



STANDARD HIGHLIGHT

National Standards for Quality Online Teaching
Standard D: Learner Engagement

The online teacher promotes learner success through interactions with learners and other stakeholders and by facilitating meaningful learner engagement in learning activities.

D4 The online teacher establishes relationships through timely and encouraging communication, using various formats.

STANDARD OVERVIEW

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CHRIS LOISELLE IS THE OPERATIONS DIRECTOR FOR LINK LEARNING

Engaging students in a virtual learning environment is challenging but is attainable. When you lose the captive audience benefit of a traditional school you need a much more conscious effort on how to communicate to ensure you are creating a trusting and inviting learning environment to engage the learner. In a virtual school, your school culture is based on the way that your staff communicate with your students. In order for a school to influence culture, school's must monitor and train around effective staff-to-student communication. If staff are using communication that is positive, relational, and reflective they will build trust and optimism for students to engage. If staff communication is reliable, intentional, consistent, and balanced, they will create respect and intention with students, motivating them to engage. This is a two-way process and cannot be undervalued. Using a communications rubric and intentional professional development sessions as a guide to improve practice will provide you with the best avenue to meet this goal.

Transformational Feedback



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HELPFUL HINTS for putting standard into practice

Other helpful hints for building learner engagement include:

- Understand the Invitational Teaching Model (see resources) and the critical nature of communication in Education
- Share the research about student engagement, student/staff relationships, and how communication can influence this
- Help your staff understand the psychological needs of at-risk youth which include feelings of belonging, competence, usefulness, potency, and optimism, and how great communication can help.
- Coach with a [communication rubric](#) and theory to give a road map on how to improve
- Capture staff/student text conversations for quality evaluation
- Challenge staff to set goals based on their own self evaluation and reflect on improvement
- Identify individual and collective communication strengths and growth edges impacting relationships
- Develop intentional professional development training and to reinforce best practices in educational communication

RESOURCES to support standard use (mostly practical)

- Rubric Link: [Communication Rubric](#)
- Harrington, C. & DeBruler, K. (2021). *Key strategies for engaging students in virtual learning environments*. Michigan Virtual University. <https://michiganvirtual.org/research/publications/key-strategies-for-engaging-students-in-virtual-learning-environments/>
- *Better than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom Management* (p. 23), by D. Smith, D. Fisher, and N. Frey, 2015, Alexandria, VA: Copyright 2015 by ASCD
- Purkey, W. W., & Stanley P. H. (1991). *Invitational teaching, learning, and living*. Washington DC: National Education Association Library
- Cox, J., & Sagor, R. (2004). *At Risk Students: Reaching and Teaching Them* (2nd ed.). Routledge, New York. <https://www.amazon.com/At-Risk-Students-Reaching-Teaching/dp/1138470619>

Author/Organization Bio

Kristi Teall is the Executive Director for Link Learning. Link Learning is a virtual program for Berrien Springs Public Schools. We currently have 16 different locations across the State of Michigan to serve youth at-risk of dropping out of school. Her role includes increasing leadership capacity, student engagement, and improving relationships and support through professional development, data analysis, and guidance for the success of both staff and students.

Chris Loiselle is the Operations Director for Link Learning. He began working with Berrien Springs Public Schools building their off-site virtual programs in 2011, and as Operations Director, helped develop it into one of the largest virtual high school programs in Michigan. He is also co-founder of Student Achievement Systems; an educational software development company.

Chris and Kristi lead the Quality Assurance Team for Link Learning. They have worked together on and off since 2008 in many capacities. They believe that communication is a critical component for success in virtual teaching and learning and their work has supported that belief.

Check out the NSQ Professional Learning Portal and NSQ Website for more resources at www.NSQOL.org.

