

# C.A.R.E.S. Instructional Framework for Student Engagement

Student engagement is the foundation of literacy excellence and equitable outcomes. This framework aligns effective literacy instruction with engagement strategies, helping ensure that all students experience a meaningful, impactful, and empowering learning environment.

## **1. Communicating with Clarity (Trust, Relationships, and High Expectations):**

*Students engage when they understand what they are learning, why it matters, and how they can succeed.*

- Establish trusting, respectful relationships with students and families through clear, consistent, and compassionate communication.
- Break down units of study into logical and flexible learning progressions.
- Post and explain learning goals and success criteria to provide direction.
- Set high expectations that build on student strengths, informed by assessment data, and designed to exceed basic standards.
- Regularly connect with families to share student progress and celebrate growth.

## **2. Access and Representation (Equity, Supportive Learning Environments, and Community Engagement):**

*Students engage when they see themselves in their learning and experience equitable access to literacy instruction.*

- Use asset-based language to build student confidence and sense of belonging.
- Integrate culturally responsive texts, assessment items, and instructional practices.
- Provide multiple ways for students to demonstrate learning, e.g. Universal Design for Learning.
- Foster collaboration with families and communities to create an inclusive literacy environment.

## **3. Relevant and Authentic Experiences (Purposeful, Meaningful Curriculum and Student Agency):**

*Students engage when learning is relevant to their lives, interests, and future aspirations.*

- Design literacy tasks that challenge students to think critically and apply learning to real-world situations.
- Use Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to create cognitively demanding and open-ended literacy experiences.
- Connect reading and writing to students' experiences, cultures, and personal goals (WIIFM—"What's in it for me?").
- Incorporate student choice in texts, topics, and responses to foster deeper engagement.

**4. Empowerment (Student Agency, High Expectations, and Support):** *Students engage when they have ownership over their literacy learning and feel supported in taking risks.*

- Offer voice and choice in reading materials, writing projects, and literacy tasks.
- Encourage student goal-setting, self-reflection, and peer feedback to develop independence.
- Provide specific, growth-oriented feedback that builds confidence and resilience.
- Balance high expectations with individualized scaffolding to ensure all students feel capable and successful.

**5. Student-Led Interactions (Collaboration, Relationships, and Celebrating Learners):** *Students engage when they are active participants in conversations and see their thinking valued.*

- Establish norms/agreements that empower students to co-create community.
- Teach and model respectful argumentation, critique, and dialogue.
- Ensure all voices are heard through routines and protocols that support inclusive, equitable conversations.
- Celebrate student contributions by highlighting what they notice, as well as encouraging them to be noticers in their literacy lives.

***“When a teacher C.A.R.E.S., students learn!”***

### Recommended Professional Resources

Afflerbach, P. (2022). *Teaching Readers (Not Reading): Moving Beyond Skills and Strategies to Reader-Focused Instruction*. Guilford Press.

Johnston, P., Champeau, K., et al (2020). *Engaging Literate Minds: Developing Children’s Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Lives, K-3*. Stenhouse (Routledge).

Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. Scholastic.

Routman, R. (2018). *Literacy Essentials: Engagement, Excellence, and Equity for All Learners*. Stenhouse (Routledge).

Scoggin, J. & Schneewind, H. (2021). *Trusting Readers: Powerful Practices for Independent Reading*. Heinemann.

Tovani, C. (2021). *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage Our Most Reluctant Students*. Stenhouse (Routledge).