

Education Expert Dr. Laura McDermott Highlights the Importance of Engagement in Learning in HelloNation

What does it take for students to truly retain knowledge and develop critical thinking skills?

COLUMBIA CITY, IN, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- What does it take for students to truly retain knowledge and develop critical thinking skills? According to Dr. Laura McDermott of Whitley County Consolidated Schools, the answer lies in one word: engagement. In an article featured in [HelloNation](#), McDermott explains why real learning requires more than passive participation and how educators can foster environments that help students connect deeply with their studies.

In the article, McDermott makes the case that memorizing facts or completing worksheets might lead to passing grades, but they rarely result in lasting understanding. Instead, she argues, learning that sticks is learning that involves active participation. When students are engaged—discussing, collaborating, solving real problems—they're not just absorbing information. They're processing it in ways that make it meaningful to their lives.

This kind of engagement goes well beyond simply paying attention during a lecture. It calls for lessons that involve real-world relevance, critical thinking, and student interaction. Whether through group projects, open-ended questions, or linking curriculum to current events, the more involved students are, the more likely they are to retain what they learn. McDermott cites research showing that students who are actively engaged can remember material up to three times longer than those who passively receive it.



Dr. Laura McDermott of Whitley County Consolidated Schools

The benefits of engagement extend beyond academic retention. According to McDermott, interactive learning experiences help students build life skills such as problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. These are abilities they'll need not only for future education or employment but for navigating challenges in everyday life. Engagement, in this sense, becomes a bridge between the classroom and the real world.

Designing a classroom environment that supports engagement doesn't require abandoning structure or academic standards. McDermott emphasizes that rigor and engagement can go hand in hand. Educators don't have to completely overhaul their curriculum; even small changes—like offering student choice, incorporating hands-on activities, or using project-based assessments—can lead to major improvements in how students respond to lessons.

One of the key ideas McDermott puts forward is giving students a sense of ownership in their learning. When students feel that their voice matters and that the content relates to their own interests or goals, they are more motivated to dive in. This increased motivation leads not only to better academic performance but also to greater self-confidence and independence as learners.

Throughout the article, McDermott outlines how these strategies are not limited to any one grade level or subject. Whether teaching math, science, language arts, or social studies, any educator can create opportunities for deeper engagement. The emphasis is on helping students discover not just what to learn, but how to learn—and more importantly, why learning matters in the first place.

Ultimately, McDermott argues that an engaged student is one who sees learning as more than a task. It becomes a process they take seriously, one that helps them grow not only in knowledge but in their ability to think critically and work with others. This kind of learning leaves a lasting impression and helps students carry those lessons with them long after the school day ends.

This approach to education is outlined in the HelloNation article, [Real Learning Requires Real Engagement](#). In it, Dr. McDermott offers practical insights into how educators can rethink traditional models and create classrooms where students thrive both academically and personally.

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