MAKING THE MOST OF THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS: PRIMING FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Ways to Foster a Positive Environment

- Use the first day & syllabus to establish student belonging. Be consistent throughout the semester.
- Model welcoming language and behaviors.
- Make clear, explicit expectations & grading criteria. Strive to be fair.
- Learn and use students' names. Ask students to do the same.
- Establish ground rules for your course & for interaction.
- Connect material to your students' interests & backgrounds.
- Examine your assumptions about your students.

Welcome Statements

I look forward to working with you over the next __ weeks in [Course Name]. Get ready for a journey of a lifetime. In this class you will learn about __, __, and __.

Welcome to [Course Name]. My name is __, and I am your instructor in this course. In addition to welcoming you to the course, I would like to give you some helpful information and a few hints for successful completion of this course.

Ways to Develop Student Rapport & Buy-in

- Arrive early; talk with your students as they come in.
- Introduce yourself. Share your enthusiasm for the discipline/course.
- Learn & use students' names. Get to know your students.
- Address myths and students' fears:
  o "What have you heard about this course?"
- Have students reflect:
  o "What do you expect to learn in this course?"
  o "How prepared for this course do you feel? Why?"
- Ask for students' input. Provide flexibility & choice.

Ways to Set & Communicate Expectations

1. Articulate policies explicitly; share your rationale.
2. Establish guidelines for interactions and behaviors (civility).
3. Articulate the expectations, goals and responsibilities of your students and you (the instructor).
4. Consider the context and needs of your students (e.g., freshmen, level, context).
5. Make connections between your expectations and the "real world."
6. Foster a growth mindset.

Ways to Start Student Learning on Day 1

1. Learn about your students (line game, icebreakers)
2. Start learning your students' names.
3. Foster a growth mindset culture. Model expectations and behaviors.
4. Establish a culture of feedback and interaction.
5. Probe for your students' prior knowledge (ex: survey, pre-quiz, concept inventory, essay).
6. Student self-assess their knowledge of concepts and skills you expect they have and those they will acquire in the course.
7. Connect course content to current events & students' current academic lives & future professional lives.
8. Have a discussion. Ask students to generate ideas or hypotheses. Preview a final exam question.

Additional Ideas & Resources

Guide to Planning and Teaching the First Day (DePaul Univ)

Tip: New Semester Round-Up! (Bayraktar, 2021)

How Teach a Good First Day of Class (Lang, 2019)
 1) Curiosity 2) Community 3) Learning
 4) Expectations

First Day of Class (Vanderbilt University)

Stimulating Curiosity Using Hooks (Smith, 2017)

Tip: Icebreakers! (Bayraktar, 2020)

Course Welcome Message to Students (Conestoga)

Planning the First Day of Class   Course: _____

1. By the end of the first class session, I would like my students to be able to:

2. By the end of class, I would like my students to feel or believe:

3. How will students demonstrate these (above), or how will I know that these happened?

4. What strategies & activities to achieve the above? Draft the plan/schedule for the first class.

Sample class session template:
[5 min] Welcome, reminders, questions, overview of today's goals activities & relevance
[15 min] Day 1: Preview or "hook" to interest students. Future days: Concepts, skills (lecture)
[10-15 min] Student learning activity to engage with the material, practice, and/or discuss
[10-15 min] Day 1: Discuss the syllabus. Future days: Additional concepts, knowledge, skills
[5 min] Wrap-up, student 1-minute reflection/assessment, reminders