



# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

## Introduction

Federal legislation requires each state to include a school quality or student success indicator in its education accountability plan. South Carolina chose to include a school quality indicator. According to *South Carolina Succeeds*, our state accountability plan, the school quality indicator measures the "positive and effective learning environment of the school in grades 3-12." The intent is to "determine the degree to which the school climate supports and fosters high levels of engagement as perceived by a majority of the student population."

## Engagement Tool

Cognia (formerly AdvancED) won the contract to "measure elementary, middle, and high school student engagement through students' responses to items about their learning experiences." Their Student Engagement Survey is supposed to "[delve] deeply into student classroom experiences and provides actionable data to improve teaching and learning." It is designed to measure "student engagement through self-reported student opinions about their learning experiences."

## Development of the Student Engagement Discussion Guide

The Department of Accountability and Assessment developed this discussion guide to support Richland Two teachers and administrators in preparing our students to understand and respond appropriately to the Student Engagement Survey. Our team developed a series of questions that focus on the three domains measured by this survey: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Just as teachers have access to the South Carolina College and Career Ready academic standards to prepare their students for state accountability assessments, we believe teachers should also have a guide to help prepare students for this survey.

While it is **not appropriate to tell students how they should respond** to the survey items, it is appropriate to **define** the **concepts** measured by this instrument and give students the **opportunity to discuss and reflect** prior to the administration of the survey. Given the importance of student engagement in determining a student's success in school and beyond, educators should actively encourage students to reflect on these concepts throughout the school year.

## State Department of Education Approval

Legal and ethical issues were primary concerns in the development and subsequent use of this guide. The questions included in this guide were reviewed by a South Carolina Department of Education official and found to be appropriate for use.

## How to Use the Student Engagement Discussion Guide

There are no right or wrong answers to this survey. Students should be encouraged to respond based on their personal beliefs and past experiences. Remember, the survey directions tell student they should "pick the answer that is most like you" and that it is important they "provide honest answers." The purpose of the discussion is for students to reflect and to share. Your role is to guide your students and help them consider approaches or behaviors that are most likely to help them be successful in school and beyond.

Any classroom teacher, counselor, or administrator can use this guide. Select an item and present it to the students. Make sure the students understand both the vocabulary and the concepts. Solicit responses from the students. Recognize responses that are most likely to help them be successful in school as such. Do not disparage responses that are not likely to help them be successful. Instead, encourage the student to think through the likely outcome and consider other options.

## Questions

Please contact Dr. John Arnold, Director of Accountability and Assessment, with any questions or concerns about the use of this guide. Dr. Arnold can be reached at (803) 787-1910 or [jarnold@richland2.org](mailto:jarnold@richland2.org).

## Additional Resources

[AdvancED Source, Fall 2017](#) - A compilation of eight articles related to student engagement. Includes links to additional suggested readings.

[Best Practices for Student Engagement](#) - A publication of Hanover Research that provides an overview of student engagement. Includes sections on classroom and school design practices to support student engagement.

[Engaging Students For Success](#) - This publication by the Education Week Research Center shares the results of a national survey and includes potential strategies and solutions.

[South Carolina Succeeds](#) - The state's consolidated accountability plan to meet the requirements of federal (ESSA) and state (EAA) legislation.

[Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) - The most recent re-authorization of the 1964 Elementary and Secondary Schools Act.

## Directions

Select an item from the list below and present it (orally, written on board, etc.) to your students. Give your students sufficient time to reflect on the item before asking for volunteers to share their responses. Provide definitions of vocabulary and concepts as needed.

Some of the discussion items include simple vocabulary and concepts and may result in short discussions. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. Recognize responses that are most likely to help them be successful in school as such. Do not disparage responses that are not likely to help them be successful. Instead, encourage the student to think through the likely outcome and consider other options.

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1. What do you do when your classwork feels too hard?
2. How important is it for you to have lots of different kinds of classwork every day?
3. How do you feel about going back to school for activities after school or at night? What are some examples of after school activities available to student, families, and the community?
4. How do you feel about using a computer to help you learn in class?
5. Why do you think school rules are important?
6. What motivates you to learn in school? What motivates you to learn at home?
7. How do you use the things you learn in class?
8. How do you prepare for a test?
9. What do you do when you don't know something in class?
10. How do the things you learn in school help you?
11. How do you feel about the activities you do in class?
12. Do you like speaking in front of the class? Why or why not?
13. How do you feel at the end of the school day?
14. Tell me what you like best about school. Why?
15. How do you feel about the work you do in school? Why?
16. What learning goals are you most excited to achieve by the end of this school year? Is it hard to meet these goals? If so, what can you do about it?
17. When do you ask your teacher questions?
18. Tell me about a time that you learned something so interesting in school that you chose to do more than your teacher asked you to do.
19. Tell me about a time that you helped another student with classwork.
20. When do you become helpful to your classmates?
21. If someone could teach you a way to help you improve on anything in school, what would it be?
22. What is an example of a time when hard work really paid off for you?
23. If you were to help a younger student realize that he/she could be more successful by putting in enough effort, how would you help him/her understand this? What would you tell the student?