



Youth Development
Resource Center

GUIDES TO QUALITY PRACTICES

Active Engagement

Active engagement is the process of involving all students in activities that encourage them to develop a deeper understanding of content by working with and reflecting upon the material being presented.

With the active engagement process, students transition from being mere recipients of information to being participants actively engaged with new information in a learning environment.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL SUGGESTED INDICATORS

Active engagement requires two things: great content and strong adult support. Use this checklist when designing your program.

GREAT CONTENT:

- ☐ **Provide stimulating activities** - youth get to actively interact with materials, ideas, and skills.
- ☐ **Provide appropriate challenge** - content that requires effort, but is attainable (do you know what's age-appropriate for your group?)

STRONG ADULT SUPPORT:

- ☐ **Engineer for success and allow for mistakes-** realize that every lesson or activity may not go exactly as you have planned. When you plan your activity, plan for time for your youth to make mistakes and learn from them so you can be prepared.
- ☐ **Ask lots of questions** – ask open-ended questions so you can get more information from your youth, and build community!
- ☐ **Participate alongside youth** - if youth have hesitation about participating in an activity, participating in it alongside them shows that you're willing to do the task you've asked of them. Showing vulnerability to your youth goes a long way!
- ☐ **Promote learning connections** - often we say that the skill they are learning in an activity will help them in the real world. Promoting learning connections provides a concrete experience to an abstract idea you're presenting. For instance, if the activity promotes thinking on your feet - which you're always saying is a good skill to have in job interviews - set up mock interviews for students to see in real-time how that skill is helpful.
- ☐ **Scaffolding** - providing supports to succeed and meet high expectations.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT CONTINUED

BUILDING COMMUNITY:

- ▶ Without building community active engagement will be very challenging. Students want to learn with you, but if they do not feel safe in the community they may be afraid to share. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.
- ▶ In business, warm calling is getting in touch with calling a prospect with whom you or your company has had some prior contact. Warm calling is the opposite of cold calling and is generally more efficient and effective. In youth development, this may look like "Ok, Peter, I'm going to call on you first so listen to the instructions carefully!" so as not to "cold call" or surprise your youth, creating blocks for active .

ACROSS AGES:

- ▶ As youth get older, they can think more critically and can be given more responsibility. As a result, activities may go deeper and last longer, and meaningful projects that last numerous sessions are more possible.
- ▶ As children become adolescents, their abilities to think in abstract and complex ways increase.
- ▶ As a group of youth gets older, their interests and abilities diverge. That is, small differences at younger ages (such as reading speed or love of sports) get larger as youth get older (faster readers get even faster, kids really love or really hate sports).

Source: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

HANDS-ON LEARNING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT:

- ▶ Hands-on activities are not always active engagement activities. Active engagement may have some hands-on activities/experiences. Without active engagement, hands-on activities aren't enough on their own.
- ▶ Active engagement utilizes the brain to engage the five senses so learning can take place. While hands-on learning can be a part of active engagement, it isn't the only ingredient you need.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

- ▶ <https://store.cypq.org/search?type=product&q=active+learning+>
- ▶ <http://cypq.org/about/approach>
- ▶ http://www.cypq.org/sites/cypq.org/files/Active_Learning_GuidebookSample.pdf

Implementation Activities

- ▶ <https://teachingcommons.lakeheadu.ca/zoom-interactivity-active-learning-strategies>
- ▶ <https://aggie.io/>