

How Active Learning Ignites Hope in Students

Date : 12/09/2018

As the calendar flips to September, students worldwide crack open their new notebooks on the first day back to school. For many children, the new school year comes with nerves, excitement and the sense of a fresh start, but recent research from Gallup reports that as students move past fifth grade, this sense of adventure and enthusiasm for schools degrades year by year. Active learning, a teaching pedagogy that transforms traditional classrooms into environments where students take on an active role in their learning experience, shows promising signs as a way to reignite a love for learning within students.

The [2017 Gallup Student Poll](#), a 24-question survey that measures the engagement, hope, entrepreneurial aspiration and career/financial literacy of students in fifth through 12th grade, found that less than half of students are engaged at school. This disengagement is accompanied by discouragement, as one-fifth of students reported feeling actively discouraged — lacking things such as mentors who encourage their development, goals for the future and hope that they have a great future in front of them, or will even graduate high school. While the results of the poll are quite stark, research by PolyVision and Steelcase Education provides encouraging examples for the future of education.

Displays Play a Key Role in Active Learning Classrooms

PolyVision partnered with Teach for India, and Whitemark Limited, the company's national distributor in India, to donate hundreds of high quality [e3 CeramicSteel whiteboards](#) and [chalkboard surfaces](#) to underdeveloped classrooms across seven cities; Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai and Ahmedabad. To measure the positive effects on teaching and learning capabilities, PolyVision launched a post-installation survey for the teachers. The survey results speak strongly in favor of the integration of quality displays in the classroom.

- 97% of teachers believe writing on boards is an essential tool to increase learning
- 90% of teachers find their students communicate better with the new visual aids
- 85% of teachers believe their class is retaining information better
- 81% of teachers noticed positive learning outcomes

Patel, a teacher in Mumbai, describes the importance of visual learning in his classroom. "In a lesson, having the students make a connection between what the teacher is saying and words or images on the board is crucial to understanding a topic and improving one's vocabulary. Visual learning is particularly important in primary classrooms."



In addition to the improved retention visual learning enables, displays are a key component in allowing active learning classrooms to be designed without a “front,” meaning students do not sit in rows facing the a board. Rather, students direct their attention to different areas based on the activity at hand. This activity-based movement and small group activity helps students in forming relationships and allows those who may be more introverted to open up and share their ideas rather than sharing in front of the entire class.

Whiteboards throughout the classroom provide teachers and students with options — you can project, write, and hang materials with magnets. Personal whiteboards offer students the chance to capture their own thoughts and ideas during a lesson and easily share with the instructor or small groups of peers. Employing both the body and brain in the learning process, whiteboards engage students physically and mentally through the act of writing and drawing.

The Case for Mobility

Post-occupancy studies by [Steelcase Education](#) show that student engagement is favorably impacted by classrooms intentionally designed for active learning. Physical movement increases alertness and it’s this physical movement in active learning classrooms that Steelcase Education researcher Andrew Kim says helps keep students engaged. “WorkSpace Futures researchers observed more success in maintaining student attention with active learning approaches that directly involve students in course content.”

Other researchers agree. The push for movement in the classroom only continues to increase with studies backing up the notion that movement improves students overall wellbeing and their ability to maintain attention in class. A recent article published in the journal [Psychology Research and Behavior Management](#) reports the integration of yoga/mindfulness activities was

associated with a significant improvement in emotional and psychosocial quality of life of students. Another study published in [Journal for Evidence Based Complementary Alternative Medicine](#) found that after doing 10 weeks of classroom yoga, students showed overall improvements in social interactions with classmates, attention span, academic performance, ability to deal with stress and anxiety as well as boosting their confidence, self-esteem and overall mood.



With mobile furniture, shifts in active learning classroom layouts facilitate multiple learning and teaching modes in one class period. Students can quickly form small groups, setup for a large group discussion or form rows for lectures and exams. Teachers also move throughout a lesson, walking the room to fulfill the role of a coach for students one-on-one or with small groups. It's not only the mobility of students and teachers in active learning classrooms that increases engagement, the movement of content and ideas keep students alert and encourages the development of soft skills, such as communication, collaboration and creative thinking.

Active Learning is Shaping Education

The many benefits of active learning continue to be documented. Integrating movement, displays and an active-participant mindset in the classroom are key components to enhancing opportunities for student success . These elements combine to foster education in an environment that allows the flow and natural rhythm of learning and instills key skills in students.

As more classrooms transform into active learning environments, the number of students who are engaged in their lessons, form relationships with peers and teachers and build self confidence in their ability to learn will continue to grow.