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# Friday Focus

## Carter County Schools

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## SCOR-ing Engagement

We are constantly seeking strategies for keeping our students actively engaged. What, exactly, does that mean? Harvey Silver and Richard Strong, two leading authors and researchers on the topic of student engagement, put it this way: **Students who are engaged in their work are energized by four goals—success, curiosity, originality, and satisfying relationships—the acronym is SCORE.**

How do we cultivate these motivations in our classrooms? This model poses four important questions that teachers must ask themselves in order to score a high level of engagement in their classrooms.

1. Under what conditions are students most likely to feel that they can be successful?
2. When are students most likely to become curious?
3. How can we help students satisfy their natural drive toward self-expression?
4. How can we motivate students to learn by using their natural desire to create and foster good peer relationships?

### Convincing Kids They Can Succeed

Before we can use success to motivate our students to produce high-quality work, we must meet three conditions:

1. We must clearly articulate the criteria for success and provide clear, immediate, and constructive feedback.
2. We must show students that the skills they need to be successful are within their grasp by clearly and systematically modeling

these skills.

3. We must help them see success as a valuable aspect of their personalities.

### Arousing Curiosity

How can we ensure that our curriculum arouses intense curiosity? By making sure it features two defining characteristics: the information about a topic is fragmentary or contradictory, and the topic relates to students' personal lives. It is precisely the lack of organization of a body of information that compels us to understand it further. This may explain why textbooks, which are highly organized, rarely arouse student interest. It also explains why a strategy such as the Question Formulation Technique is so effective in motivating students to read further, seek information, or plan a course of action for conducting research or solving a problem.

### Encouraging Originality

How should self-expression be encouraged? There are several ways.

*Connect creative projects to students' personal ideas and concerns.* For example, one teacher begins her study of ceramics by having students examine objects found in the homes of a variety of ancient civilizations. She then asks the class to design a ceramic object that expresses their feeling about their home.

*Expand what counts as an audience.* One of the most successful creative projects we have seen involved an audience of one. Each student in a middle school class was linked to an older member of the community and asked to write that person's "autobiography."

*Consider giving students more choice.*

The medium of expression, for example, is often as important to an artist as the expression itself. What would have happened to the great tradition of American blues if the early musicians were forced to adhere to traditions of European music? This is one more argument for instructional methods that emphasize learning styles, multiple intelligences, and cultural diversity.

### Fostering Peer Relations

Students want and need work that will enhance their relationships with people they care about. This drive toward interpersonal involvement is pervasive in all our lives. Further, most of us work hardest on those relationships that are reciprocal—what you have to offer is of value to me, and what I have to offer is of some value to you. Consider how cooperative learning strategies such as Kagan structures can boost peer relations by having students work together in teams and pairs. Other learning designs such as "jigsaw" foster accountability between individuals and teams of students so that the final product is a result of the joint effort of everyone involved. This kind of reciprocal learning builds the kind of relationships that young people find engaging.

**By seeking to break down boundaries between teacher and student, student and the learning process, we will learn what students want and need. As a result, more and more teachers may go to bed at night remembering images of wonder, enthusiasm, and perseverance on the faces of their students.**

