

Excellent Engagement

Jane Vella, PhD

I want to be challenged when I am learning by excellent engagement. By this I mean, I want to be challenged by a learning task that stretches me, moves me to deep reflection and critique, and pushes me to hearty implementation of new concepts, attitudes or skills.

Recently I was at a session where the teacher had all of us do “a little exercise.” No! Engagement is not a wake-up opportunity or nod to the principle that does not stir synapses and grow dendrites. I came there to learn!

As teachers/professors/facilitators/leaders, we need to design learning tasks that challenge learners in a delicately constructed sequence, and deal with significant content. These carefully developed learning tasks should welcome doubt and criticism, moving learners towards authentic constructivist application to their unique contexts. Joy is the measure, and you will see and hear that joy as teams of learners report their findings and their creations with laughter and renewed energy.

Today, every learner is sitting on a small device that has immediate access to all the information you as teacher or professor have to offer. Our demanding role, it seems to me, is to design that access so that their learning is useful in their context.

Excellent engagement—nothing less is worthy of your learners!

(Originally published on GLP blog May 2, 2016)