



# 4 WAYS TO CREATE MORE MEANING WITH CHILDREN! USING ENGAGED LEARNING



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**H**ave you ever been teaching, and you look out to see a room full of children just staring back at you with glazed eyes? Maybe you've experienced sessions where children start twitching, get easily distracted, or maybe even disruptive as you desperately try to cover the content and keep their attention.

In these situations, it's easy to come away wondering, what, if anything, the children took away from the lesson. So, is there a better way? Yes there is! It's called engaged learning, and it can completely change the experience of both the teacher and the children!

**Simply defined, engaged learning occurs when methods are used to encourage children to actively participate in the process of learning.**

In this process, children interact with the lesson goals in creative ways, collaborate with each other, and demonstrate understanding through activities, discussions, and applied learning to everyday life. Let's dive in to discover four aspects of engaged learning and explore some tips for implementing this approach in our learning environments!



# 1 ENGAGED LEARNING IS BEST FOR KIDS- IT ADDRESSES EVERYONE'S LEARNING STYLES!

**It is said that people remember 10% of what they read, 20% of the they hear, yet 90% of what they do.** While these exact numbers may be disputed, they developed out of an interpretation of Dale's Cone of Experience (Edgar Dale, 1969). Dale showed that the more our five senses are involved in learning, the better the learning will be. There is a large body of research on the different learning styles of individual learners which indicates that when multiple learning styles are employed, more individuals will walk away with increased learning.

Think of this in practical terms. If you categorized children as visual (learn best by seeing), auditory (learn best by hearing), or tactile-kinesthetic (learn best by moving/doing) and only utilize the skill of reading in your sessions, you are only addressing the visual learner and some auditory learners. **However, if you create a meaningful activity that gets children out of their seats and moving, you have suddenly created a learning experience that fully addresses all three learning styles.**



## 2 ENGAGED LEARNING INCREASES TRUST AND SECURITY!

**Psychologists have long noted the link between feeling encouraged, supported, and safe and effective learning.**

This is likely to come as no surprise. When everyone in a learning environment is engaged, feeling a part of the group, and enjoying themselves, learning can take place in deeper ways. Engaged learning addresses this important facet of psychology by creating active opportunities for children to collaborate, support each other, and work toward a common goal.

Through creative activities and group learning, children build trust with the teacher and with others and see the environment as safe and enjoyable. When this occurs, children begin to discover the joy of learning and recognize their own gifts and abilities to explore and discover the topics being introduced.

## 3 ENGAGED LEARNING INCREASES INVESTMENT, MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE!

**When children are engaged, they begin to invest more energy in their own learning.** Engaging activities increase dopamine, endorphins, and oxygen levels, all of which have been shown to support learning. In learning spaces that utilize active and enjoyable means to introduce and reinforce lesson goals, children's' motivation increases dramatically and performance soars.

**If engaged learning is present, children stay interested and motivated and look forward to the next lessons and experiences.**

And teachers report that when they create learning environments that use engaging activities and a variety of learning methods, it is more exciting, interesting, and enjoyable for them as well. An engaged teacher creates the environment for an engaged learner!

# 4 ENGAGED LEARNING ADDRESSES MODERN ATTENTION SPANS

Concerned about the influence of today's technology, sociologists and educational specialists are researching its effects on children's attention spans. They have discovered that the ability of a child to sit in a desk and stay focused on a single task or endure a "lecture-style" approach for a considerable length of time appears to be decreasing.

Therefore, lessons need to move with specific pacing and incorporate a range of learning experiences. Engaged learning to the rescue! Through meaningful, creative activities and multi-focused approaches to learning, attention spans are respected so that learning doesn't stall.

So, what can you do to implement some of the principles of engaged learning?

- **Assess where you are and where you'd like to be.** The first step is to complete an honest assessment of your current learning environment. Is it engaging? Do you and the children look forward to each lesson? Start by looking at your lessons and seeing where you could build in some opportunity to expand the engagement level of the children.
- **Incorporate engaging discussions or introductory activities.** Don't jump into the content before tapping into the children's prior knowledge about some aspect of the topic. For example, instead of immediately reading about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, have the children come to the board to write the first word they think of when they hear the word forgiveness, or invite them to share about times they have experienced forgiveness with others. *Once they are invested because they have made a life connection, they will be ready to engage the topic further.*
- **Reinforce core concepts with out-of-the-seat activities.** Break in-seat reading with practical, out-of-the-seat activities that can strengthen or support the main teaching. For example, have a relay race to emphasize teamwork (Church), encourage groups to create a role-play that shows a focused concept in action (forgiveness, kindness, etc.), or use common games, puzzles, and other worksheets to create group activities that relate to the lesson.

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If you're looking to bring your learning environment to life and increase understanding while creating enthusiasm and enjoyment for all involved, engaged learning is the way. Start today and discover for yourself!

**ARE ALL OF YOUR CHILDREN BEING ACTIVELY ENGAGED?**

Your Ministry Care Team has a few ideas to help you so your kids will joyfully discover the beauty of the Church's teachings, fall in love with Jesus and the Bible, and transform a learned faith into a lived faith!

**GET READY TO DISCOVER! 1-800-533-8095**