



## MODULE FIVE

### Program Presentation Strategies



*Programs are most successful when students are fully engaged, as seen here at Museum of Industry. There is no 'one way' way to engage students, rather presenters must use a variety of engagement strategies.*

TOOLBOX  
FOR  
MUSEUM  
SCHOOL  
PROGRAMS





## MODULE FIVE

# Program Presentation Strategies

This module will help interpreters develop skills specific to facilitating and delivering school programs.

**Audience:** Program Presenters.

**At the end of this module, readers will:**

- Understand their role as host, facilitator, and knowledge bearer.
- Learn several engagement strategies specific to working with students.
- Learn some tricks for managing student behaviours.
- Have a better understanding of how to include difficult knowledge in school programs.

### Glossary:

- Behavioural Engagement
- Chaperone
- Cognitive Engagement
- Critical Thinking
- Emotional Engagement
- Engagement
- Facilitation
- Formal Learning
- IMP (Interpretive Master Plan)
- Informal Learning
- Object
- School Program
- Student
- Student-Centered Learning
- Tour

The interpreter brings the program to life. They are able to fulfill their role by follow the program outline to ensure the program runs smoothly while knowing when to be flexible in order to [facilitate](#) student-centered learning.

The interpreter's role as museum educator and program presenter is threefold:

- as a *host*, who creates a welcoming, comfortable and inviting atmosphere which facilitates learning by ensuring the physical, intellectual and emotional needs of the [students](#) are met and the logistics of the program are followed.
- as a *facilitator* between viewers and experiences who invites learners of all ages, levels of understanding and experience to interact with and make relevant object and information.
- as a *knowledge sharer* who motivates creative responses through a well-grounded knowledge of the program's subject matter, educational theory, and techniques all while making sure the curriculum outcomes are addressed.



*This interpreter at Highland Village Museum is balancing his role as host, facilitator and knowledge sharer. Although the program appears to be improvisational, the interpreter is respecting the written program by keeping in mind logistics and learning outcomes.*



## Museum Interpreter as Host, Teacher and Knowledge Sharer

The “Museum Interpreter as Host, Teacher and Knowledge Sharer” is provided as a pull-out poster in [Appendix B](#). Consider posting this, in a spot visible to staff and volunteers before presenting programs.



## Engagement Strategies

### What are They? Why Are They Important ?

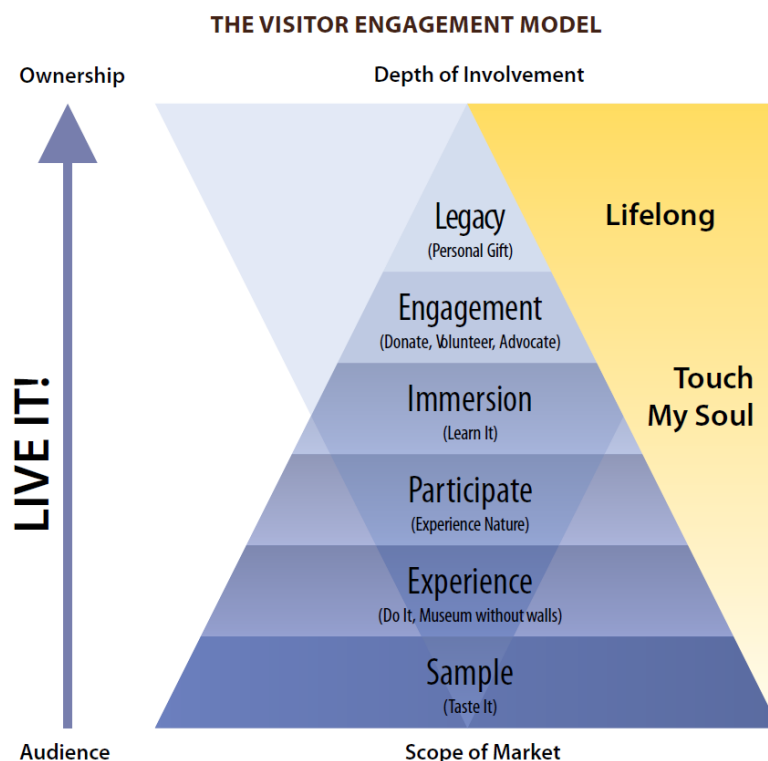
Student-centered learning places an increased emphasis on engaging students and encouraging a more active role in learning. Engaged learners are high achieving, critical thinking, and are motivated to pursue a deeper understanding of a subject. There are fewer challenges with behaviour when students are engaged.

There are three main types of engagement: behavioural, emotional and cognitive. During a program, students should have opportunities to demonstrate all three types.

Type	Behavioural Engagement	Emotional Engagement	Cognitive Engagement
What Is It?	A student's overall participation in an activity, including following the instructions and expectations.	A student's feelings about a learning environment or activity.	A student's personal investment in their own learning and desire to increase their understanding.
What Does It Look Like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributes to discussions.</li> <li>Participates in activities.</li> <li>Focuses on specific tasks.</li> <li>Follows instructions and demonstrates expectations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrates interest or curiosity in the subject.</li> <li>Students are positive, optimistic or excited about activities.</li> <li>Discusses how activity makes them feel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses critical thinking.</li> <li>Willing to tackle challenging work.</li> <li>Asks in-depth questions about the material.</li> </ul>

Engagement strategies are not limited to working with school programs. As the IMP states, engagement creates a positive experience for participants and encourages them to become more involved in the museum. As with visitors, it is important that teachers and students see the museum not just as a place they can sample once but rather programs should convince them to return. Module 7 examines ways to expand a museum's relationship with schools beyond the school program.

**The IMP states that "the Heritage Division must strive to provide experiences that touch the soul of their visitors, capturing their hearts and imaginations for the future." (IMP p. 73)**



The Visitor Engagement Model can be found on page 72 of the Nova Scotia Interpretive Master Plan.





## Continued... Engagement Strategies

### Engagement Made Easy

Engaged learning isn't something that just happens when a program starts. It is a process that begins before the learner arrives and, if successful, continues once the learner has left. "Easy Steps to Engaged Learning" reminds interpreters how to create an environment conducive to engaged learning.

The five steps reflect of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. First, the physiological needs are addressed. Then the interpreter establishes a safe and secure learning environment. Next, students are given the opportunity to belong to and be part of the learning experience. Through facilitation the interpreter addresses student's need for self-esteem by ensuring all students feel respected and have a sense of achievement. Finally, students will be able to self-actualize by taking ownership for what they are learning and how it applies to them beyond the museum school program.



### Easy Steps to Engaged Learning

#### 1. Ensure Physical Needs are Met

Point out washroom locations, provide appropriate seating and a comfortable environment. Allow time to eat snacks.

#### 2. Be Welcoming.

Welcome the group and introduce museum staff and volunteers who will be facilitating the program. Establish expectations. Have and know emergency plans.

#### 3. Use Participatory Learning.

Allow students to choose to participate in a way they are comfortable with. This can include posing and answering questions verbally, by writing, drawing, nodding, acting, etc.

#### 4. Be Prepared to Facilitate.

Set-up before the group arrives. Know your subject material. Allow time for activity, discovery, questions, discussion, and reflection. Do not just talk at your audience.

#### 5. Empower Students to take Ownership of their Learning.

Let students have choices, be creative, think critically and not focus on getting the "right" answer. Relate material to students' lives.






*"Easy Steps to Engaged Learning" is provided as a pull-out poster in [Appendix B](#). Consider posting this, in a spot visible to staff and volunteers before presenting programs.*

## Continued... Engagement Strategies



### Strategies for Building Engagement

There are many strategies that can be used to create engagement when delivering a program. Here are some...

STRATEGY	TIPS TO ACHIEVE
<p>Make the expectations explicit and clear.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't assume a student will know what is expected of them. Always give clear instructions.</li> <li>• Give time for any questions that might arise.</li> <li>• Provide instructions verbally. Reinforce them writing where possible.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide opportunities for student-centered learning.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give a framework and clear expectations and then allow students to take the subject matter in a direction that interests them.</li> <li>• Avoid lecturing. Instead ask a variety of different types of questions.</li> <li>• Allow students to ask questions. Allow them to discover the answers on their own through experience, observation, inference and building on existing knowledge.</li> <li>• Elaborate on a student's idea/question by asking them, or their classmates, to build on it with their thoughts.</li> <li>• Provide students with choices whenever possible.</li> <li>• Give more than one option for students to choose how to express their thoughts and observations.</li> </ul>
<p>Base discussion around <a href="#">objects</a> that relate to the subject matter.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide objects that students can examine, observe, and, when possible, manipulate.</li> <li>• Have students describe and record the characteristics of the object.</li> <li>• Allow them to infer an object's possible uses, the stories it tells, or why they think it is important.</li> </ul>
<p>Encourage and praise critical thinking.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to share their ideas and build on the ideas of others.</li> <li>• Give guidance if a student is having difficulty, but don't provide the "right answer." Assure them that it's alright if they don't all get the same answer.</li> <li>• Have students justify their reasoning regarding an answer, regardless of if it is right or wrong.</li> <li>• Use praise, but don't be over the top. Making other students think that one answer is "right" can discourage them from contributing and building on an idea.</li> </ul>
<p>Provide a supportive, collaborative learning environment</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate enthusiasm for the subject matter and the ideas that students share.</li> <li>• Use names if possible.</li> <li>• Allow students to work both in groups and independently.</li> <li>• Use questioning strategies that encourage all students to participate in a supportive manner (voting cards, thumbs up-thumbs down, small group consensus, etc.)</li> </ul>



## Strategies for Managing Behaviour

There are some simple strategies that interpreters can use to reinforce positive behaviours while discouraging negative ones. Ultimately, the responsibility of dealing with student behaviour is that of the teachers and [chaperones](#). It is not the interpreter's responsibility to enforce consequences regarding student behaviour and at no point should they threaten students with disciplinary actions.



### Gaining Attention: To make expectations clear you will need to gain a group's attention.

- **The 'Can you Hear Me' game.** Like a game of 'Simon Says', the interpreter asks the group if they can hear you, followed by an action to perform. (for example, "If you can hear me, touch your nose.")
- **Clap a rhythm** to get the groups attention. Have them clap the rhythm back as a response. This often requires 2-3 rounds.
- **Begin speaking very softly** to the whole group. As students are seeing you speak, but are unable to hear you, they may focus attention on you.
- **Use a hand signal** that indicates when attention is needed (for example, a peace sign, index finger in the air, spread fingers, etc.). Have students perform the same action when they see it.
- **Have a sound maker** that indicates attention is needed (bell, percussion sticks, tambourine, etc.)
- **Say, "give me five".** With hands in the air, have students count down. Start at five and speak softer at each number until one is a whisper.
- **Ask the teacher what technique they use** to gain attention in the classroom. Find out the teacher's preferred technique and use it when necessary.

### Prevention: It's easier to stop a problem from occurring, rather than addressing it when it does.

- **Clearly state rules and expectations.** Ask students to define the expectations of behaviour. (for example, raise hands, respect other's ideas, no running, indoor voices, don't tap on animal tanks, etc.).
- **Be a Model.** Practice what you preach. Follow the expectations and rules presented.
- **Be Prepared.** Have all required materials at hand and know the program schedule and activities. Flow from one activity to another quickly and efficiently, maintaining momentum.
- **Be Aware.** Keep an eye on how engaged the students are. If many students are off task the instructions might not have been clear enough or the task might be too challenging. Be prepared to give new instructions or alter the activity to meet the group's needs.
- **Be Flexible.** If you observe that the majority of the group is finished an activity early or are becoming disengaged with the current activity, move to the next aspect of the program early if possible. If this isn't possible, engage them in an alternative/extension activity.

### Intervention: Strategies to discourage negative behaviour and encourage positive ones

- **Ignore the Behaviour.** Sometimes simply ignoring a negative behaviour will cause a student to abandon it.
- **Eye Contact.** Make the student aware that you have observed their actions by holding eye contact with them. If they know the expectations, this will often be enough to remind them of the expected behaviour.
- **Proximity.** Position yourself closer to the student exhibiting the misbehaviour. Your presence can sometimes reinforce your expectations.
- **Address the student(s).** Engage them in discussion regarding the current activity or subject matter. If they are talking over you, ask for their input on what you are talking about in a sincere way. Avoid singling a student out in front of their peers. Praise positive behaviour you notice.
- **Consult with teacher or chaperone.** If the other strategies fail to address the issue, ask for help.



## Continued... Managing Behaviour



### Classroom Behaviours vs. Informal Learning Environment Behaviours

Teaching and learning in a school classroom ([formal learning](#)) is very different than teaching and learning in an [informal learning](#) environment, like a museum. When designing and presenting museum school programs, sites often resort to models that are used in classrooms. As discussed in [Module Four](#), museum school programs are at their strongest when the activities are ones that cannot be replicated in the classroom. Similarly, behaviours in informal learning environments are often ones that might not be replicated in the classroom.

Although many practices used in classroom management are useful in a museum setting such as raising hands to talk, or walking quietly from one location to another, these behaviours might not be the only behaviours in informal learning environments. Programs are often designed to allow students to be active, creative, and think outside the box. This may involve rethinking the behaviours we expect and encourage from school groups. It adds to the benefit of learning in informal settings, as students are not only taken outside of the classroom, they are also given the chance to perform activities not usually presented in the classroom. Hopefully this will result in a positive experience for the students and an opportunity to approach learning from a different perspective.



*Sitting quietly, raising hands to answer questions, and filling out worksheets is not always the behaviour museums want in their school programs. Allowing different behavioural expectations will help create more engaged students. Here students at Le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse learn the proper way to interact with farm animals—a very different behaviour than one needed in the classroom.*

#### Earn A Badge

Using the previous pages as inspiration, develop your own list of what works for you in order to keep students engaged. Write down three “tricks” you have used or would like to try for each of the following scenarios...

1. To get the attention of a class of students who are talking amongst themselves.
2. To maintain the attention of a group of students.
3. To regain the attention of one or two students who have become disruptive to the activity.





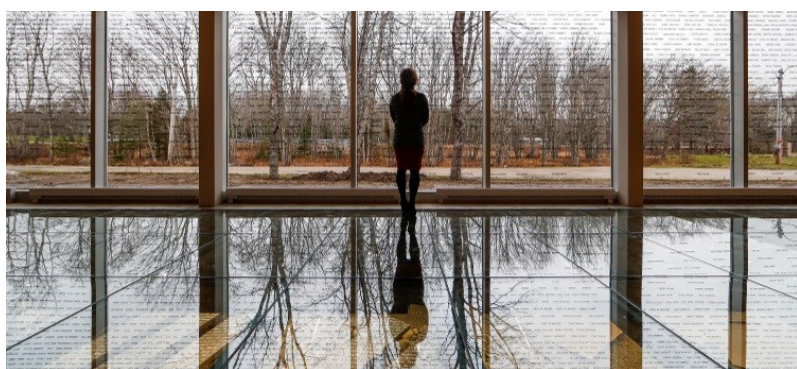
## Interpreting Difficult Knowledge

### What is Difficult Knowledge? How to Present it in School Programs?

Some programs introduce students to sensitive subjects including injustice, discrimination, and death. Additionally, program presenters do not know what experiences students bring with them which could alter how they react to topics. Teachers should be made aware of any such subjects when booking a program so they can assess if the information is appropriate for their class.

When presenting these programs it is very important to approach the subject and students with respect and sensitivity. Some students may find these topics difficult to discuss in an environment that is strange to them, such as a museum. This can result in student behaviour challenges. Here are some simple hints on how to alleviate some of these challenges.

- Talk to teacher before the program.
- Plan the experience based on the characteristics of the ages of the students.
- Prepare students before entering the space or starting the topic.
- Establish behaviour expectations with the students.
- Acknowledge students are out of their comfort zone – both physically and with the information. Assure students that museums are a safe learning environment.
- Ensure activities are ones that demonstrate sensitivity and respect.
- Have an “out” for students who require it.
- Allow a lot of time for questions and discussion.



*Every museum has difficult knowledge to interpret. Many stories are obviously challenging, however students might bring prior experiences with them that reveal unexpected difficult knowledge in topics such as family, illness, poverty, or natural disasters. Here are a few examples of interpreting difficult knowledge from the Nova Scotia Museum: examining names from the “Book of Negroes” at the Black Loyalists Heritage Center (above), spending time in the Fishermen’s Memorial Room at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic (left top), hearing a family story of surviving the Halifax Explosion at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic (left middle), and using the local beaches at Fundy Geological Museum to learn how coastal communities in Nova Scotia are vulnerable to sea level rise due to climate change (left bottom).*

### Self-Reflection: How Effective are You as a Program Presenter?

Take a few moments after you present a program or [tour](#) to do this self-reflection exercise. Consider repeating it on a regular basis so that you can monitor your own improvement.

1. Give yourself one point each time you ask students what they know about a subject before you start your activity.
2. Measure how many seconds you wait for a response. Give yourself one point if you waited longer than two seconds for a response.
3. Give a point each time you ask a question that doesn't have a single correct answer.
4. Give a point if you developed interaction between the members of your group rather than simply between yourself and one other student.
5. Give a point each time you reinforce an answer without saying that the response is correct.
6. Give a point each time you do not stop discussing a point when the 'right' answer is given, but ask if there are other answers.
7. Give yourself a point each time you ask a question requiring predicting, hypothesizing, inferring, or reconstructing events.
8. Give yourself a point each time you are a good listener.



*How many points do you get when you use this self-reflection to test your effectiveness as a program presenter? This interpreter at Ross Farm looks like he is giving a very engaging presentation—making eye contact with his audience and interacting with objects.*

