

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty No. 3

The Top 10...

The Crucial Second and Third Classes

Good research shows that the “stickier” courses are, the more likely students are to stay in class in college. Most of us understand that the first class is extremely important in setting the tone and “culture” of a course. However, it is really in the second and third classes when we can do things that increase the likelihood that a student will succeed. Make your course and the college “sticky” to students.

- ✓ Stick them to **you**. Ask each and every student to meet you briefly before or after class to talk about his or her life/career plans/college plans. Have students write about why they are in class, and what they hope to learn. Arrive early to class and talk with students. Grab a couple of students after class to talk briefly.
- ✓ Stick them to **each other**. Provide a variety of short in-class projects in which they work together. Move students around two or three times so they meet other students. Strongly encourage them to share emails/phone numbers with other good students and to stay in contact outside of class to solve tough homework problems or to answer questions.
- ✓ Stick them to **doing the homework**. Have them complete and hand in something for both the second and third class. Make a point of reviewing it in class and identifying the material as important. These can be very short things (“the most important thing in this chapter, to me, was ...” or “one thing that surprised me in the reading for this week was,” for example).
- ✓ Stick them to your **subject**. Students who are engaged in the subject stay in class. Tell them what excites you most about the lesson for the day – and your subject in general.
- ✓ Stick them to being **your partner** in the class. In the third class, ask them to give you anonymous written feedback on their learning and your

teaching. Tell them you will review and discuss this in the next class and that this is to help you teach **THEM** in particular, not students in general. For example, ask “What is something I do that helps you learn?” or “what is something I do that you believe gets in the way of you learning?” and/or “what do you like best about the course so far?” Do this again about 40% through the course and again 70% through. Be sure to share their responses and indicate how you will use them within a week.

- ✓ Stick them to the **room**. Move around as you teach. Make eye contact with students individually. Show them that the whole room is yours, and theirs.
- ✓ Stick them to arriving and **being ready on time**. Start on time. Do significant things right at the beginning of class. For example, identify how what they are studying for this class fits in with previous material, and/or some ideas about applications in life.
- ✓ Stick them to **staying until the end** of class. Do something significant at the end of class. For example, regularly have students write down the three most important things they learned in the past week, and give them points for “class participation” for every one they hand in.
- ✓ Stick them to the **college**. Share a few things happening at the college. Clubs. Events. Show them how to get engaged. Give them ways to make contact with other students.
- ✓ Stick them to **success**. Give them something to do, and make certain that, if they do a decent job, they earn an immediate – within a week – decent grade. For example, give them a question that they can answer after doing the homework, and have them submit a paragraph or two paper explaining their answer. Or assign a project in class to small groups where you give them a problem that they must answer using what they’ve studied.

Remember, students who believe they are *partners with you and each other* in their learning are more likely to stay.