AMY **BERRY**

Foreword by John Hattie

REIMAGINING
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

FROM **DISRUPTING** TO **DRIVING**

CORWIN

Thank you

FOR YOUR
INTEREST IN
CORWIN

Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Reimagining Student Engagement.

LEARN MORE about this title!

CORWIN

Introduction

· ··

WHY ENGAGEMENT?

Before becoming a primary school teacher, I was in charge of the *Responsible Thinking Classroom* at a local high school. The idea was that teachers would use a series of prompts to encourage disruptive students to make a more "responsible" choice, and if they did not comply, they came to me. While not the intention, it was seen by many as the naughty kids' room. Some students came in angry and raging at the injustice of it all, and "They've got it in for me!" was a frequent complaint. At times, their frustration was so great they were reduced to tears. Other students were happy to escape their classroom and strolled in with satisfied smiles and a wave as they walked to a seat to fill out the required paperwork. I would meet with each one as they came in, hear their side of the story, and help them fill out their form. The final step in the process was to facilitate a meeting between the teacher and the student. The student would explain their view of the events and their plans for preventing similar events in the future, often followed by an earful from the teacher about making better choices. Then the green light was given for the student to rejoin the class in the next lesson. It was not designed to be punitive or controlling, but there was no denying that this had become a ritualized battle over compliance. In some cases, a student would only come through my room once or twice—perhaps just having a bad day. However, there were also frequent flyers who I saw every week or even every day.

Later, I moved into a part-time role in the same school providing support for individual students who were failing to meet the expected outcomes for learning. It may have been a different room and a different context, but many of the faces and names were all too familiar to me. It was clear that these students had

a very different experience of school than I had growing up. For these students, school was not about learning, improving, and achieving success. Instead, school was a daily battle and a daily reminder of their failings.

These experiences stuck with me over the years. At the time, it motivated me to return to university, filled with optimism and a desire to create a better experience of learning and school for all those "naughty kids" out there. I still feel that same deep desire for change, but I see now that the problem is much bigger than I once thought. Disengagement takes many forms and affects students across all levels of achievement, socioeconomic backgrounds, and ages. Disruptive students who actively demonstrate their disengagement and disenchantment with school are the most visible, but they are merely the tip of the iceberg. Less visible, but no less concerning, is the large number of students who are passively disengaged and disconnected from learning at school. They choose this path for a number of different reasons, but the result is the same. They fly under the radar on a pathway that limits both their potential for learning and their ability to thrive at school. Student engagement has been frequently linked to desirable outcomes such as achievement, academic success, and student well-being, making it a valued goal for the education community. The quest to improve student engagement in our schools has attracted the attention of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners for well over two decades. Despite this attention, it remains that schools and teachers continue to struggle with the persistent challenge of improving student engagement in learning—a challenge that was only heightened by the educational disruptions of COVID-19.

Although the push to reform education is constant, the traditional practices, rules, and structures that characterize what happens in schools—often referred to as the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Tobin, 1994)—have proven to be stubbornly impervious to change. As David Labaree (2021) noted, "Innovative reform efforts bombard schools constantly, but they nearly always seem to bounce off the classroom door, having little to no effect on how teachers teach and students learn" (p. 28). This includes efforts to improve student engagement, with the entrenched norms presenting a significant roadblock to change. Within the traditional grammar of schooling, the implicit expectation is that students will be passive recipients of instruction and compliant participants in learning activities. Teachers are responsible for delivering instruction, giving students something to do, and monitoring student compliance and achievement. As alluded to in the opening quote, this runs

counter to what we know about promoting student learning and well-being (Mehta & Datnow, 2020) and what we know about motivation and engagement. To thrive, students need to feel connected to their peers and the teacher, feel valued and appreciated within the classroom community, and be given a voice in learning. They need to be involved in work that is meaningful, relates to their lives, and has a clear purpose. They need to be actively involved in learning, motivated to learn, and able to connect with their peers during learning. Instead, the existing grammar of schooling sets the scene for passivity, frustration, boredom, apathy, and an ongoing battle over compliance. With the bedrock of this grammar of schooling firmly in place, it is little wonder that despite decades of attention at the research and policy levels, we appear no closer to achieving the goal of greater student engagement in our classrooms.

Rather than tinkering around the edges of the existing grammar of schooling, a more substantial reimagining of student engagement is needed—one that challenges the existing conceptions of passive students who need to be pushed or pulled by the teacher to get motivated and engaged, and teachers as the drivers of learning and engagement. The view of engagement that you will read about in this book positions students as active and agentic partners in engagement who possess rich inner motivational resources that provide valuable fuel for engagement and learning, should the student choose to invest them. It views students as competent partners who are capable of developing the skills and knowledge that will enable them to regulate their engagement and actively drive their learning forward. Teachers share the responsibility for engagement with students, and their role is no less important. They provide the necessary support, structure, and opportunities for students to become actively engaged, autonomous, and successful learners. Teachers are valued not just for their pedagogical expertise and managerial capabilities, but also for their ability to become actively engaged in the engagement process with their students.

This book has three main aims: developing a richer vocabulary for engagement that is accessible and meaningful to teachers *and* students, redefining the roles and rules of engagement, and describing a process for engagement embedded in the learning experience. Along the way, you will be invited to reflect on your own experiences of teaching and learning, hear from others about their experiences of student engagement, and think about the pathway and steps that you will take with your students as you reimagine engagement in your classroom.

What Do We Mean by Engagement? The Illusion of Consensus

"Of course we want our students to be engaged. Doesn't everyone want that? I mean, that's just a given."

I f you've spent any time in and around schools, you may be so familiar with the term *engagement* that you don't even notice how often people use it during everyday conversations about teaching and learning. It has become a part of our school vernacular to the point that it is assumed everyone knows what it means. One of my colleagues once cornered me in the hallway to exclaim, "Ever since your presentation last week, all I hear about is engagement. I can't believe how much people use that word! It's driving me nuts!"

One of the challenges of student engagement lies in the term's familiarity and the frequency with which it is used. In 2016, Jacquelynne Eccles warned, "[T]he popularity and seeming familiarity of engagement as a concept" brings with it "the danger that, although we believe we are communicating well, we are actually talking about very different things" (pp. 72–73). While all of us have experience using the term, how often have you been asked to explain what you mean? Understanding what is meant by *student engagement* has become a form of assumed

knowledge for anyone working in schools these days. Not only do we assume everyone understands the concept, but we also assume there is a level of consensus about that meaning among those in the education community. As we will soon see, this is not true. Before we turn our attention to frameworks for describing engagement, take a moment to reflect on your own understanding of the concept.

💡

TIME TO REFLECT

If you were asked to describe what student engagement means to you, what would you say? What does student engagement look like or sound like in your classroom? How do you detect whether students are engaged or not? Make some notes to record your thoughts; we will return to them at the end of this chapter.

Now draw a line underneath your notes and consider the next question. Can you think of a time when your students were especially engaged in something they were doing in class? What was happening that told you they were really engaged in this? What did it look like or sound like? Add these notes under the line.

Ask five of your colleagues to explain what they mean by engagement. How do they know when their students are engaged?

ENGAGEMENT AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCEPT

One of the most common ways of describing engagement comes from the field of educational psychology and research into human motivation. The predominant framework for engagement was proposed by Jennifer Fredricks, Phyllis Blumenfeld, and Alison Paris in 2004. They characterized engagement as having three dimensions: a behavioral dimension, a cognitive dimension, and an emotional dimension.

- **Behavioral engagement** describes behaviors such as following rules, attendance at school, paying attention, showing concentration, contributing to class discussions, being on task, and participating in school activities.

- **Emotional engagement** refers to students' attitudes toward school and toward learning, as well as their feelings about school and learning. These feelings include things like belonging, happiness, sadness, anxiety, interest, and valuing success in school.

- **Cognitive engagement** relates to students' psychological investment in learning and their use of strategies for learning. This includes things like going beyond what is required in a task, seeking out challenges, demonstrating a resilience to failure, and having a desire to master the knowledge and skills that are taught. There is also a significant overlap between the concept of self-regulated learning and the use of metacognitive strategies in pursuit of a learning goal.

This is not to suggest that everyone agrees on this description of engagement. Other dimensions have been proposed, including academic engagement, social engagement, collaborative engagement, and agentic engagement. Even when researchers agree on the dimensions, they don't always agree with each other on how to categorize things under those dimensions. For example, some label "effort" as an example of behavioral engagement, while others see it as an example of cognitive engagement.

This model has generated many measures and models, and it is seductive and clear—but how useful is it to enhance engagement in your students, and do the three components predict much? Despite its popularity in education policy, questions remain about how useful this framework is to teachers and how well it represents their daily experiences of student engagement.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Now that you've read about the three-dimensional framework for describing engagement, have a look back at the notes you made when reflecting on what student engagement looks like and sounds like in your classroom. Can you see things that might be categorized as behavioral engagement? Emotional engagement? Cognitive engagement?

Are there things on your list that don't seem to fit in those categories?

(Continued)

Can you fit the five teachers' comments about their notions of engagement into one of these three dimensions?

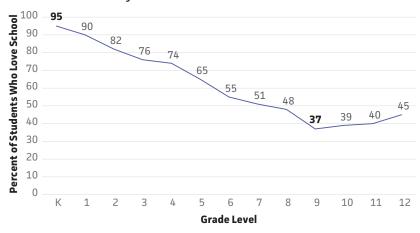## ENGAGEMENT AS A SCHOOL PROBLEM

It is difficult to discuss the concept of engagement without also thinking about what it means to be disengaged. In my own research, many teachers often referenced disengagement as a way of explaining engagement. You can see this in the following comment:

"They are just so engaged and so enthusiastic about learning. You can see it in their independence and just the effort they put in. Because there are others who are the opposite, who are never engaged. There's a couple that just go, 'Yeah, school's boring.'"

Along with being described as a psychological concept, student engagement is often viewed through a deficit lens that focuses on disengagement. This perspective is primarily interested in systemic issues such as preventing school dropout and the negative impact of disengaged students on teachers and classrooms. As a result, work in this area concentrates on students identified as either disengaged or at risk of disengaging from school, rather than how teachers promote the engagement of all students in daily learning experiences in the classroom.

Many researchers have reported a pattern of decreasing engagement as students move through school, particularly in the transition from elementary to high school. Others have described concerning rates of disengagement within schools and the negative consequences for both students and teachers. A recent report into student engagement in Australian schools described widespread disengagement with roughly 40 percent of students regularly disengaged in the classroom, over half of whom were categorized as compliant but "quietly disengaged" (Goss et al., 2017, p. 10). In the United States, it has been reported that only 47 percent of students are engaged in school (Hodges, 2018), and around half of the students surveyed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2016) said they were bored every day at school.

FIGURE 1.1 ● The Jenkins Curve

Anyone who has listened to John Hattie speak might be familiar with the Jenkins Curve research. Lee Jenkins (n.d.) surveyed three thousand teachers and asked them two questions: *What grade level do you teach? What percentage of students at this grade level love school?* The results, presented in Figure 1.1, show a dramatic decline in enthusiasm for school as students move through the system. Teachers reported that 95 percent of kindergarten students loved school, but that level dropped to 37 percent for Grade 9 students. Despite believing that students only started to lose their enthusiasm for school once they transitioned out of elementary school, Jenkins found that loss of love for school actually begins in kindergarten and Grade 1. It is true that "love of school" does not necessarily mean "love of learning at school," as some students love school for the social aspects or extracurricular activities like sports or music. It's fair to assume that if we asked specifically about loving learning at school, the numbers would be even worse than those shown in the Jenkins Curve.

Teacher experience is no remedy for student engagement, with experienced teachers experiencing the same rates of disengagement as those new to the profession. Student disengagement can take its toll on teachers, potentially leading to decreased well-being and burnout. However, we also have compelling evidence to suggest that schools and teachers have the ability to effectively intervene and positively influence students' engagement in school and in learning even when there are factors that are predictive of disengagement and dropout (e.g., low socioeconomic status).

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: ARE WE IN A PARTNERSHIP, OR ARE WE IN A BATTLE?

engagement (n)

1600s, "formal promise," from French *engagement* and Old French *engagier*, meaning "make a pledge." Also indicates a hostile encounter or battle between armed forces.

1700s, a formal agreement to get married.

Apparently being engaged means we are either going to war with each other or getting married! As strange as it may sound on the surface, this could actually be closer to the mark than you might think.

Who gets to decide whether a student is pronounced "engaged" or "disengaged"? Generally speaking, it is the adults who make the rules for engagement, and students are expected to follow them. Many teachers and schools continue to blame students for their disengagement, rather than reflecting on how the environment influences engagement. In this situation, the disengaged student becomes the opponent who fails to play by the rules. In the context of classroom learning, the teacher makes plans for teaching and learning, and these plans include expectations for how students will engage in the planned activities. It is the teacher's plans for the learning experience that serve as the reference point for engagement. Are students engaged in the teacher's plans for learning, or are they disengaged from those plans? Battle lines are drawn.

Importantly, the fact that individual students are doing an activity the teacher has planned for them does not necessarily mean there aren't other things they would rather be learning or engaged in doing. Similarly, students may be disengaged from the planned learning activity but actively engaged in something else. Just as students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge, they are not devoid of their own rich motivational resources. They bring to the classroom a range of motivational resources that can be fuel for engagement—such as personal interests, relationships with peers, curiosity, and previous experiences of

success. The question is not whether students are motivated or not motivated. The question is whether they are motivated to learn what we want them to learn and do what we want them to do. It is a matter not of switching on motivation, but of directing their motivation to worthwhile challenging learning. Students have a choice to make when it comes to where they will invest their motivation and to what degree they will invest. These choices have implications for their engagement in classroom learning experiences. Our challenge as teachers is not to push or pull students in the direction we want them to go, but to work in partnership with them to create opportunities for learning that they want to invest their motivational resources in pursuing.

Before we move on, let's take a moment to reflect on our experiences with student disengagement.

💡

TIME TO REFLECT

If you were asked to describe what student disengagement means to you, what would you say? What does disengagement look like or sound like in your classroom? Add these to your notes about engagement.

ENGAGEMENT IN WHAT?

Engagement must have a context. We engage *in* something or *with* something, or we disengage *from* something. Research into student engagement looks at many different contexts for engagement ranging from engaging in the social institution that is "school" to engaging in the process of learning something. To better understand the value of engagement and its role in supporting specific outcomes, it is useful to look at the different lines of engagement research.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Broadly speaking, student engagement in school has been repeatedly associated with achievement and academic success, and a lack of engagement in school has been associated with less desirable outcomes such as school dropout. Engagement has the potential to help students persist with challenging

tasks, remain resilient in the face of setbacks or failures in learning and at school, and experience greater well-being.

Many schools and districts collect data on student disengagement to identify at-risk students. These data tend to rely on things relating to students' behavior at school, like attendance and suspensions, rather than things relating to students' emotional or cognitive engagement in learning. Disengagement tends to be higher in urban schools and among males, students from minority groups, and students from lower socioeconomic households (Fredricks et al., 2019).

While there is a general pattern of declining engagement as students progress through school, distinct engagement patterns have been identified by researchers. Some students have fairly stable patterns of engagement (sometimes consistently low), and others have a more rapid drop in engagement over time (Janosz et al., 2008). Students can show different patterns of engagement that suggest being successful at school does not necessarily equate to being fully invested in learning. That is, students can be achieving and going through the motions of "doing school" but also report feeling bored, feeling stressed, and not learning anything (Conner & Pope, 2013; Pope, 2001; Wang & Peck, 2013).

One way to think about this is to make a distinction between "engaging in school" and "engaging in learning." When we are thinking about students engaging in school, we are interested in things like attendance, involvement in the activities that happen at school, and adherence to the rules and social norms of the school. While these things may contribute to preventing dropout and supporting a sense of belonging within the school community, it is unlikely that these aspects of engagement will be sufficient in promoting learning.

As teachers, we want our students to feel invested and involved in school, but we are also interested in how students engage in learning. This might include involvement in planned learning experiences, willingness to take on challenges, collaborating with peers, and applying a range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support their learning. The focus of this book will be on fostering student engagement in learning in a way that will also support their needs for autonomy and competence as learners and their feelings of being meaningfully connected to others in learning.

ENGAGEMENT FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

Being clear on what students will be engaged in is only one side of the coin. On the flip side, we need to consider why we are interested in their engagement and what purpose it will serve. Engagement has been associated with a number of different outcomes that might be of interest to schools and teachers. These include achievement and academic success, as well as feelings of well-being and connection to others at school. In order for us to choose strategies for facilitating student engagement, we need to think about the outcomes we are hoping to influence and how success will be measured. Let's consider the following scenarios:

Scenario 1

Paul wants to improve student well-being in his class. In particular, he is interested in fostering a greater sense of social connection within the class and positive feelings about being at school and in this class. He has selected a number of strategies that he hopes might improve their engagement in an upcoming unit of work. These include opportunities to work in teams, giving them some choice in what they will do in that team, and using an open-ended task. He is hoping to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies by looking at their completed tasks.

Scenario 2

Tanya wants to improve her students' skills in researching historical events and deepen their knowledge of a key historical event. She is hoping that including a number of engaging elements, such as videos and a game related to this historical event, might help students to be more engaged in their learning. In her planning, she has developed a short feedback form to get students to rate their enjoyment of the different activities.

Both teachers are interested in increasing the engagement of their students, but for very different reasons. Paul is hoping engagement will positively influence student attitudes and feelings about school, while Tanya is hoping engagement will lead to improvements in understanding and specific skills. Looking at their plans for evaluating their impact, do you think the teachers will have the evidence they need to determine if their engagement strategies "worked"?

Ideally, we are hoping to align our intentions for engagement, and the strategies we will use to facilitate engagement, with our intended outcomes. In addition, we want to align our strategies for collecting evidence and evaluating our impact with the intentions for engagement and the intended outcomes. In

order to do this, we need to be explicit about what the students will engage in and what intended outcome this engagement is intended to support.

ENGAGEMENT FROM THE TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

Despite an abundance of research into student engagement and evidence to show the influence teachers have on the engagement of their students, very few have investigated how teachers think about engagement. Do teachers make distinctions between emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, and cognitive engagement? Do they focus on disengagement and fixing problems with engagement? Or, do they have other ways of thinking about student engagement?

My work as a classroom teacher inspired these questions and others and formed the basis for my research into teacher perspectives on engagement. Rather than contesting the existing approaches to engagement, this work sought to add an additional vantage point for thinking about and discussing student engagement, one that is embedded in the daily life of the classroom.

As teachers, the way we conceptualize student engagement is the result of many things. One of the primary influences on our understanding of engagement is our prior experiences in the classroom. This may relate to both our experiences as students and our experiences as teachers attempting to engage students within lessons. In my research, many of the teachers' descriptions of the concept of engagement involved recounting specific episodes in the classroom either as a way of illustrating what they were trying to convey or as a way of thinking through and reflecting on what they knew of engagement. You may have found yourself doing this same thing when you reflected on what engagement and disengagement mean to you. A key finding from my research was that teachers have a range of meanings when they use the broad terms *engagement* and *disengagement*. Not only do different teachers describe engagement in different ways, but individual teachers also express a range of different meanings for the concept of engagement.

So much for the illusion of consensus. So much for immaculate perception.

DISRUPTING TO DRIVING:
A CONTINUUM OF
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In 2016–2017, I decided to investigate the concept of student engagement from the perspective of the classroom teacher. I conducted in-depth interviews with teachers to explore their conceptions of student engagement in learning. The reflection prompts that you've used in this chapter are similar to some of the questions I asked these teachers. In particular, I was interested in both the everyday examples of student engagement these teachers described, as well as their descriptions of less common, but often powerful, examples of highly engaged students. In this way, I was trying to capture the full range of engagement that teachers might encounter in the classroom. Since this research, I have had many other opportunities to ask teachers to describe engagement and recount their experiences of student engagement in the classroom. I've also received feedback from teachers, parents, and others in the education community to suggest that the forms of engagement I described resonate with their own experiences and provide a useful reference point for their work with students. In 2020, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and John Hattie included the continuum in *The Distance Learning Playbook*, introducing it to a wide range of education professionals and extending it beyond its origins in the classroom and into the realm of distance learning.

Using teachers' descriptions of engagement from the interviews, I created a continuum describing six different forms of engagement in the planned learning experience (Berry, 2020). This includes their engagement *in* the activity, as well as their engagement *with* peers during the planned activity. In Figure 1.2, on the left are three forms of students disengaging from the planned learning experience, and on the right are three forms of students engaging in the learning experience. The most active forms are on either end, and the most passive forms are in the middle. Finally, possible goals that a teacher might have for student engagement in the learning experience are offered as a way of connecting teacher expectations with the different forms of engagement.

Let's take a closer look at these six forms of engagement, beginning with three ways that students engage in the planned learning experience. These forms range from passively participating and going along with what the teacher has planned, to actively investing in the focus for learning and driving their progress toward meaningful goals for learning.

FIGURE 1.2 ● *Disrupting* to *Driving*: A Continuum of Student Engagement

ACTIVE ←——— PASSIVE ———→ ACTIVE

	DISRUPTING	AVOIDING	WITHDRAWING	PARTICIPATING	INVESTING	DRIVING
Engaging in the activity	Disrupting the learning environment Refusing to participate Arguing with the teacher	Looking for ways to avoid work Being off-task Being unprepared Looking for reasons to leave the room or move around the room	"Flying under the radar" Physically separating from others Being distracted Putting in low effort	Doing the work Being on task Paying attention Responding to questions	Asking questions about what we are learning Valuing what we are learning Showing interest or curiosity in what we are learning Enjoying learning	Setting goals for my learning Seeking feedback to help me improve Seeking out challenges Monitoring and evaluating my progress
Engaging with peers	Arguing with peers Trying to distract others	Off-task talking with others Playing around with others instead of working	Sitting with a group if directed but not interacting	Working with others when directed to do so	Sharing ideas and thinking with peers Following shared interests	Collaborating with others toward a shared goal Challenging each other to drive improvement
	Students are **disengaging** from the planned learning experience			Students are **engaging** in the planned learning experience		
	What goals might the teacher have for engagement in the learning experience?			I want them to follow my lead and complete certain tasks	I want them to be interested in learning and actively involved in the process	I want them to be proactive and collaborative learners

© Corwin, 2022

PARTICIPATING

"Probably the first thing is where their focus is at, so if they're looking at their work or quietly completing the task."

This form of engagement is characterized by students' compliant behavior and willingness to do what the teacher has asked them to do. Behaviors associated with this type of engagement include being on task, being focused, paying attention, doing work, and responding to teacher questions. In relation to engaging with peers, this is limited to working in groups or pairs when directed to do so by the teacher. When expectations for engagement sit at this level, the focus is on listening to the teacher, following the teacher's instructions, and completing the tasks that have been assigned by the teacher.

INVESTING

"Students who are engaged ask a lot of questions, are keen and curious, want to know more, and think actively about what they are working on."

When students move from passive compliance to this more active form of engagement, we see signs that they are personally invested in and finding value in what they are learning. Behaviors include showing curiosity and interest, displaying signs they are enjoying learning, asking questions about what they are learning, engaging in discussions about the learning, and thinking more deeply about what they are learning. This includes wanting to share their questions, ideas, and experiences with peers during the learning experience, either as part of a whole-class discussion or during small-group activities. When expectations for engagement sit at this level, the focus is on deeper thinking, more active involvement in learning, and students feeling that what they are learning is both interesting and meaningful.

DRIVING

"That was important to them. That was the focus that was driving them, and every thought they had was what they wanted to do. They kept asking, 'When are we having time to plan?'"

In this most active form of engagement, students are striving toward a goal they have set for themselves, one that is personally meaningful to them and involves a certain level of challenge. We sometimes refer to this kind of challenge as "hard fun." Behaviors associated with *driving* include setting goals for learning; engaging in self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-evaluation; seeking feedback to help them improve; and looking for ways to extend their learning. At this level, engagement with peers is also at its highest level. This can include actively collaborating with others to learn together and actively seeking out peers as a valuable source of feedback and support during learning. When expectations for engagement are at this level, the focus is on wanting students to successfully "drive" their own learning, either individually or collaboratively, and make use of available resources (including peers) to support improvements in learning.

When students are *driving*, they are becoming masters of their own learning and engaging in behaviors characteristic of *self-regulated learning*. This includes setting goals for improving, making a plan for improvement, taking actions and using strategies to achieve that goal, monitoring and evaluating progress toward the goal, and using feedback to guide improvement (Panadero, 2017).

Three forms describe students disengaging from the planned learning activity; they range from passive withdrawal through actively attempting to disrupt the learning environment.

WITHDRAWING

"They've just pulled the blinds down; you can see them automatically glaze over, and it doesn't matter what you're saying—you've lost them."

Students who are passively disengaged in the learning experience are often described as "flying under the radar." They are not trying to call attention to themselves or cause any disruption, but they are also not participating in the planned learning experience. Behaviors that are associated with this form of disengagement include appearing distracted, not making eye contact, daydreaming, physically withdrawing from the group, staring out the window, and lacking participation or effort. In this passive form of disengaging from the learning experience, students are only engaging with peers when directed to do so by the teacher. This may involve sitting with a group as part of a group activity but not interacting with others during the activity.

Some students actively engage in not being visible to the teacher, hoping never to be asked questions in class, and seeming like they are there but not. While this may seem like a harmless form of disengaging, the impact of passive disengagement on learning is just as serious as the more active forms of disengaging (Angus et al., 2009).

AVOIDING

"They find excuses to go out of the room a lot, or go to their bag a lot. They sit on the computer and find other things to do instead of staying on task."

Students at this level of disengagement are often described as being off task and actively looking to avoid engaging in the planned learning experience. Unlike the *withdrawing* form, students are not as concerned with going unnoticed, and they are actively seeking out other things to do rather than passively disengaging. Behaviors associated with this form of disengagement include moving around the room unnecessarily, being off task, asking to leave the room, and being unprepared. In relation to engaging with peers, students may engage in off-task behavior like talking or playing with materials with other students who are also looking to avoid engaging in the planned learning activity.

DISRUPTING

"They go around to someone else's desk and start an argument about something—goofing around, being loud, and causing a bit of trouble."

In this form of disengagement, students are actively disrupting the learning environment or explicitly refusing to participate in the planned learning experience. Behaviors include arguing with the teacher or peers, being noncompliant, trying to distract others, and moving around the room in a way that causes a disruption to learning (e.g., running around, rolling around on chairs). In relation to engaging with peers, students at this level might get into arguments with peers or try to distract them by attempting to attract their attention away from the planned learning activity. They can be actively engaged in being disruptive, and reprimands can reinforce these behaviors by showing the disruptive students and their peers how successful they can be in their disrupting role.

This continuum offers an additional vantage point from which we can think about student engagement, this time from the

perspective of the teacher, and an expanded vocabulary for discussing engagement within the context of classroom learning. In the coming chapters, we will continue to explore how this continuum might be used in planning for, reflecting on, and evaluating student engagement in learning. First, take a moment to return to your notes and reflect on them through the lens of the continuum.

TIME TO REFLECT

Looking back at your notes on engagement and disengagement, can you see some connection to the different forms described in the continuum? What forms can you see represented in your notes? Are there any forms that are absent in your notes?

Can you think of examples of each of the forms of engagement and disengagement from your own experiences in the classroom?