

## Essential Conditions for Engagement

Visible/Audible - what we see and hear in classrooms and schools	Invisible/Inaudible - what we sense in classrooms and schools
<p>Teachers create rituals rather than rules, there is an orderly and predictable daily structure, routines, mutually agreed upon that are unique to this group of learners, that make the group feel that they are one-of-a-kind.</p>	<p>A climate of respect and civility, a tendency to engage in focused learning and to reflect on ideas of great import that connect to the world outside school and children's later lives. A daily sense of the joy in learning and playing alongside each other.</p>
<p>Teachers construct a warm and inviting environment that is as comfortable for adults as it is for children - they use book shelves to cordon off spaces for small group, large group and independent learning and cozy places to curl up and read, softer lighting, curtains and cushions, carpet, photographs of children at work and play and artifacts from shared experiences.</p>	<p>A sense that everything that can be done has been done to make children and adults feel that their spaces are their sanctuary, apart from a sometimes troubled world outside and absolutely safe, physically, emotionally and intellectually.</p>
<p>Music, photographs, and art are permanent and predictable elements of the classroom culture - children discuss what they find beautiful and work to leave an aesthetic legacy in the classroom. They discuss ways to make their own working spaces uniquely conducive to engagement.</p>	<p>An impression of being surrounded and engulfed in an aesthetic world - a world in which a learner can be immersed in something important and beautiful merely by being present each day.</p>
<p>It is visually evident which parts of the room are set aside for scholarly talk and which are kept for independent work that requires quiet concentration. The words of authors, including the student authors are sprinkled liberally throughout the room. The room is a tribute to words. Books that represent a diverse perspectives, cultures, characters, and authors are presented in inviting ways. The shelves are filled with</p>	<p>The sense of an abundance of time for in-depth discourse about books, writers and the ideas represented in language. Teachers and children display a reverence for ideas, feel a determination to grow continually stronger in using oral and written language to build understanding of a fascinating and complex world, understanding of the conditions we need to think deeply and a respect for</p>

<p>books on fascinating topics from the social and natural world.</p>	<p>spirited interaction <i>and</i> the silence we need to ruminate.</p>
<p>The teacher serves as lead learner, modeling how readers and writers live in the world and speaks frequently and openly about his/her interests, frustrations, successes, routines, rituals and tactics that make the way somewhat smoother. Teachers show that to be engaged is to embrace the struggle and revel in the joy of working through difficult problems.</p>	<p>A feeling that “we’re all in this together” and that there is no perfect, complete learner - it is the work of a lifetime to use language effectively and explore ideas and that adults are working just as hard as children to do so.</p>
<p>Teachers use think alouds in whole group, small groups, and conferences to show what readers and writers think about in order to read with greater insight. Teachers focus on crafting their language to communicate clearly when writing and speaking.</p>	<p>A sense of awe about the “mysterious” workings of the human mind, but also a sense of clarity that smart is not something you are, it’s something you get. The teacher understands the importance of a growth mindset and building independence and agency in children and works hard to do so.</p>
<p>Children make most book and topic choices and regularly pursue topics of passionate interest--they have equal access to all materials, not just those at their “level” .</p>	<p>A significantly enhanced sense of ownership, an excitement about tackling challenging tasks because the children have chosen to do so and keeping a commitment matters. A sense of agency - an internal knowledge that each child has the capacity to tackle difficult challenges.</p>
<p>Children know when and why they work in specific texts to practice their word learning (surface structure skills) and when and why they work in text with challenging ideas for comprehension purposes (deep structure learning). They can articulate learning goals in both surface and deep structure learning. They can articulate goals toward which the class is working. They can articulate individual goals toward which they are working.</p>	<p>A sense of purpose - children read, write, and inquire not only for the joy in language but because they have very specific and ambitious goals toward which they are working and being mentored by other students and their teacher. As the school year progresses, children are more responsible for setting their own goals.</p>

<p>Children move about the room independently and purposefully, collecting the materials they need, replacing what they have used, caring for the spaces as they go. They value moving gently through the space, they are eager to guide visitors through the room, describing how it works for all within its walls.</p>	<p>A pervasive impression of caring for a precious space and the people within it, evident pride, clarity about how people mutually care for a space closely shared with others. A sense of empathy for other students, characters in books, and for those in the world outside school.</p>
<p>Children <i>teach</i> rather than share when they have done work of great import with respect to their goals - they plan their teaching sessions with care, ensuring that they meet a variety of learning needs in the classroom and that their learners will be engaged and active - they seek to ensure that their learners will retain and reapply what they have taught.</p>	<p>Children share their ideas, not for the sake of sharing but because they believe others will benefit. They discuss complex topics that are current and relevant to their own and others' lives outside school. When pursuing topics as researchers, they consider implications of their findings in the social and natural world. They are attuned to other's needs and take action in and out of school settings to mitigate conflict in the world.</p>

True engagement flourishes in certain classroom environments. We need to consider the visible and audible *and* the invisible and inaudible climate of the classroom.