

“Ignite” - Cue the Brain to Pay Attention

Definition/Rationale:

“Attention is the first step in learning. During the input stage of learning, the brain has to let in new content. First, we have to pay attention. We cannot learn, remember, or understand what we don’t first give our attention to. Beginning a lesson by simply announcing that you are going to start the lesson will not activate the brain’s learning apparatus” - **Hammond, Culturally Responsive Teaching & and the Brain, page 128**

The goal is not just engagement, but engagement that the brain pays attention, recognizes what’s coming is important, and lets in the new content being offered (page 129-130).

Examples

The strategies below are meant to engage the Reticular Activating System (RAS). The RAS is a bundle of nerves that sits in your brainstem. And its job is to regulate behavioral arousal, consciousness and motivation. The goal is not just engagement

Detailed examples of the following are found on page 128 of Hammond’s book.

Call & Response: Develop a simple back and forth chant that cues the brain tha something in particular is going to happen. The brain’s neurons start to get excited. The “call from the teacher that begins the process alerts the student’s brain that something is about to happen.

Music: Find a short upbeat clip of music and use it to signal the start of some specific type of learning. Select a grade appropriate clip.

Provocations: Select an eye-opening quote with strong emotion, a challenging puzzle or an outrageous statement . . . show a video clip that arouses emotion.

Talk: Create a short, intense, and semistructured talk activity that allows students to engage in culturally congruent ways—overlapping speaking, all at once, or pair share.

Resources

[The Neuroscience of Call & Response](#)
[Zaretta Hammond: Student Engagement](#)

Videos

- 📺 Teach Like a Champion Technique 12 - The Hook
- 📺 How to Hook Students: Launch Your Classroom! Live Episode 13