ACTION RESEARCH PLAN

Our Children's Attention: The New Currency

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Q. How might we cultivate meaningful, screen-free learning experiences that engage students actively in both classroom and real-world contexts?

Procedures

Focus

- Student engagement in classroom activities
- Student social awareness (understanding perspectives / building empathy)
- Reducing over-dependence on screens in learning

Strategies Explored

- Model clarity, level of thinking, & alignment to standards
- Reframe learning: students are equal in value, not identical in how they learn
- Multiple pathways to the Whole Child (neurological, physical, creative)
- Employ Montessori (hands-on) & Waldorf (limited screen) methodologies
- Use tactile tools: dictionaries, maps, clocks, word banks, art-making
- Integrate screens ONLY as tools (reference, visuals, —not entertainment)

Projected Outcomes

- Increased active engagement & participation
- Strengthened imagination & "wow" moments through discovery
- Improved social interaction, empathy, & peer respect
- Growth in independent learning & collaborative performance
- Rewiring away from dopamine-driven screen dependency
- Development of self-regulation & patience in learning
- Students using reasoning before relying on devices or AI

Performance Indicators

- Peaks & ebbs in participation and excitement
- Increased willingness to take on challenging tasks
- Growth in student pride, ownership, & creative output
- Peer encouragement & collaborative energy
- Ability to make connections (visual/ verbal / artistic)
- Use of tools (dictionary, word bank, visuals) to anchor understanding

Sources of Data / Evidence Collected

- TA journaling (reflection on engagement, focus, attentiveness)
- Photo/video documentation of student work (beginning to end)
- Photo/video of instruction (TA practice & delivery)
- Student artifacts: poems, songs, zines, artwork, clocks
- Audio recordings of student work & performances

Findings

Performance Indicators (Observed)

- Stronger engagement when learning is tactile & experiential
- Students retain more when visuals + vocabulary are connected
- Increased pride & emotional investment in their work
- Students encourage each other organically during creation
- Improvement in attention when screens are limited & purposeful

Reflections

What Was Successful

- Hands-on, "old school" methodologies produced strong outcomes
- Word banks + visuals created faster, deeper understanding
- Passionate delivery directly impacted student focus & retention
- Bridging past methods with present tools created meaningful learning
- Art-making became the connector that unified disconnected learners

What Was Less Successful

- Students initially struggled with patience & delayed reward
- Over-reliance on screens outside the classroom still impacts focus
- Lacked familiarity with basic tools (dictionary, analog clocks, etc.)

Key Takeaways for Practitioners

- Just because it's modern doesn't mean it's effective
- What is "tried & true" still produces strong outcomes
- Screens should be tools—not teachers
- Engagement comes from imagination, clarity, & emotional connection
- Art is a powerful bridge to restore attention, empathy, & human reasoning
- Sankofa mindset: reach back to move forward

Next Steps

- Continue weaning students off passive screen dependency
- Expand tactile, arts-integrated learning strategies
- Deepen use of vocabulary + visual anchoring systems
- Build stronger home-school connections around self-regulation
- Further develop student independence & leadership in group settings
- Share model with other teaching artists as a bridge between "tried & true" & modern practice

