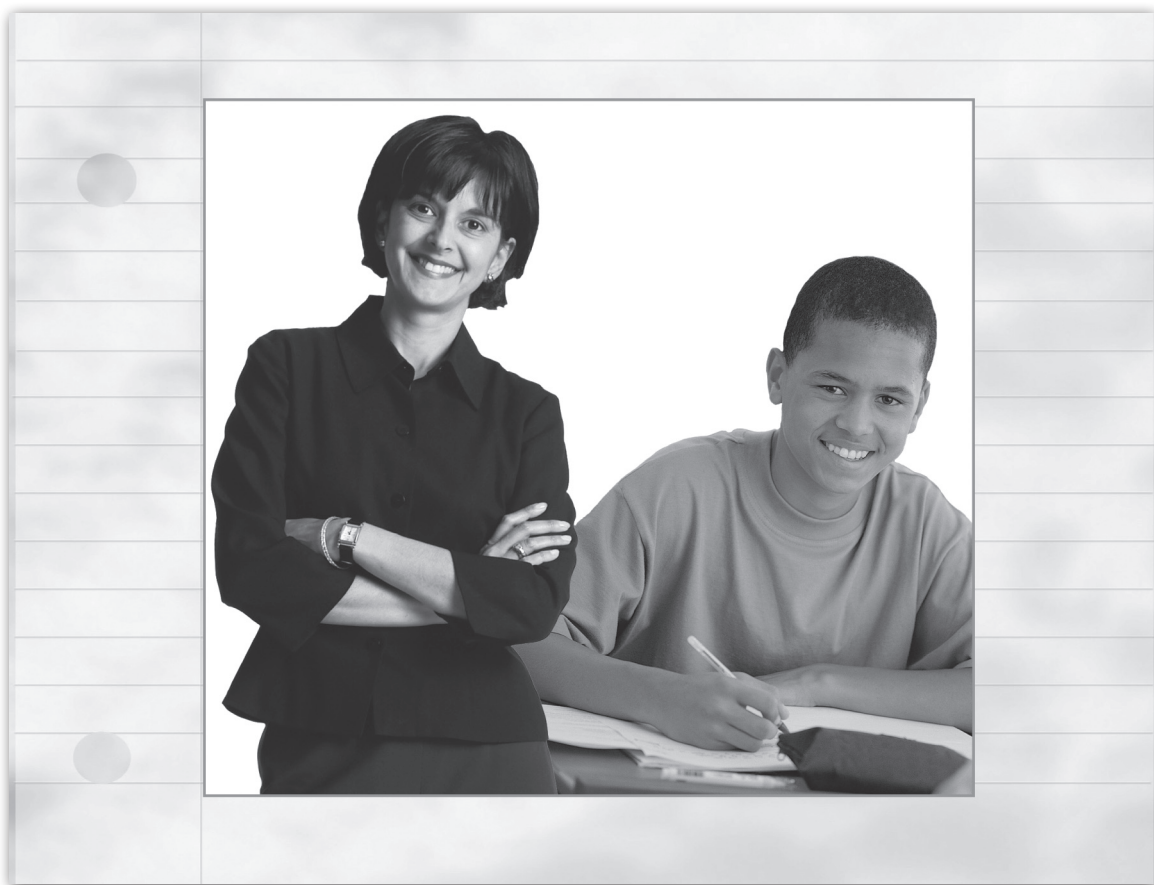


Student Engagement

Teacher Handbook



International Center

for Leadership in Education

The International Center for Leadership in Education
wishes to thank the author of this handbook:

Richard D. Jones, Ph.D.

Excepting those portions intended for classroom or training use, no part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to International Center for Leadership in Education. The International Center for Leadership in Education grants the purchaser of this publication permission to reproduce those pages intended for use in classrooms or training. Notice of copyright must appear on all copies of copyrighted materials.

Copyright © 2009 by International Center for Leadership in Education

All rights reserved.

Published by International Center for Leadership in Education.
Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 1-935300-32-6

The handbook is a companion to the
professional development resource kit
Student Engagement —
Creating a Culture of Academic Achievement.



International Center for Leadership in Education
1587 Route 146 • Rexford, New York 12148
(518) 399-2776 • fax (518) 399-7607
www.LeaderEd.com • info@LeaderEd.com

Contents

Overview	v
1. Engaging Today's Students for Academic Success	1
The New Academic Focus: Student Engagement	1
Elements that Support Student Engagement	2
New Generations of Students	3
Brain Research	4
Gender Differences	6
Brain-Compatible Teaching	11
2. Building Student Relationships	15
Positive Relationships — Essential to the Learning Process.....	15
Activities for Getting to Know One Another	15
Activities for Building Strong Teams	17
Activities for Reflective Fun	19
Effective Communication	19
Resources	22
3. Data-Driven Engagement	23
Measuring Student Engagement.....	23
Learning Criteria to Support 21 st Century Learners	23
Classroom Walkthroughs	27
Student Engagement Characteristics	28
Student Engagement Walkthrough Checklist	31
Student Feedback	33
Three Dimensions of Student Engagement	34
4. A School Culture of Engagement	37
An Inviting School Culture	37
Three Key Elements of a Positive School Culture	38
Addressing Student Needs	39
5. Engagement-Based Learning and Teaching – Preconditions	47
Introduction	47
Learning Relationships — Tips and Techniques	48
Creating the Ideal Classroom Environment — Tips and Techniques	58
Rewards and Grading — Tips and Techniques	62
Guiding Principles — Tips and Techniques	69
Student Habits — Tips and Techniques.....	74
Foundation Skills — Tips and Techniques.....	78
6. Engagement-Based Learning and Teaching – Pedagogy.....	91
Introduction	91
Designing for Rigorous and Relevant Learning — Tips and Techniques	92
Personalized Learning — Tips and Techniques	104
Active Learning Strategies — Tips and Techniques	115
Focus on Reading — Tips and Techniques.....	127

Student Engagement — Teacher Handbook

7. Technology Solutions	141
Using Technology to Engage Students	141
Linking Technology to the Rigor/Relevance Framework	142
Expanding Possibilities	145
Examples of Engaging Students Through Technology	145
8. Common Problems – Creative Solutions	149



Chapter 3

Data-Driven Engagement

Measuring Student Engagement

A key to increasing student engagement is finding efficient ways to measure it. When something is measured, summarized, and reported, it becomes important, and people pay attention. Many schools are working diligently to improve student engagement. Frustration can occur, however, if schools embrace this goal without a systematic approach to measure current student learning, set goals, monitor progress, and recognize success.

Some school improvement initiatives such as reading level are carefully constructed, viewed appropriately through the lens of a school's mission, driven by data, and accountable to multiple stakeholders. Other initiatives, such as student engagement, however, are not so meticulously conceived. Rather than allowing data to drive goal setting and decision making, some schools still are guided by good intentions, hunches, and impressions. Often, these schools inadvertently lose sight of learners' needs as they struggle to ensure compliance with state regulations. The quest for student engagement must be conducted in the context of a comprehensive data system for measuring student learning. The same holds true in pursuing the implementation of successful engagement practices that foster student learning.

Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners

Learner engagement, otherwise known as student engagement, is one of four dimensions of the Learning Criteria for 21st Century Learners™, a tool created by the International Center that supports school improvement processes through data collection and analysis process. The set of criteria was a result of and has become a key part of the International Center's ongoing collaboration to identify and analyze the nation's most successful school practices and policies for achieving a rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students.

Four Dimensions of the Learning Criteria

The Learning Criteria is arranged in four dimensions that school leaders can use to determine the success of their schools in preparing students for current assessments and future roles and responsibilities.

1. **Foundation Academic Learning** is achievement in the core subjects of English language arts, math and science and others identified by the school. Indicators include: percentage of students meeting proficiency level on state tests and percentage of students graduating high school in four years.
2. **Stretch Learning** is the demonstration of rigorous and relevant learning beyond minimum requirements (participation and achievement in higher level courses, specialized courses, etc.). Indicators include interdisciplinary work and projects, such as a senior exhibition, completing sequences in the arts or career and technical education and average number of college credits earned by graduation through dual enrollment. Stretch learning may be the most difficult of the Learning Criteria because it compels schools to define how they are stimulating and stretching each student and not just the most academically gifted. It challenges a school to find data to validate the claim that “all students will ...” If schools are truly stretching them, students also will spend most of their time in Quadrants C and D of the Rigor/Relevance Framework.
3. **Learner Engagement** is extent to which all learners (1) are motivated and committed to learning, (2) have a sense of belonging and accomplishment, and (3) have relationships with adults, peers, and parents that support learning. Indicators include attendance rate and participation rates in extracurricular activities. Students need to be engaged before they can apply higher order, creative thinking skills. They learn most effectively when the teacher makes sense and meaning of the curriculum material being taught. This can only happen if the teacher has created a safe learning environment that encourages students to meet challenges and apply high rigor skills to real-world, unpredictable situations inside and outside of school.
4. **Personal Skill Development** consists of (1) measures of personal, social, service, and leadership skills and (2) demonstrations of positive behaviors and attitudes. Indicators include service learning participation and teamwork.

Think about a son or daughter's new friend. Are you more concerned about the friend's grades or his or her character qualities? Personal skill development gets to the heart of what makes a citizen, friend, or community member. What are schools doing to promote these qualities? Are they making leadership opportunities available for all students? Are they creating a curriculum that teaches these skills and making them graduation requirements?

The Learning Criteria is designed to provide a robust, comprehensive, and a detailed portrait of school performance that clearly maps out a route for school improvement efforts. It delivers data that can fuel accountability reports to the community at large and underlines the notion that school improvement is a multifaceted enterprise. The Learning Criteria also challenges schools to leverage data as a means of monitoring continuous, long-term growth and improvement efforts.

This model also redefines success in terms that are unique to each school, meets standardized test measures of school success, and reveals the school environment in all of its complexity and depth. It clarifies four important aspects of a well-educated student and elevates student engagement as an important measure of school effectiveness. Student engagement is not the sole purpose of education, but an essential part of overall student achievement and school success. If students are to retain and apply what they have learned, they have to enjoy the learning process.

Learner Engagement Sample Data Indicators

A school should have data indicators in all four dimensions of the Learning Criteria. Following are some sample data indicators for the Learner Engagement dimension.

For grades K-8, data indicators may include:

- student surveys
- parent surveys
- student risk behaviors (asset survey)
- surveys on degree to which teachers know their students
- student participation in classroom and school leadership (Junior Leadership Team, etc.)

Student Engagement — Teacher Handbook

For grades 9-12, data indicators may include:

- student surveys
- parent surveys
- student risk behaviors (asset survey)
- dropout rate
- attendance rate

The specific data indicators used will vary among schools based upon state requirements and school philosophy, focus, and curriculum. To identify success, all data indicators must be quantifiable in the following four categories:

- **School Performance** – expressed in objective terms
- **Sustained** – trend data to show improvement or maintenance at high levels for 3-5 years
- **Disaggregated** – comparisons in achievement among all subgroups
- **Benchmarked** – compared to similar schools, schools in state, school in nation, or accepted norms from national/state surveys, reports

The identification of data indicators for the Learning Criteria is the start of a process. It is meant to be dynamic and continuous. Initially, few schools will have all of the data necessary to complete the Learning Criteria fully. It will take time and several steps to move through the process.

Data on learner engagement as part of the Learning Criteria is focused on results or school performance. It does not include measures about education processes and the engagement of students during regular class instruction. Other instruments can be used for measurement of the level of student engagement through administrative classroom walkthroughs, peer reviews, or teacher and student reflection. Process data is important in determining if you are making progress, but you must first commit to focusing on results in learner engagement.

Classroom Walkthroughs

Purpose

Classroom walkthroughs are specific, short observations in classrooms. These may be done by school administrators, instructional coaches, or teacher peers. Classroom walkthroughs are not a traditional supervisory evaluation of the teacher. They are shorter snapshots that focus on a specific instructional practice. They may be conducted by an individual or a team of educators.

Walkthroughs should be introduced after all staff involved fully understand the purpose and expectations. Teachers who will be observed should be contacted beforehand, and the criteria and specific observations that will be examined should be explained. It is important that teachers understand what administrators or coaches will be looking for.

Procedures

All walkthroughs should have a common set of criteria. The purpose of this activity is not to evaluate the teacher, but to make classroom observations and talk to students to obtain specific information about the level of engagement. During a walkthrough, the observer should avoid disturbing the classroom lesson. Once walkthroughs are common practice, teachers and students will accept them as routine.

Before the walkthrough, observers should introduce themselves briefly to the teacher and obtain any background information that will help them better understand what the students are engaged in at that particular time. Since the observation is not an evaluation, observers make no judgments nor give any feedback to students or the teacher. The focus should be on students interacting with their peers or how engaged students are in the work they are doing. A good rule of thumb is to conduct walkthroughs in classrooms once or twice a month.

After a walkthrough, arrange to have debriefings. These can be handled in two ways. If the intent is to determine the overall student engagement levels of a school, the debriefing would be for the entire group of staff members without making references to individual teachers. If the feedback or observation is

intended to coach teachers after observing how they conducted their classrooms, then it is important to meet with these teachers individually to discuss the observations made during the walkthrough.

Student Engagement Characteristics

Many classroom walkthroughs blend measures of student engagement with measures of instructional practice. Although this is a good way to view effective learning, sometimes we need to pay more attention simply to how well students are engaged rather than on what kind of instruction is being delivered or how the classroom is set up. In this way, we become more focused on the learner rather than on the teacher.

The Student Engagement Walkthrough Checklist that follows examines the degree to which students are exhibiting engaging behaviors, regardless of what is being taught. This observation is meant to help reach agreement in defining high degrees of student engagement.

As administrators and instructional supervisors conduct classroom walkthroughs, they can use the checklist to rate the level of student engagement in each of the categories. The first part is based on direct observation of students and includes these criteria: positive body language, consistent focus, verbal participation, student confidence, and fun and excitement. The second part of the checklist requires more than direct observation. It requires talking to students to determine more about their mental engagement. These criteria include: attention to individual needs, clarity of learning, meaningfulness of work, rigorous thinking, and performance orientation.

There are several questions for each criterion to gauge the level of student engagement. Each criterion is rated on a scale from “very low” to “very high.” An overall level of student engagement can be determined using the compilation of the criteria ratings.

Teachers can use this checklist as a reflective tool to examine themselves and determine the level of engagement in their classrooms. Sometimes it is difficult for teachers to evaluate themselves. However, sharing this checklist with them can help to establish common definitions of highly engaged students, reflect on

practices, and share instructional ideas that contribute to increased levels of student engagement.

Student Engagement Characteristics: Part 1

First, the observer must examine the following set of characteristics of engagement. These direct observations include:

- **Positive body language.** Students exhibit body postures that indicate listening and attention to the teacher and/or other students. Eye contact, head position, leaning forward or backward, and positions of arms all indicate a student's level of interest and attention.
- **Consistent focus.** Students are focused on the learning activity with minimum disruptions. Consider these questions regarding student behavior during the entire observation: Are students focused on the learning experience? Does their attention waiver because of lack of interest, lack of knowledge of how to proceed, frustration, or some outside distraction?
- **Verbal participation.** Students express thoughtful ideas and answers. They ask questions that are relevant or appropriate to learning. Student participation is not passive; it involves sharing opinions and reflecting on complex problems.
- **Student confidence.** Students exhibit confidence to initiate and complete a task with limited coaching or approval-seeking and can actively participate in team-based work.
- **Fun and excitement.** Students exhibit interest and enthusiasm and use positive humor.

Student Engagement Characteristics: Part 2

The second part of the observation requires conversations with students to gather details about the degree to which they are engaged in a learning experience. There are five strategies for measuring perception of engagement. For each aspect, questions are provided to encourage conversations with students.

Student Engagement — Teacher Handbook

- **Individual attention.** Students feel comfortable in seeking help and asking questions.
- **Clarity of learning.** Students can describe the purpose of the lesson or unit. This is more comprehensive than describing the activity based on the lesson of the day.
- **Meaningfulness of work.** Students find the work interesting, challenging, and connected to learning.
- **Rigorous thinking.** Students work on complex problems, create original solutions, and reflect on the quality of their work.
- **Performance orientation.** Students understand what quality work is and how it will be assessed. They also can describe the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.

Student Engagement Walkthrough Checklist

OBSERVATIONS

	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Positive Body Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit body postures that indicate they are paying attention to the teacher and/or other students.					
Consistent Focus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
All students are focused on the learning activity with minimum disruptions.					
Verbal Participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students express thoughtful ideas, reflective answers, and questions relevant or appropriate to learning.					
Student Confidence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit confidence and can initiate and complete a task with limited coaching and can work in a group.					
Fun and Excitement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students exhibit interest and enthusiasm and use positive humor.					

Student Engagement — Teacher Handbook

PERCEPTIONS

Very High High Medium Low Very Low

Individual Attention

Students feel comfortable seeking help and asking questions.

Question to Ask: What do you do in this class if you need extra help?

Clarity of Learning

Students can describe the purpose of the lesson or unit. This is not the same as being able to describe the activity being done during class.

Questions to Ask: What are you working on? What are you learning from this work?

Meaningfulness of Work

Students find the work interesting, challenging, and connected to learning.

Questions to Ask: What are you learning? Is this work interesting to you? Do you know why you are learning this?

Rigorous Thinking

Students work on complex problems, create original solutions, and reflect on the quality of their work.

Questions to Ask: How challenging is this work? In what ways do you have the opportunity to be creative?

Performance Orientation

Students understand what quality work is and how it will be assessed. They also can describe the criteria by which their work will be evaluated.

Questions to Ask: How do you know you have done good work? What are some elements of quality work?

Overall Level of Student Engagement

Student Feedback

Here is a quick and informal way to get feedback from students on the level of engagement for a specific class period. As you work to increase the level of student engagement, student feedback will confirm or deny whether you are actually making progress. Also, by involving students you indicate your commitment to make instruction more engaging.

Use the following five-point scale to allow students to rate the level of engagement. Have all students give their rating simultaneously and anonymously. Digital response pads work well for this. You could also have students write a rating number on a card or individual whiteboard and then collect them. If you use this frequently, you could laminate five cards with the ratings for each student. Students hold up the card with their chosen rating.

Before students begin to give you feedback, explain the criteria that will be used to rate the level of engagement. A class is highly engaging if:

- the work is interesting and challenging
- you are inspired to do high-quality work
- you understand why and what you are learning
- time seems to pass quickly

Rating Scale

1. Low level of engagement:
Class was boring, time moved slowly.
2. Low to moderate level of engagement:
Class was OK.
3. Moderate level of engagement overall or high level for a short time:
Class was good.
4. High level of engagement for a major portion of the class period:
Class was very good.
5. High level of engagement for the entire class period:
Wish we had more time.

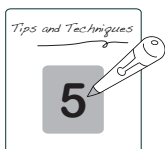
Three Dimensions of Engagement

Three dimensions of engagement can be used to measure progress in increasing student engagement.

1. **Intensity** refers to the level of engagement of each student.
2. **Breadth** refers to how broadly the class as a whole is engaged. Is the entire class engaged? 75%? 50%? Full levels of engagement are not achieved until all students are engaged.
3. **Consistency** refers to how long students are engaged at peak levels throughout the class period. Are they engaged at high levels consistently through an entire period of instruction? Or are students engaged at the beginning of a class and lose attention and interest as the class goes on? Consistent engagement is better than having cycles of high and low engagement.

Following are some suggestions for addressing different engagement scenarios using these three dimensions.

- Low engagement intensity
 - Add rigor and relevance to expectations and lessons.
 - Reflect on nature of student work and increase application.
 - Work on student relationships.
 - Establish classroom procedures and have students practice them until they become habits.
- Moderate engagement intensity, but low consistency (variation throughout class period)
 - Vary instructional strategies.
 - Use active learning strategies.
 - Maintain high levels of rigor.
- Moderate engagement intensity but low breadth (only some students are engaged)
 - Use personalization strategies.
 - Work on student relationships.
 - Focus on reading issues.



Student Habits — Tips and Techniques

Classroom habits are the routines and procedures for students that teachers create. These habits include the way that students enter a classroom or engage in an activity at the start of every class period. Other habits include the ways that students open and organize materials that they need for the day, move from large to small groups for various activities, and work on individual problems.

Teachers can create improved classroom environments and encourage higher levels of student engagement if they focus on appropriate procedures and have students practice those procedures until they become habits. When students fail to follow the procedures, teachers need remind them of the rules and ways in which they can practice them. Good habits help to make effective use of instructional time and reduce the disruptions that distract students from the learning process. It is through practices that these procedures become powerful habits and keep students engaged in learning.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit."
— Aristotle

If we think about the students we have known, we probably can easily remember those individuals whose habits consistently interfered with their learning. They may have engaged in excessive socializing with friends, playing computer games when they were supposed to be studying, or waiting until the last minute to complete schoolwork. These students probably did not realize their full academic potential. Similarly, we likely can recall students whose habits consistently produced a high level of achievement. These students made a habit of doing their homework, studying for tests, maintaining a positive attitude, actively participating in school life, and doing what was necessary to achieve at a high level.

School, home, and social life compete each day for students' time, energy, and attention. In an era of the Internet, instant messaging, e-mail, MP3 players, video games, and cell phones, student distractions can run high. Older students tend to have part-time jobs and greater access to the society around them, adding to the time students might not be thinking about school.

To rein in these distractions, educators can teach students to recognize, internalize, and apply specific habits that will facilitate academic achievement. Students need to be surrounded by teachers, parents, and others who encourage engagement by incorporating strategies that:

Chapter 5 Engagement-Based Learning and Teaching — Preconditions

- provide a basic awareness of habits that lead to high achievement
- help students learn good habits
- emphasize the importance of good habits
- support the implementation of habits through positive feedback and encouragement

The rapidly developing brains of students seek to make sense of the world by categorizing experiences and to categories. Consequently, students value rituals and consistent procedures. Kindergarten is all about developing routines and patterns of behaviors; these are continued through elementary school but often neglected as students move to secondary schools. Teachers can enhance learning if they establish rituals and patterns. For example try greeting students when coming to class, playing music between activities, posting thoughtful quotes or intriguing questions. Also, post student assignments in the same place every day. Have these identified in advance and remind students at the end of each class period. Consistent practicing of routines beginning in elementary school and extending throughout the high school years is essential to creating an engaged learning environment.

Successful techniques for transforming beliefs into behaviors include teaching in a way that allows students to discover ideas about good behavior. One technique, for example, might be the Socratic dialog approach in which teachers ask questions that probe for deeper understanding and allow the students to reconsider their own thinking through self-reflection and relevant knowledge. Teachers also can encourage, prompt, coach, and praise behavior that reflects engagement beliefs and feelings. They can support the emotional component as it is expressed in the form of intrinsic motivation, pride, curiosity, or special interests in a subject or activity. In numerous different forms, students can attach positive feelings and associations to learning, studying, completing homework, competing at a high level, and involvement in school life.

Bell Ringer Activities

An excellent way to establish routines for engaging students early in a class period is to have specific tasks that students are expected as soon as they enter the classroom.

Student Engagement — Teacher Handbook

- Post a math question of the day on the board for them to answer.
- Provide a paragraph with 10 built-in errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or capitalization. Send students on a hunting expedition. Then review the work with them.
- Have students in a foreign language class do conjugations, translations, matching, identifying, etc. Play a song from that culture while they complete the assignment. When the song ends, so does the bell ringer.
- Have students submit questions on a given topic. The students whose questions get chosen for use receive rewards.
- Print out short biographies of famous scientists and have students read a biography day 1. On day 2, the students write a short summary. On day 3, they exchange the summaries and edit each others work. On day 4, they rewrite their summaries and turn in the assignment.
- Use short current events articles and political cartoons. Have students explain how the article ties in with what they are studying.
- Use a puzzle, question, paradox, picture, or cartoon on a slide or transparency to focus on the day's topic.
- Give students a random list of historical events and have them put them in chronological order.
- Put statements on the board for students to determine if they are fact or fiction. Keep a running record of how many students are correct each day.
- Create anagrams or other word puzzles for students to figure out words.
- Have student write as many words as possible related to a topic.
- Provide a brainstorming activity.

"Habits are safer
than rules; you
don't have to
watch them. And
you don't have to
keep them either.
They keep you."
—Frank Crane,
*Presbyterian
minister, speaker,
and columnist,
late 19th and early
20th centuries*

Student Habits Self-Check

Always Sometimes Rarely

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I have classroom rules regarding behavior expectations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Classroom rules regarding behavior expectations are posted, taught, reviewed, and reinforced on a regular basis. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Classroom routines are consistent and predictable from day-to-day. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I teach, review, and reinforce on a regular basis routines for students entering, exiting, and moving within the classroom. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Classroom rules are stated in positive language. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Homework policies are reviewed and reinforced on a regular basis. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Students practice acceptable ways to seek my attention. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Students follow classroom procedures. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. I use routines for distributing and collecting materials and supplies that result in little loss of instructional time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. My noninstructional duties result in minimal loss of instructional time. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. My responses to student misbehavior are appropriate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. My responses to student misbehavior are consistent. |