

BE ENGAGING

Being an engaging volunteer can really make the difference for students as they are introduced to new learning content and activities. If students are not paying attention, they are not learning the material. So, how do you get attention and hold student interest? Read on to find out!



Authenticity

Showing up in the classroom as your authentic self makes you more relatable to students. Students will be more interested in hearing what you have to say if they feel a connection. Share personal things about yourself with the students (as appropriate). Being conversational, telling jokes, and sharing personal stories will make the lesson more memorable for the class.

Taking time to get to know the students is just as important as allowing them to get to know you. Consider starting each lesson with an ice breaker as a way for you to learn more about the students, and for them to learn more about each other. Ask the educator for suggestions on a good ice breaker for the group. When leading discussions, offer examples from your own life that students could relate to, and ask them to share similar examples from their lives. When leading a discussion, be affirming of every answer and idea, no matter how it differs from your own personal views.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm can go a long way in keeping students interested and engaged in the topic at hand. If the facilitator seems uninterested or bored with the material being discussed, students will be bored, too. If you're passionate, be passionate! Showing enthusiasm in front of a group of young people may not come naturally for everyone. Follow these tips to help you find your enthusiastic style:

- Use facial expressions and smile
- Make eye contact with students
- Use a variable and excited tone of voice
- Vary your body language; perhaps walk around the room
- Say that you are excited, intrigued, fascinated, etc. about the material
- Tell students that you are happy to be sharing this time with them



Storytelling

Storytelling is a great way to connect with students, describe concepts in an accessible way, and create a memorable learning moment. Stories evoke emotion, and emotion is a big part of learning. Having an emotional response stimulates learners to care about the content and makes the content better stick to memory. When sharing a personal story, consider these guidelines:



- Be colorful and descriptive, but stay to-the-point
- Consider the choices presented in the story
- Describe the outcome and how it relates to the lesson
- Stories do not all have to be “success stories” – telling a story in which a mistake was made is valuable and illustrates that mistakes help us learn. Be sure to share what you learned from the experience.

More Resources to Explore:

[Video: JA Why Stories are Important \(5:57\)](#)
[Article: Being an Enthusiastic Teacher](#)
[Article: Enthusiasm: Why You Need It](#)
[Article: 30 Storytelling Tips for Teachers](#)