



Increasing Engagement by Tapping Student Feedback

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“How can we get more insight into what would best help our students?” asked the members of the math department at Washington Middle School (WMS) in Albuquerque, New Mexico earlier this semester. Their answer, “Let’s ask the students and see what we find out.” With all of the challenges with remote learning, this seemed like the best way to inquire into what was supporting student learning, hindering their learning, and what students would like to see changed.

The math team had come together with Erin Mayer and me, both AIM4S^{3™} math developers, to explore the challenges of their current reality and how to best address them. This first session began with a brainstorm of successes and challenges that the teachers identified with having all students in remote learning. (See image #1.) Many of the challenges teachers and students faced were things that they could not directly control. Technology glitches, families in

participation, increase student voice, and make math more relevant for them.

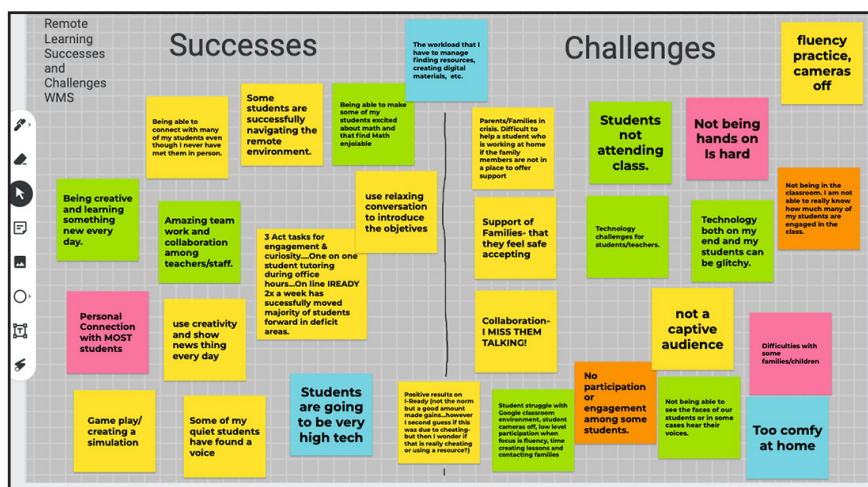


Image #1: Teachers at WMS brainstormed student successes and challenges with remote learning using Jamboard.

Once they identified the focus area, the next question was what strategies or activities they could plan that would increase student engagement. Erin Mayer, one of the math trainers, mentioned that she had received some invaluable feedback from her students when she had asked them directly what supported their online learning. The math team jumped on this idea and

decided to get input from their students and bring this back to the next session to share with each other.

Asking students to share their experiences as a learner is an example of Continuous Feedback, one of the Key Instructional Principles in the math framework Achievement Inspired Mathematics for Scaffolding Student Success (AIM4S^{3™}). As part of instruction, we as teachers

—continued on page 12—

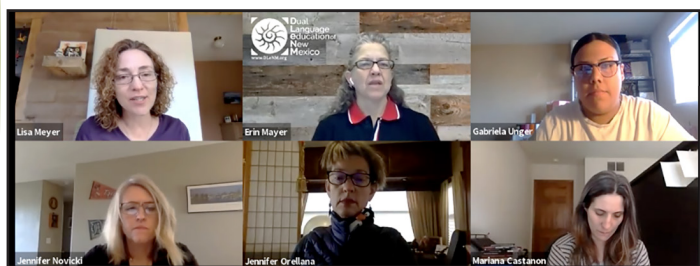
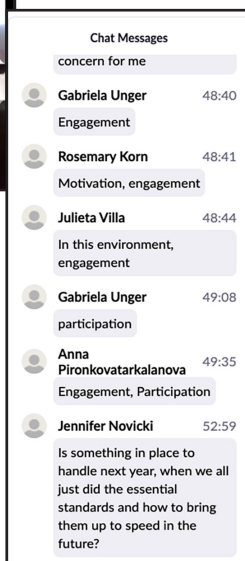


Image #2: Teachers identified student engagement as their biggest challenge.

crisis, and the lack of in-person contact were areas they were addressing as best as they could. As the animated discussion continued, the teachers identified student engagement as the biggest challenge that they could impact. (See image #2.) The teachers were anxious to find way to shift what they were doing with students to encourage more





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routinely use formative and summative assessment data to inform instruction. We share feedback with our students on what they can do to improve their study skills and understanding of the content. Rarely, do we ask students for feedback on class routines, how information is presented, and how we can best support their learning. By not asking students for feedback, we miss out on a wealth of information that can guide our instruction, strengthen our classroom culture, and improve student outcomes in our class.

Below, Jennifer Novicki, Jennifer Orellana, and Gabriela Unger from the WMS math team share their learnings from this experience including what they found out from their students, how they adjusted their instruction based on this information, and their reflections on the process. It is our hope that this information could be helpful for other teachers.

Jennifer Orellana

Jennifer Orellana teaches sixth-grade math in English. She decided to use a Google Form to get information from her students using an open-ended response format. (See image #3.) The questions that she asked were:

- ☐ What can I, as your teacher, help you with this year?
- ☐ What do you like best about online learning?
- ☐ What do you like least about online learning?
- ☐ What activities in class help your learning the most?
- ☐ What activities should we do more of to help your learning?
- ☐ What activities should we do less of?

When she reviewed her students' responses, some recurring themes were frustration with slow WIFI and being on the computer so much. Many enjoyed the videos, breakout group activities, online games, and specifically Kahoot! Kahoot! is a game-based

platform where teachers can write their own questions or use kahoots that other teachers have already written. Students wanted help with fractions, decimals, and mixed numbers. Many preferred not having cameras on, as they were self-conscious about themselves on camera or their surroundings, and they found themselves more distracted at home than at school. A number of students mentioned enjoying office hours to

get one-on-one support. A surprising number of students asked to include more art or drawing in class.

One of the challenges Ms. Orellana faced when reviewing the responses was that what one child liked another did not. For example, some students found online learning more difficult, while others found it easier than in-person learning. While most students enjoyed drawing, a couple asked for less art. Some students enjoyed how much time they had to work by

themselves while others missed partner and group work. This information reinforced for Ms. Orellana the importance of doing a wide variety of activities to support the range of learners in her classroom. There is no match that fits everyone.

Based on the students' feedback, Ms. Orellana lowered the number of tech tools that she was using and the number of windows that students needed to have open at one time. This decreased the number of students facing connectivity issues and increased engagement, though WIFI lags continued to be an issue. She continued to incorporate games as much as possible. She also included more sketching in their problem-solving and vocabulary work. She is currently exploring Sketchnoting as a notetaking strategy that might be a good match for many of her students.

Looking back, she would have done a survey like this once a month to get more regular feedback

Image #3: Teacher Jennifer Orellana used this open-ended response form to gather information from her students.

—continued on page 13—



—continued from page 12—

from students. She also would have shared the questions with students ahead of time to get their input and ideas on what topics were important to be on the survey. She believes there is power in students seeing that their input is valued and that their math teacher is interested in how they are doing—not only with math but personally as well. The survey proved to be an effective way to communicate that.

Gabriela Unger

Gabriela Unger teaches the seventh-grade special education math classes. Thanks to the smaller number of students in her classes, she decided to use class discussion to get feedback from students. She considered using the chat and Google Forms but had some students who were reluctant to participate in this type of written feedback. When she first started the discussions, students were often very quiet, and it was hard to get information from them. She started doing a quick check-in on Fridays regarding the tech tools that they were using. The students connected to language around “hate it, love it, and in-between”. Ms. Unger found that student feedback increased with this format.

She had been trying different websites and tech tools to build engagement but found that students were overwhelmed and preferred that she use just a few tools. Students enjoyed Kahoot! and found Google Slides a fun way to do interactive activities with vocabulary and graphing. There were other websites she used that the students didn’t enjoy or found too babyish, so she stopped using those. Now that they are back in face-to-face instruction, students are appreciating the opportunity to do more paper-pencil work and less on computers. She is still working on engaging her students and finding ways to increase participation and student voice.

Ms. Unger would recommend that teachers consider the specific students in the class to determine the most appropriate format to elicit feedback. She found it was important to be persistent and to keep it short and manageable for everyone.

Jennifer Novicki

Jennifer Novicki teaches sixth, seventh, and

eighth grade accelerated math and gifted math. Ms. Novicki developed a routine using Google Forms that included a grade check and reflection from students. The form included feedback from students on activities that they were doing in class and information to help her with groupings. An important element to this form was the work she had done previously to build a classroom culture that supports students in giving honest feedback. She had also set a collaborative norm for students to work with different classmates throughout the semester. Her questions included:

- ☐ What can I do as your teacher to better support your learning? (short answer)
- ☐ What do you like best in distance learning? (short answer)
- ☐ What activities should we do more of to help support your learning? (multiple choice)
What activities should we do less of? Why? (short answer)
- ☐ If you were placed in a group, who in this class do you feel you could work well with? Who would you prefer not to work with? (short answer)
- ☐ Open StudentVue. Record your math grade. Record your math strategies grade. (multiple choice)
- ☐ Choose the statement below indicating if you need to attend office hours and, if you do, what time you will be attending. (multiple choice)

Ms. Novicki’s students shared with her that they liked the instructional videos that she recorded for them to watch outside of class. She was actually surprised at this so it was helpful feedback to know that the time invested to make these was worthwhile. Her sixth graders told her they were tired of working so much on the computer, so she developed a roller coaster building project and had parents pick up the materials at the school. Students were quite excited about this task. They appreciated Ms. Novicki’s attention to pausing, doing problems, and polling them to see how they were doing in class and how they were feeling about the work. Students shared that they

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didn't like the digital notebooks they were using to record some of their work. She adjusted the format in Google Classroom and students liked these changes. She is trying this strategy again, incorporating the changes. A number of students also shared that they enjoyed explaining how they solved a problem using FlipGrid, so she continued to include this in her instruction.

Ms. Novicki found that asking some questions in a multiple-choice format gave her more detailed information and made reviewing students' responses easier for her. This was especially true with the question about which strategies they should do more of in class. Taking the time to list specific things they had done in class for this particular question paid off—she received much more information from every student who filled out the survey. It also supported students in filling out the open-ended question that asked which activities they should do less of since the list was included in the previous question. (See image #4.) Other multiple-choice questions that made it easier to respond to asked for the students to report their grades. The list of possible responses allowed for more consistent reporting. The times offered in the question regarding potential office hour appointments, likewise, made it easier for students to choose and set up a clear expectation for them to attend. (See image #5.)

Final Thoughts

Tapping our students for feedback is a powerful way to maximize our planning, have students reflect on their learning, and assure them that their voice matters to us. An important step is sharing what we learn with the students and highlighting how we are using this information and incorporating it into our lessons. Building a positive classroom culture with high expectations for students that includes routines for continuous feedback cycles leads to higher learning and engagement on the part of students and teachers. We all want to feel like our voice and opinions matter.

What activities should we do MORE of to help support your learning? Check all that apply! *

- ☐ Daily 7 on MSM- the warm up we start each class with
- ☐ Gimkit and Kahoot Reviews
- ☐ The videos instructions (to review again if needed)
- ☐ The videos with MSM
- ☐ Digital Notebooks (focused on 1 standard, an examples is Ghost Island)
- ☐ Practice problems (practice printable)
- ☐ Clicker quiz in MSM or Google Quiz (for feedback and assessment)
- ☐ MSM immersion problem, resolution and simulation game/activity
- ☐ Pre and Post Unit Self Reflections (slide 9 and 10 of your digital notebook)
- ☐ Office hours
- ☐ Other...

What activities should we do less of? Why? *

Long answer text

Image #4: Ms. Novicki's open-ended questionnaire provided much-needed direction for her instructional planning.

Open StudentVue! The link to log in can be found on the STREAM page of our google classroom! RECORD YOUR GRADE IN MATH STRATS BELOW! *you do not need to record the - or + with the letter grade*

- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D *required to attend office hours
- ☐ F *required to attend office hours

Choose the true statement below.

- ☐ I currently have a C or higher in both Math classes. I am not required to attend office hours.
- ☐ I will attend on Wednesday at 2:15
- ☐ I will attend on Friday at 2:15
- ☐ I will contact you to schedule office hours (email me at novicki@aps.edu or 505-433-7703)

Image #5: Multiple-choice questions allowed for more consistent reporting and a way to ensure student attendance during office hours.

For more information about AIM4S³™, visit <https://www.dlenm.org/what-we-do/instructional-support-and-resources/aim4s3-math-framework/> or email aim4s3@dlenm.org.