
Keeping Students Engaged in CTE

Your comprehensive Guide to Boosting Student Engagement and Motivation

Introduction: Why Student Engagement is Essential to Learning

You've likely heard that student engagement is essential to your success and the success of your students. But why is it so important to keep your students engaged?

Simply put, engaged learners are far more likely to achieve their educational goals than disengaged students. Just as importantly, teachers with active students are more likely to feel valued and effective in the classroom and better manage the unique challenges of working in education.

When your students are disengaged, they are likely to experience negative outcomes, such as:

- Lower retention of course material
- Lower scores on assessments
- Lower pass rates on certifications
- Being unprepared for future courses and careers

On the other hand, engaged students are far more likely to experience positive outcomes in the classroom, including:

- More motivation to learn
- Better performance on assessments and certifications
- Increased involvement in class and extracurricular activities
- Being prepared for future courses and invested in their careers

For your students to have the best opportunities for success, it's paramount that they're engaged and focused while in class.

But how do you keep your CTE students engaged in a world full of distractions?

In this guide, you'll find teacher-tested strategies you can use to boost engagement and improve student outcomes in your program.

Table of Contents

Start Your Class with Bell Ringer Activities	3
Teach with Enthusiasm	4
Promote Active Learning Over Passive Learning	5
Make Your Material Relevant	6
Offer Role-Play Examples	7
Play Learning Games	8
Adopt Blended Learning Strategies	9
Incorporate Technology When Appropriate	10
Use Project-Based Learning (PBL)	11
Meet Your Challenges in the Classroom	12



1. Start Your Class with Bell Ringer Activities

One of the best ways to engage your students is to grab their attention at the beginning of class with a bell ringer activity.

Bell ringers are easy-to-implement tasks teachers use at the beginning of a class period to help students recall what they've already learned and focus on the class ahead. When used effectively, bell ringer activities provide the context students need and set the stage for a successful class period.

Some popular bell ringer activities include:

- Question of the Day
- Student Check-Ins with Google Forms
- Keyboarding Warm-ups
- Current Event Activities
- Warm Up Surveys
- Knowledge Checks
- Educational Games

Depending on the subject you teach, one or more of these activities could be a highly effective way to open class. Better still, you can vary your bell ringer activities to keep your course exciting and compelling.

With the order and structure you create through opening class with a bell ringer, you're well on your way to fostering an engaging learning environment.

Related Resources

- [**The 5 Best Bell Ringer Activities to Boost Your Business Education Classes**](#)
- [**5 Bell Ringer Activities to Engage Computer Applications Students**](#)
- [**5 Bell Ringer Activities for CTE Health Science Classes**](#)

2. Teach with Enthusiasm

It's hard to underestimate the importance of an enthusiastic teacher in bringing energy to a CTE classroom. Almost everyone knows what it's like to listen to a dull, boring lecture from an instructor who seemingly couldn't care less about the subject matter.

While it's hard to be upbeat and energetic every day, **your demeanor as a teacher significantly affects classroom morale.** Even if you're handling uninspiring course material, a bright disposition and outlook on the topic can lift your students' spirits more than you might think.

To show enthusiasm, consider ways to add insight or humor to your lessons. When students are interested in what you have to say, they'll be more apt to learn material that could otherwise go in one ear and out of the other.

If you find the content you're teaching is hard to get excited about, it might not be your lack of passion for your subject. It may be that your curriculum itself is dated or irrelevant. If this is the case, **consider searching for teaching materials that better fit your classroom.** The resources below are one place to start.

Related Resources

- [3 Best High School Agriculture Curriculum Options](#)
- [3 Best High School Automotive Curriculum Options](#)
- [Top 4 High School Business Education Curriculum Resources](#)
- [Top 3 Cosmetology Curriculum Options for High School](#)
- [4 Best High School Family and Consumer Science Textbooks](#)
- [Health Science Curriculum: Where to Find What You Need](#)

3. Promote Active Learning Over Passive Learning

Another way to increase student engagement is to regularly promote active learning in the classroom.

Too often, students only experience **passive learning** in their classes. With passive learning, teachers present information while students sit, listen, and watch. Students receive a lot of information in passive learning settings, but without active participation, engagement and interest are likely to be low.

On the other hand, **active learning** requires students to interact and be involved in the learning process.

Instead of compelling your students to passively listen for the entire class period, you can promote active learning with:

- Regular class discussions
- In-class demonstrations
- Critical thinking and decision-making exercises
- Opportunities for collaboration and group learning

When you include both passive and active learning opportunities, you're giving students a fresh look at the subject matter. Learning through different methods will make them more likely to engage, retain information, and be ready to take on more challenging content.

Related Resources

- [Free Critical Thinking & Decision Making Lessons](#)
- [Top 5 Critical Thinking Lesson Plans](#)

4. Make Your Material Relevant

One of the most common causes of learners disengaging from a class is the perception that the material is not relevant. Examples that feel irrelevant make it difficult for students to understand why the information is important.

Your students are young, diverse individuals with unique perspectives and experiences. Your lessons should feel relevant to them and reflect their differences while making connections to the real world.

When students can make connections to their own lives and future goals, they have more ownership and interest in the course material. **Talking about course material in the context of their personal experience boosts student engagement.**

Some examples of making course material relevant include:

- Engaging health science students with a conversation on healthcare ethics.
- Discussing cybersecurity with computer applications students.
- Holding conversations on the hiring and interview process with business and career readiness classes.
- Providing customer service scenarios for students in cosmetology, barbering, and family and consumer sciences.
- Offering design opportunities in architecture, construction, and manufacturing courses.
- Entering agriculture students in meat judging and other competitive events.

With relevant conversations, your students are more likely to come to class prepared, focused, and ready to respond to what others have to say.

Related Resources

- [4 Best Strategies to Ensure Your Middle Schoolers Pay Attention](#)
- [6 Top Ways to Keep Health Science CTE Students Engaged](#)

5. Offer Role-Play Examples

Role-playing is a great way to get students out of their seats and engaged with the material in your classes. Role-playing is perfect for CTE because it allows students to experience situations they are likely to encounter working in their chosen fields.

While the type of role-play you choose will depend on your subject matter, some common forms of role-playing include:

1. Healthcare skill and procedure demonstrations
2. Accounting and finance scenarios
3. Machine and workplace safety demonstrations
4. Practice scenarios for law and public safety students
5. Teamwork and communication exercises
6. Career simulations and mock interviews

When implementing scenario-based role-playing, ask your students to act out what they would do in a given situation and give them helpful feedback that will guide them to become adept professionals—regardless of their field of study.

Role-playing in a group setting helps students stay engaged as they develop essential soft skills like communication, professionalism, and teamwork.

Related Resources

- [Free Job Interview Activity for Students](#)
- [7 Best Workplace Readiness Skills Lesson Plans](#)
- [How to Teach Customer Service in High School](#)
- [How to Run a Mock Interview with Your Students](#)
- [3 Best Communication Lesson Plans for Middle School](#)

6. Play Learning Games

When your learners tire of regular lessons, you can overcome boredom with learning games that refresh students' memories. Often, these kinetic activities prove more appealing than sedentary work and can effectively engage students.

Learning games are a reliable tool for prompting students to recall class material because they create a sense of friendly competition in the classroom. When they can play a game, learners are more likely to come prepared to do their best and actively participate.

Some popular learning games include:

- Playing Pictionary
- Running a relay race
- Memory games and trivia
- Computer application games

Games add variety to the regular classroom routine, and teachers can implement them to reach different types of learners. These activities work particularly well when helping students memorize complex concepts.

Related Resources

- [Engaging Students with Gamification in the Classroom](#)
- [Accounting Games for High School: 4 Top Options](#)
- [8 Top Agriculture Games for High School](#)
- [4 Engaging Medical Terminology Games to Boost Student Motivation](#)

7. Adopt Blended Learning Strategies

Blended learning combines traditional classroom instruction and digital methods to help students learn more effectively than with a single strategy.

In this approach, digital learning augments the teaching, practice, discussion, and collaboration of conventional education with additional content elements.

Blended learning has several benefits, and when you incorporate it into your classroom, you foster an environment where students can engage most fully with your course material.

In a blended learning environment, traditional instruction introduces students to course material and focuses on hands-on skills and practice. On the other hand, the digital aspect provides additional content that reinforces key concepts in students' minds. This multifaceted teaching style gives students everything they need to learn and remember lessons.

Some ways you can incorporate blended learning into your classroom include:

1. Using multiple types of resources
2. Balancing old and new teaching techniques
3. Varying your assessments

When you focus on blended learning opportunities in your classroom, you can provide students with a more interesting and **engaging learning environment** that maintains your class focus.

Related Resources

- [What Is Blended Learning?](#)
- [Top 7 Blended Learning Strategies for CTE](#)
- [Top 5 Blended Learning Best Practices](#)

8. Incorporate Technology When Appropriate

When used appropriately and effectively, new technologies can positively impact your classroom and engage students.

Today's students are surrounded by technological innovations that vie for their attention. It's critical that the technology you use positively grabs their focus—and doesn't simply add to the digital clutter and noise in their lives.

When you adopt a blended learning strategy, there's room to use technology constructively. You can vary traditional instruction with online learning components and virtual demonstrations.

Depending on the subject you teach, you can use class time to showcase technologies such as:

1. Interactive screens
2. Virtual reality (VR) components
3. Industry-specific technology
4. Cloud computing

The key is to ensure that each technological element you incorporate focuses on your classroom goals. Incorporating technology only when it facilitates learning will boost rather than detract from student engagement.

Related Resources

- [How New Technology Engages Students in Middle School Computer Applications](#)
- [9 Tips for Using Technology to Differentiate Instruction](#)

9. Use Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Another engagement technique you can use along with blended learning is project-based learning (PBL).

Projects push students to generate original ideas and bring their personalities to the table when completing coursework. Depending on the project's nature, you can also help students gain experience in teamwork, planning, or creative design. When you push students to brainstorm and execute projects, you foster their creativity and critical thinking and drive them to engage with the course.

Some examples of projects you can use in a CTE course include:

1. Semester-long projects that tie together class concepts
2. Projects that require students to learn and build on industry skills
3. Computer-based projects that teach students to master a specific application
4. Design and planning projects that help learners understand the big picture

The best projects not only push students to think deeply about the topic but also allow them to express themselves freely, flex their creative muscles, and have fun!

Related Resources

- [5 Best Career Exploration Projects for Middle School](#)
- [3 Best Free Medical Terminology Project Ideas](#)
- [7 Best Marketing Lesson Plans and Projects for High School](#)
- [5 Top Personal Finance Projects for High School](#)
- [4 Hands-On High School Engineering Projects](#)

Meet Your Challenges in the Classroom

Keeping your students engaged and learning in your CTE classes is essential to a successful year. When you use effective teaching strategies, you're on your way to ensuring your students are involved in class and ready for assessments and certifications.

However, keeping your students engaged is only one of the challenges you'll likely face as a CTE teacher. Between planning, grading, and managing your classroom, the everyday obstacles you encounter can be overwhelming.

Do you want to feel less overwhelmed and spend more time helping your students succeed?

Download your free guide to *Overcoming Your Challenges as a CTE Teacher*. You'll learn to address challenges like meeting standards, balancing technology in the classroom, and more.