, utility value, and attainment value and lower the cost of engaging and persisting in simultaneous learning? Fortunately, there is research on what this might look like in practice. In 2015, Antonetti and Garver published *17,000 Classroom Visits Can't Be Wrong*, where they reported on data from over 17,000 classroom walk-throughs. Today, this database contains more than 23,000 walk-throughs, some of which are virtual walk-throughs. Embedded in the data were eight features of classroom tasks that were associated with sustained engagement. As learners fluctuate in their levels of engagement, we can make adjustments in these eight areas to re-engage those learners that have waned in their engagement, as well as sustain the engagement of other learners before they disengage.

- ➔ **Make sure there are clear and modeled expectations.** Does the learner have a clear understanding of what success looks like? This characteristic refers to clear learning intentions and success criteria. Recall the examples shared in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. How do we differentiate the learning intentions and success criteria for simultaneous learning?
- ➔ **Provide more opportunities for personal response.** Does the student have the opportunity to bring their own personal experiences to the learning experience? Examples include any strategy or learning experience that invites learners to bring their own background, interests, or expertise to the conversation. Zoomies can **safely**, and **when appropriate**, use their living environment as their learning environment.
- ➔ **Create a sense of audience.** Does the learner have a sense that this experience or task matters to someone other than the teacher, the grade book, or merely clicking the submit button on Canvas? Tasks that have a sense of audience are those tasks that mean something to individuals beyond the teacher. In simultaneous learning, Roomies can serve as an audience for Zoomies as they teach something back to their peers.

Similarly, Zoomies can serve as the audience for Roomies as they narrate a recording comparing and contrasting student work samples (see Figure 1.6).

- ➔ **Increase the levels of social interaction.** Does the learner have opportunities to socially interact with peers in breakout rooms or through discussion boards? Providing learners with opportunities to talk about their learning and interact with their peers supports their meaning making and development of conceptual understanding. Are there ways to structure simultaneous learning so that Roomies can interact with Zoomies?
- ➔ **Ensure emotional safety.** Does the learner feel safe in asking questions or making mistakes? To be blunt, if learners feel threatened in your classroom, they will not engage. What steps are we taking to make sure our learners feel respected, valued, and cared for beyond an attendance record?
- ➔ **Offer more choice.** Does the learner have choices in how they access the learning? As learners engage in any learning experience or task, we should offer choices around who they work with, what materials and manipulatives are available, and what learning strategies they can use to engage in the experience and complete the task. In simultaneous learning, do we provide an online portal or common location for materials and manipulatives?
- ➔ **Utilize novelty.** Does the learner experience the learning from a new or unique perspective? Learners do not pay attention to boring things. How can we present content in a way that captures their attention?
- ➔ **Make the learning authentic.** Does the learner experience an authentic learning experience, or is the experience sterile and unrealistic (e.g., a worksheet versus problem-solving scenario; simply converting a PPT to a narrated slide deck versus using reciprocal teaching to gather and share information)?

As each of us strives to foster, nurture, and sustain student engagement in a simultaneous learning environment, we have to keep several main points in mind:

1. Engaging learners in a face-to-face environment utilizes the same principles as engaging them from a distance.
2. Engagement is a multidimensional idea that is best described on a continuum from active disengagement to active engagement with passivity in between the two.
3. To sustain engagement, we have to constantly monitor and be prepared to adjust simultaneous learning when engagement and persistence wane in our learners.

DESIGN A SCHEDULE TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT



Simultaneous learning requires that we constantly monitor and be prepared to adjust simultaneous learning when engagement and persistence wane in our learners. In addition, the different models, all of which combine face-to-face and distance learning, require us to constantly monitor the time variable. How we allot and allocate instructional time in simultaneous learning can and will have an influence on engagement and persistence. Let's return back to the nuts and bolts of engagement and the role they play in promoting engagement.

Earlier in this chapter, we mentioned the idea of Zoom fatigue. Teachers and students have experienced the “Zoom exhaustion” that comes from too many hours trying to sit still and remain engaged in front of a screen. Likewise, face-to-face days should not be used to cram everything from a particular standard into two days. While we may find that replicating the school schedule during simultaneous learning days to be the easiest approach, this is not workable for teacher or students. Five or six hours of daily instruction, complete with the same bell schedules, recess breaks, and lunch schedules, is too difficult for sustained engagement. Eventually, this will even lead to the “Sunday evening blues”—anxiety about tomorrow's school day begins to build on Sunday evening. Specifically, for our Zoomies, their homes, apartments, the Boys and Girls Club, and the local YMCA do not run on a school schedule.

Maximizing the engagement of our simultaneous learners means that we return to our discussion about clarity for learning. How is our time best spent during face-to-face learning, synchronous learning, and asynchronous learning? Integrating the lessons learned from the research on task value (Eccles, 2005) and classroom walk-throughs (Antonetti & Garver, 2015), the time we are with students, face-to-face and synchronous, should be prioritized for connection, discussion, and interaction. The time that learners must devote to asynchronous learning may be best used for deliberate practice, building background knowledge, processing, and self-reflecting. When designing and implementing rigorous and engaging experiences that move learning forward, think about the what, why, and how of the learning (i.e., clarity) and then the nature of the experiences in each context.

Within each model for simultaneous learning, consistency and predictability of the schedule will help maximize engagement. When we talked about novelty in promoting student engagement, that novelty referred to the learning experience or the task, not the schedule. In simultaneous learning, teachers, students, and families must know who is where on what day and when they have to be there. This ensures the consistency and predictability needed for the continuity of learning. We must work with our colleagues to design weekly schedules for A–B groups. Then, we must ensure that how we communicate clarity and expectations for learning experiences and tasks is shared early and adhered to so that when learners transition

**HOW IS OUR TIME
BEST SPENT DURING
FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING,
SYNCHRONOUS
LEARNING, AND
ASYNCHRONOUS
LEARNING?**

between face-to-face and distance learning, they are comfortable and confident about what is to be accomplished before, during, and after each learning experience. As we noted previously, this includes consistency and predictability in sharing learning intentions, success criteria, and any assessments so that students have a clear sense of purpose and can ask questions in advance (e.g., face-to-face, using the chat feature, or discussion boards).

A scheduling template or grade-level or schoolwide master schedule for the particular simultaneous learning model can help tremendously in providing students with consistent and predictable ways to engage with the content, with you, and with their peers. A grade-level or schoolwide master schedule is particularly useful for families with several children attending a school, and at the secondary level for students who are meeting with several subject matter teachers. Where learners are and when they are there will provide the structural and relational supports that promote engagement. We have observed countless situations where confusion about where to be and when defaults to simply not logging in at all—disengagement.

**DISENGAGEMENT MAY
BE A SIDE EFFECT
OF CONFLICTING
SCHEDULES.**

Along those same lines, disengagement may be a side effect of conflicting schedules. In simultaneous learning, we may be doing our very best to schedule sessions that meet the needs of our learners. However, without a grade-level or schoolwide master schedule, students and their families may be juggling sessions and meetings that change each day. What is a student supposed to do when the English teacher and a special education support person are unknowingly asking for the same time?

The nuts and bolts matter. If we devote significant time during our planning days (e.g., A–B model and full week model) and planning periods (e.g., split day model) to design and implement rigorous and engaging learning experiences, but then create a schedule that is not managed by anyone, we subvert our work to foster, nurture, and sustain engagement.



CHALLENGING, BUT POSSIBLE AND POTENTIALLY REWARDING

As we transition to a closer look at the specific elements of asynchronous and synchronous learning experiences and tasks, we want to recall an earlier conversation about the relationship between teaching and learning and tools for teaching and learning (see Figure 5.2).

5.2 FUNCTIONS AND TOOLS

Teacher wants students to	Student Engagement Opportunities	Sample Digital Resources
Find Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can locate information sources • Can organize and analyze information sources for accuracy and utility to the task • Locating information is driven by curiosity and topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wakelet • Google/Google Scholar • Quizlet • Pear Deck • eBooks
Use Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can cite sources of information • Makes judgments about how best to use information • Asks questions the information provokes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evernote • OneNote • Flipgrid • Grammarly • PlayPosit • TurnItIn • Nearpod • Didax Math Manipulatives • Toytheater Virtual Manipulatives • Boomwriter
Create Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can write and discuss information according to grade-level expectations • Transforms information in order to explore ideas new to the learner • Takes academic risks to innovate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GSuite for Education • Office 365 • ThingLink • iMovie • Padlet • Seesaw • Screencastify • Google Drawings • Jamboard • StoryboardThat
Share Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately matches purpose to audience • Uses metacognitive thinking to identify the best strategies for the stated purpose • Is resourceful and resilient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animoto • Storybird • WeVideo • Jamboard • YouTube

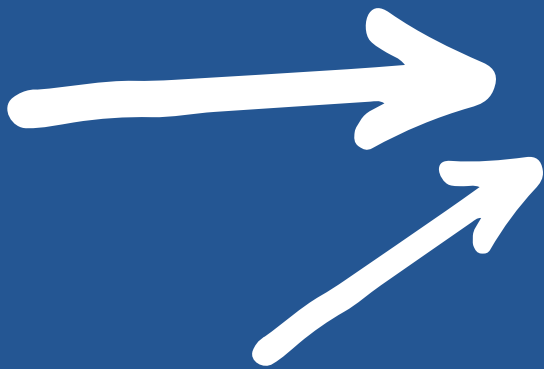
Source: Adapted from Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2020). *The distance learning playbook, grades K–12: Teaching for engagement and impact in any setting*. Corwin.

In education, we have so many options for resources and tools that are available to support our teaching and student learning in simultaneous environments. Selecting your suite of tools for Roomies and Zoomies can be challenging, as there are so many to choose from. The endless lists of tools and resources can be daunting to scroll through. These lists do not provide guidance or information based on the particular simultaneous learning model or the local context of your school, classroom, and learners. To ensure that designing and implementing rigorous and engaging experiences that move learning forward is possible, even if stressful, here are some reflective questions that can help us make decisions on which tools from Figure 5.2 make the most sense for your model, school, classroom, and learners:

- ➔ What learning function does this tool fulfill?
- ➔ Is it developmentally appropriate for my students to use with minimal adult assistance?
- ➔ Does this tool have accessibility features that are aligned to digital compliance requirements (e.g., provides closed captioning, supports screen reader software)? What are they?



ACCELERATING LEARNING



In this section:

□ FEATURES OF ACCELERATION

1. IDENTIFY SKILLS AND CONCEPTS THAT HAVE YET TO BE LEARNED.
2. PROVIDE KEY ASPECTS OF KNOWLEDGE IN ADVANCE OF INSTRUCTION.
3. INCREASE THE RELEVANCE OF STUDENTS' LEARNING.
4. CREATE ACTIVE, FAST-PACED LEARNING EXPERIENCES.
5. BUILD STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE.

**LET'S BE CAREFUL OF
ENGAGING IN TOO MUCH
DEFICIT THINKING.**

Learning loss. The COVID slide. The gap year. We've all heard the predictions that students will fail to learn as a result of distance, remote, hybrid, simultaneous, hyflex, and blended learning. There are students whose performance or understanding has been compromised. Yet there are other students who performed well, even better than in their past. The predictions of learning loss, such as the "COVID slide" projected by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University (Kuhfeld et al., 2020a) of 32 percent to 37 percent in reading and 50 percent to 63 percent in mathematics, have been challenged by large-scale data presented by groups such as NWEA and their 4.4 million MAP assessments of Grades 3 to 8 that show relatively little loss for those who took the assessment (Kuhfeld et al., 2020b). But there is solemn news within those findings. Up to 25 percent of the students who took the test in 2019 did not do so in 2020. Many of those students were from low-income households, often Black or Latinx. While some students did well, others fell further behind. In many school systems, existing equity gaps further widened. The distribution of learning, and learning loss, has not been even across all groups of learners (i.e., race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status). Even pre-pandemic, it never was.

If we really think about it, the phrase *learning loss* is mostly wrong. Learning loss implies that they once had it and now they do not have specific learning. It is hard to find evidence that students forgot what they had learned in the past. The reality is that some students experienced less than ideal instruction and did not learn all that they could have in a particular content area or grade level. And yet, some students learned more than they would have in that same content area or grade level.

Perhaps we need to think about unrealized potential. What could students have learned? Where would their learning be if there had not been a pandemic? But let's be careful of engaging in too much deficit thinking. There are some pretty impressive things that students did learn during their time in distance learning. Who would have thought that second graders would be logging into video conferences, problem-solving technology glitches, and collaborating with peers in breakout rooms? Who could have predicted that high schoolers would design their own learning projects, complete science labs in their homes, and develop personal fitness plans with the physical education instructor? When we spend too much time focused on deficits and the gaps that may have occurred, we run the risk of lowering our expectations for all students. We might begin to think that students could not possibly achieve this year because of what happened in the past year. However, let us be clear, we are not in denial about the realities that students have faced during the abrupt transition to distance learning. What we aim to do is draw attention to the potential that focusing on the gaps and the loss will result in remediation programs and lowered expectations for students for years to come. Our learners do not need that! Students need us to believe that they can learn and then design and implement rigorous and engaging experiences that communicate those expectations to them. Instead of learning loss and unrealized potentials, let us focus on learning leaps. Specifically, we need to focus on acceleration and learning recovery.

Drawing on the research regarding acceleration for students identified as gifted and talented, the effect size of acceleration is 0.68 (www.visiblelearningmetax.com), well worth the effort to change the narrative. Acceleration does not mean skipping a grade level or covering two chapters in five minutes. Acceleration and learning recovery do not mean that students should repeat the grade, which is being recommended in some state legislatures as we write. In fact, grade-level retention is one of the most negative influences on learning in the Visible Learning database (www.visiblelearningmetax.com). Instead, acceleration and learning recovery means

**STUDENTS NEED US
TO BELIEVE THAT THEY
CAN LEARN.**

focusing on and ensuring that the core and key parts of the curriculum are covered and that they are covered with depth. Of course, the narrative of acceleration needs to be supported with high-quality learning experiences that have an impact. The fact is that teachers like Ms. Lewanowicz, Ms. Marquez, and those from Sanchez ISD are very good at achieving the expectations that they have for students, high or low.

In terms of the evidence on acceleration, we'll explore five areas that are important in creating these types of experiences for students.

1. Identify skills and concepts that have yet to be learned.

- What tools do we have to notice what students still need to learn?
- How can we ensure that we do not focus instructional time on content students have already learned?

2. Provide key aspects of knowledge in advance of instruction.

- How can we use what we have learned about asynchronous learning to build background knowledge and vocabulary?
- What content can be previewed before synchronous learning time?

3. Increase the relevance of students' learning.

- How can we capture students' attention and interest and ensure that they see the value in the things that they are learning?
- Can our students answer the question "Why am I learning this?"

4. Create active, fast-paced learning experiences.

- Can we develop lessons that move quickly, perhaps cycling through information several times, and allow students to engage?
- How can we ensure that students are active and practice as part of our lessons?

5. Build students' confidence.

- Are the students building their confidence in their learning as that helps build competence?
- What successes do students have that we can celebrate?
- How can we learn to be strength-spotters rather than deficit-describers?

**GRADE-LEVEL
RETENTION IS ONE
OF THE MOST
NEGATIVE INFLUENCES
ON LEARNING IN THE
VISIBLE LEARNING
DATABASE.**

**HOW CAN WE
LEARN TO BE
STRENGTH-SPOTTERS
RATHER THAN
DEFICIT-DESCRIBERS?**

FEATURES OF ACCELERATION

1. Identify skills and concepts that have yet to be learned. As we noted in Chapter 1, analyzing the standards to identify skills and concepts is an important part of the teaching and learning process. In that first chapter, we focused on the development of learning intentions and success criteria, but the analysis of standards is much more important than that. When you understand the skills and concepts that students are expected to



RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT ABOUT 40% OF INSTRUCTION MINUTES ARE SPENT ON THINGS THAT STUDENTS ALREADY KNOW.

master, you can identify which of these have yet to be learned. As Nuthall (2007) noted, about 40 percent of instruction minutes are spent on things that students already know. To accelerate learning, that number has to be much lower. Importantly, that 40 percent could differ from student to student. They all come to class knowing things. The problem is that some of them know this and others know that, so we tend to teach everything that anyone might need to learn. Obviously, that's not very effective and will not allow us to accelerate learning.

Assessments provide information about what students have yet to learn. These assessments can be informal or more formal. But you need the data if you are going to accelerate learning. Some samples of data collection that can be used to accelerate learning can be found in Figure 6.1. These are simply examples. Think about the data you have that will allow you to determine what students have already learned and what they still need to learn. And then use that information to design synchronous and asynchronous experiences that are tailored to the needs of your students. If you are able to redirect the 40 percent of instructional minutes away from things that students already know and allocate that time to things that they still need to know, you'll contribute to their learning leaps.

6.1 DATA COLLECTION EXAMPLES

Tool	What You Can Learn	Example
Writing Sample	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanics and conventions • Organization • Voice • Vocabulary and word choice 	Students were asked to brainstorm ideas in response to a writing prompt during synchronous learning. Their teacher provided them voice-recorded feedback and they used that feedback to develop their response. The teacher noted that several students needed to work on spelling while others had no errors. Other students needed work on their organization and flow. And all students could benefit from additional academic vocabulary development.
Knowledge Inventory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background knowledge • Key vocabulary • Misconceptions 	In advance of a unit of investigation in science, the students completed an inventory that included multiple-choice and constructed-response opportunities. The teacher noted that most students had significant background knowledge related to this content and did not exhibit common misconceptions. A few students needed work on academic vocabulary.
Retelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization • Ideas and content • Oral language 	Students were asked to record, using Flipgrid, information about the previous math content. The teacher had modeled retelling and students knew how to explain their thinking. The teacher used these videos to identify areas of strength and areas that confused students.
Commercially Available Benchmark Assessment (e.g., iReady, MAPS, LevelSet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress toward specific standards 	The school collects benchmark assessment data on a regular basis, and teachers use the information to identify areas of focus. They also use this information to ensure that lessons are not focused on skills students have already mastered.

Again, these are simply examples of the ways in which we can find and use information to accelerate learning. The goal is to focus instructional minutes on things that students have already learned. Importantly, we should focus on the strengths we see in the data and become “strength-spotters” so that we recognize that our students have, and are, learning.

2. Provide key aspects of knowledge in advance of instruction. This is the power and potential of asynchronous learning. And providing key aspects of knowledge in advance of instruction is a major tenant of flipped learning (e.g., Bergmann & Sams, 2012). One concern that many have expressed with simultaneous and hybrid forms of learning is the loss of instruction minutes. To address that issue and accelerate learning, it’s important to focus on the preview aspect of synchronous learning that was discussed in Chapter 2.

More specifically, it’s valuable to build background knowledge and ensure students understand the vocabulary that will be used during instruction. Background knowledge and vocabulary are significant predictors of understanding and comprehension. Much of learning is connecting the new with the known. Thus, if we can provide key aspects of knowledge in advance and build what students know, instructional time can focus on the new information.

Students can learn new vocabulary through interactive videos, as was described in Chapter 3. They can also complete vocabulary knowledge assessments and identify words that they still need to learn. Importantly, we should not return to the old “assign, define, test” approach to vocabulary in which students are assigned a bunch of words, told to look them up, and then tested on those words. Vocabulary learning is much more robust than that and requires repeated experiences with the words and opportunities to use the words. And by the way, we all learn a lot of words from reading and interacting with others.

There are two main ways to build background knowledge: direct experiences and indirect experiences. Direct approaches are those that allow the learner to experience the world around them. In the past, field trips, labs, and a range of other direct experiences were used to build background knowledge. Some of this can still occur in the physical classroom, but given the constraints of time, it’s wise to build student experiences virtually and during asynchronous learning. There are a number of museums, for example, that provide access to their collection, and some include guided learning experiences. In addition, there are a number of virtual labs and experiments that students can do. Of course, teachers can also provide students with the tools they need to engage in the labs and simulations at home.

Indirect experiences, on the other hand, involve building background in surrogate ways. Indirect experiences can include teacher modeling, wide reading, graphic organizers, and guest speakers, to name a few. Wide reading is a particularly useful way to build background knowledge in an indirect way. In fact, wide reading is one of the cheapest and easiest ways for people to rapidly build their understanding, especially for students who struggle with reading. In the absence of direct experiences, wide reading is the most effective way for building background knowledge (Marzano, 2004). Our research and experience suggest that there are four things that must be in place to increase reading volume (see Figure 6.2).

WIDE READING IS ONE OF THE CHEAPEST AND EASIEST WAYS FOR PEOPLE TO RAPIDLY BUILD THEIR UNDERSTANDING, ESPECIALLY FOR STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH READING.

6.2 ABCDs OF RAISING READING VOLUME

Aspect	Explanation
Access	If there is little to read in your home, you're less likely to read. To raise the volume of reading, students must have access to texts. There have been a number of efforts to "flood" students with things to read, but a steady diet is probably a better approach. This means that books need to be going home with students and that students need access to books like they do to technology and the internet.
Book Talks and "Blessing Books"	When trusted others make recommendations about a text, potential readers are more likely to read it. To promote wide reading, students need recommendations from others. Book talks conducted by trusted adults and peers can spur voluntary reading.
Choice	When students have choice over their reading materials, they are more likely to read. Choice is key to motivation and academic independence. Students who have opportunities to choose their own books develop elaborate strategies for selecting books and are more likely to become intrinsically motivated readers.
Discussions About Texts	Readers need opportunities to talk about what they are reading with others. These can be blogs and other digital interactions, or they can be times that students interact synchronously. Book clubs and literature circles are especially useful, and students can schedule these to occur outside of class.

3. Increase the relevance of students' learning. When learning is relevant, students are more likely to allocate resources to learn. And by resources, we mean time and attention. We noted the value of relevance in the first chapter and the importance of motivation in the second. There was even a screenshot that included why students were learning the content. Here, we want to emphasize that accelerating learning requires that students believe that what they are learning is worth the effort.

The typical ways for increasing relevance include making connections beyond the walls of the classroom and providing students with opportunities to learn about themselves. For example, a teacher might note that this content will help them understand why it rains more in one place than another. Or the teacher might say that this is an opportunity to understand how you solve problems and how your skills in problem-solving differ from others. Generally, these still work to ensure that students find relevance in their learning.

But the reality is that this aspect of learning is often neglected or rushed. There are far too many students who have no idea how to answer the question, "Why am I learning this?" And there are a lot of us educators who aren't sure either. We need to seriously consider the reasons that students need to know or be able to do something and then explore that with students. When they accept the challenge of learning, and see that learning as relevant, they are much more likely to learn. And that's acceleration.

Before we leave the topic of relevance, we'd also like to note that your passion for students, their learning, and the content they are learning contributes to relevance. We can all remember a time that we learned something simply because the person teaching us was so excited. Bring that passion and excitement to your class and show

WHEN THEY ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE OF LEARNING, AND SEE THAT LEARNING AS RELEVANT, THEY ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO LEARN. AND THAT'S ACCELERATION.

students how amazing it feels to learn things. When we do, our students might just suspend their disbelief and engage with us on another level, opening the door for further acceleration.

4. Create active, fast-paced learning experiences. One of the norms with remediation is slowing down the learning and focusing on smaller and smaller aspects. Perhaps that's not always intended, but the trend in these types of efforts is to assume that students are far behind and need the pace to be slower so that they can learn. The opposite is true. Acceleration requires that we create active lessons in which students have multiple response opportunities. Remember, we're trying to build a memory trace through repetition and retrieval. The more often learners retrieve information, the more likely they are to remember it and be able to apply it. Some ideas for universal response for Roomies and Zoomies are provided in Figure 6.3.

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6.3 UNIVERSAL RESPONSE OPPORTUNITIES

Response Opportunity	Roomies	Zoomies
Response Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students hold up their personal whiteboards. Students hold up index cards with <i>YES</i> on one side or <i>NO</i> on the other. Students use a response fan with many options (<i>true/false, A/B/C/D, thumb up/down</i>). Students submit responses through Google Forms and Microsoft Forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students hold up their personal whiteboards. Students take a screenshot of their work and transfer it to the teacher. Students hold up a CD case showing either red or green to indicate their response. Students respond using reaction buttons (emoji checks). Students submit virtual whiteboard responses. Students submit responses through Google Forms and Microsoft Forms.
Polls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students respond to a Kahoot prompt. Students complete an exit ticket in writing. Students respond using Mentimeter. Students add to a Jamboard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students respond to a Kahoot prompt. Students complete an exit poll on Zoom. Students respond using Mentimeter. Students add to a Jamboard.
Hand Signals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students hold up a number of fingers to indicate their level of agreement. Students use American Sign Language to agree, disagree, ask a question, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students hold up a number of fingers to indicate their level of agreement. Students use the reaction buttons to indicate their response.
Chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students respond in chat but do not hit send until a signal word has been given. Students review the chat, copy another student's response that resonates with them, paste it into the chat, and explain why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students respond in chat but do not hit send until a signal word has been given. Students review the chat, copy another student's response that resonates with them, paste it into the chat, and explain why.

Note that we have just provided a few examples of the ways in which students can respond, retrieving information in the process. Each of these is also an opportunity for you to check for understanding and adjust the lesson accordingly. It's important to keep the pace brisk but not to the point that students experience excessive pressure. And it's important to remember the value of wait time; many of the response opportunities described above require thinking time. As a reminder, students need wait time to think and process. Students need to

- ➔ Listen to the question or prompt
- ➔ Process what they've heard
- ➔ Translate from another language, perhaps
- ➔ Build the courage to respond
- ➔ Indicate to the teacher that they are ready

Each of these takes time, and we must be careful not to privilege students who think fast, already know the information before we taught it, are fluent in the language of instruction, or have more power because of a demographic variable. Without sufficient wait time, combined with active and fast-paced lessons, we leave some students behind.

5. Build students' confidence. Confidence and competence are connected. But too often, we focus on students' competence and not their confidence to learn. We build students' confidence in a number of ways. First, we are trustworthy, and we provide honest growth-producing feedback. Thus, students come to understand that we have their best interests at heart and care deeply about their learning. In addition, we refrain from overcorrecting. We listen, noting errors and misconceptions that we can teach later, but we don't keep correcting students as it can compromise their confidence, which can lead to shutdown.

When students tell us that they can't do something, we add *yet* and project the expectation that with additional learning, they will be able to accomplish great things. We're not suggesting that we falsely praise students or inflate their sense of current learning, but rather we recognize that learning is a journey and that errors are opportunities to learn. Remember, confidence is based on past experience, and educators can shape the current experiences that students have so that they tell a different story about themselves as they build the expectations they have for their own learning. Some advice for building students' confidence can be found in Figure 6.4.

**WHEN STUDENTS TELL
US THAT THEY CAN'T
DO SOMETHING, WE
ADD YET.**

6.4 WAYS TO BUILD STUDENT CONFIDENCE

Approach	Explanation
Set goals together.	One of the most effective ways of building student confidence is making sure everyone is on the same page about learning goals. Again, the value of clear learning intentions and success criteria cannot be overstated. To build confidence, students and teachers need to understand and agree upon the goals for learning.
Encourage self- and peer assessment.	Providing students the responsibility for helping both themselves and others improve learning by encouraging ownership of it is a huge step toward building student confidence. When students learn to self-assess, the role of the teacher becomes to validate and challenge rather than decide if students have learned. When we do this, student understanding, ownership, enthusiasm for learning, and, of course, confidence increase.
Give useful feedback.	Feedback should make someone feel good about where they are and get them excited about where they can go. This is the exact mindset that develops as we continue building our learners' confidence in the classroom.
Empty their heads.	Students tend to lose confidence in themselves because they feel they're struggling more than they are. Every once in a while, we've got to get learners to unpack everything in their heads through review and open discussion to show them just how much they've accomplished.
Show that effort is normal.	Nothing kills confidence more than for a student to think they're the only one in class that doesn't understand something. Focus on the effort that everyone is making. A good way of building student confidence in such a case is by having that struggling student pair up with one of the others who has aced the topic and get them to explain it.
Celebrate everyone's success.	Any kind of success in learning, no matter how big or small, deserves to be acknowledged and celebrated. This might mean more to some students than to others, but it's still a great way of building student confidence. After all, everyone is there in the classroom to learn together and to support each other on that path.

Source: Adapted from Wabisabi Learning. (n.d.). *6 ways of building student confidence through your practice*. Wabisabi Learning. wabisabilearning.com/blogs/mindfulness-wellbeing/building-student-confidence-6-ways

The final aspect of simultaneous learning that we explore is assessment. We present this last, yet we realize that assessment is important in each of the areas we have discussed thus far. We need assessments to know where to start learning, how to decide between synchronous and asynchronous learning, and to accelerate students' learning.

Conclusion

We have found ourselves in a different and unexpected situation in preK–12 teaching and learning. And to be very honest, none of us chose to be in a situation where some learners are physically in our classrooms, while others attend virtually and remotely. However, what we hope to have conveyed over the previous chapters is that we've got this! While the context is different, the principles behind clarity, planning, high-yield strategies and interventions, student learning, and assessment hold steady. Yet, our path forward is not simply the copying and pasting of what we did in face-to-face instruction into asynchronous learning and synchronous learning. We can't simply do what we have always done when we find ourselves teaching Roomies and Zoomies. While the principles of clarity, planning, high-yield strategies and interventions, student learning, and assessment hold steady, how we design and implement rigorous and engaging learning experiences requires us to make adaptations based on the local context. We filled the pages of this book with what to consider in making those adaptations. Teaching Roomies and Zoomies requires that we

WEVE GOT THIS!

1. **Have clarity** about the most important learning outcomes for our students. This will help us decide what is best done asynchronously and what is best done with our Roomies and Zoomies.
2. **Capitalize on the potential of asynchronous learning** and use that valuable time to preview and review. Remember, we can use evidence from these tasks to help us decide where to go next in our teaching and our students' learning.
3. **Utilize synchronous learning** for collaborative learning and scaffolding of content, skills, and essential understandings. In doing so, we collect additional evidence of students' learning so that we can provide feedback that moves learning forward. Assessments are not a "gotcha," but "I've got you."
4. **Establish norms** for combining synchronous and face-to-face environments in simultaneous learning. We have to set up the environment for our Roomies and Zoomies to learn together.
5. **Develop learning experiences and tasks that maximize learner engagement** for all learners in all settings.
6. **Focus on acceleration and learning recovery**—stop deficit thinking! Our students are where they are, and there are specific things that we can do to ensure their learning.