

Figure 4.2: Anticipating, Accepting, and Addressing Barriers

Part 1

We have all experienced a barrier to learning at one point or another. It might have been our own internal barrier (negative self-talk, distraction by difficult life events, disinterest in the content, and so on). It might have been an external barrier (the classroom environment, the way something was taught, and so on). Or it might have been a combination of internal and external barriers (your relationship with the teacher; cultural or religious incompatibilities; or too wide of a gap between your knowledge, skills, and abilities and what was being taught). Consider the following questions about barriers.

- Remember a time in school (or as an adult) when you were not engaged. What were the barriers for you?
- What do you wish your teacher would have done to either remove the barrier or help you overcome it?

Part 2

In this section, we are going to practice anticipating a student's barriers and thinking creatively about how to remove those barriers or help that student overcome them. Choose option 1 or 2 to engage with this activity.

Option 1

Think about a student you've had or currently have who is disengaged in your class.

- What does their disengagement look like? (What are they doing or not doing, saying or not saying?)
- Based on what you know about this student, what external barriers might be contributing to this student's disengagement?
- How might you think creatively to address these barriers and support this student's engagement in your class?

Option 2:

This activity pertains to a seventh-grade male student whose father left him, his three brothers, and his mother. A few years later, this student's father ended up in prison. Due to these events, he has a severe sense of abandonment and has a difficult time trusting others, let alone showing them respect. This student has a seven-year reading and writing gap. He comes into every class, goes to his seat, and puts his hood up and his head down on the desk. He won't talk to the teacher or his peers and refuses to answer any questions, let alone participate in anything happening in class.

- What internal barriers might be contributing to this student's disengagement?
- How might you think creatively to address these barriers and support his engagement in your class?