

Attention – Are our Students Engaged?

In last week's article, I introduced the DCPS Teaching and Learning Framework as a lever for augmenting pedagogy and student achievement. Although the three elements (plan, teach, and increase effectiveness) and their descriptors provide a foundation of expectations, we will explore several more specific elements of good practice that are in support of the Framework. One of those elements is **attention**.

It is likely that anyone who is reading this article has been reminded before a piano recital or a championship game that "practice makes perfect." This idiom is founded in the common (and reasonable) belief that the more you do something, the better you will become.

In 1974, researchers D.E. Wiley and A. Harnischfeger investigated their assumption that quantity of education (total amount of learning time around a subject or topic) determines the degree of learning. While the research revealed a positive correlation between these variables, later research suggested a more intricate interpretation: students who spend more time *on-task* and *engaged* in learning activities are likelier to master the learning goals that those activities are designed to reach.

In the setting of national conversations around year-long school, extended school days, attention disorders, video games, over-extended students, etc., we will ask ourselves about the effective use of time (a recurring question that we will examine through several different lenses) and attention strategies (one of those lenses) at Janney. According to educator Jon Saphier, attention "is the precondition for instruction, the sine qua non for curriculum implementation."

Over the next few weeks, we will be observing and analyzing effective attention moves in our classrooms. These moves, categorized into winning, acknowledging, enlisting, alerting and desisting, represent a repertoire of adult moves to maximize student engagement. Our work will not only be around expanding this catalog, but more importantly will be to discover the best match for individual students and/or situations, and to deliberately choose from our catalog of moves to maximize time and engagement. Your communication as to the best moves for your student, and teachers sharing their discoveries are critical toward changing the paradigm of "practice makes perfect" to "engaged practice promotes maximum learning."