

Title: Shared Attention Please! How Attending Together Fosters Meaning and Learning
Speaker: Beth Morling, University of Delaware

Abstract

Good teachers constantly consider how to capture, direct, and sustain student attention. Students who are interested and undistracted will learn more, so it's worth helping our students cultivate good habits of individual focus. However, our classrooms are more than just collections of individually attending minds. Attention is a social sport. This session will explore the phenomenon of shared attention—situations in which two or more people are aware that *we are attending* to some stimulus or situation at the same time. While psychologists have occasionally conceptualized humans' quest for meaning as separate from their drive for connection, research on shared attention (and a related concept, shared reality) argues differently. For humans, meaning and belonging are impossible to separate. Meaning is social, and close relationships thrive on shared understandings. This session will share some current science on shared attention and shared reality and introduce some fresh, evidence-based ways of thinking about our face-to-face and online spaces. I hope attendees will feel curious, interested, and inspired to think more about the social learning environments of their classrooms.

Bio

Beth Morling is Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Delaware. She attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, and received her Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Before coming to Delaware, she held positions at Union College (New York) and Muhlenberg College (Pennsylvania). She contributes to APS's *Teaching Current Directions* and maintains a blog (everydayresearchmethods.com) about teaching psychological science in the news. At Delaware she regularly teaches research methods, cultural psychology, a seminar on the self-concept, and a graduate course in the teaching of psychology. Her research in the area of cultural psychology explores how cultural practices shape people's motivations. Dr. Morling has been a Fulbright scholar in Kyoto, Japan.