Stocking Your Teaching Toolbox

Bill Searle and Joseph Finckel
Asnuntuck Community College
The Connecticut Center for Teaching
2019

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Thanks – Bill

Thanks to an awful lot of people – my students, colleagues who inspired me and taught me, difficult people I couldn't reach who ticked me off and made me dig deeper, kids I've coached, my own kids, grandkids, great-grandkids (Yipes!) and my wife. You all helped make me want to climb higher up the teaching mountain – and many of you gave me a big boost in the right direction (or a PUSH!).

I have been gifted with three great collaborations that made me raise my teaching standards. The longest was with one of the best teachers ever, Edwina Trentham. While co-chairing our college's Instructional Excellence Committee for 13 years, running workshops together and talking, her passion infected me. Tom Hodgkin was my long-time partner leading Instructional Skills Workshops and Facilitator Development Workshops. Developing, running, revising and then completely re-conceptualizing them, helped me develop meta-cognition skills far beyond what I had. Finally, Joe Finckel – "The Kid" – with whom I have been writing for the past 7 years. "The Old Man and The Kid" collaboration has made me dig much deeper into areas I had long let go of. Don't tell Joe that I'm the only one who thinks he is still a kid.

Most of all, however, thanks to my Mom and Dad. They tried to make things better in whatever endeavor they were engaged in. They taught me to always, always strive to be the best I can be. Do it a little better every time.

Thanks – Joe

If we're lucky enough and brave enough, we get to be students for life. I am incredibly indebted to the teachers who have nurtured and inspired me both as a student and as a student of teaching. I must thank Mr. Murat for making me a good writer and Dr. Butterfield for making me an even better one. As a newly-hired professor at Asnuntuck Community College, my growth as a teacher, colleague, and person was fostered by a dream team of veteran educators who each, in their own and very different ways, have contributed greatly to my life and teaching: Nick Lefakis, Ray Mercik, Michaela Mullarkey, and Edwina Trentham. As for Bill Searle, there isn't a single person who has instilled in me so strong an ethos for an intentional, reflective teaching practice, experimentation, and faculty development as Bill has. I must also thank the Connecticut statewide Center for Teaching, whose intensive faculty development programs have been invaluable. And finally, to my parents who showed me how to approach the world with wonder, and to Dr. Jon Chatlos--the most dedicated, intentional, and inspiring teacher I ever had.

Preface

If you are comfortable with your current level of teaching, this book isn't for you. It will require you to do too much work, to think too hard, and to probe too deeply.

If, however, you want to get better, to reach more students, to become more of the teacher you want to be, this book is a good place to start (and, realistically, it has the advantage of being free!).

This is the first of several we plan to help teachers who have decided that being a "good enough teacher" is not "good enough" – to help people just like us move to a higher and deeper teaching.

We liken the journey to become a great teacher to climbing a teaching mountain. At first the slope is pretty gentle and a great many people walk up. As the slope steepens, with cliffs, deep ravines and bigger boulders getting in the way, there are rest stops. Many teachers stop at one of these; the effort required to move higher is simply more than they wish to expend.

The teaching mountain gets steeper and steeper, more challenging and more challenging, the higher one goes. The effort takes increasing amounts of energy. The step from relatively poor to decent teaching brought a good feeling and many students responded. Moving from "good enough" to "good" meant reaching more difficult students and reaching other students in different ways. Some students will notice, but not as many – until later in life.

Moving beyond "good" to the best you can be for your students does not bring those early happy rewards. But, if you stay in touch with yourself, you will realize that you are changing more students' lives. You are helping more students see the potential within themselves, no longer simply teaching General Psych I, or Art Appreciation, or Intro to Business, but showing through your subject matter what their future can be. Helping students understand their world and themselves in different ways opens up opportunities to them that they may never have realized they had.

Are you up for aiming toward that spot where 30 years from now, a former student will come up to you and thank you, saying "You changed my life and I am better for it. YOU were the best teacher I ever had."

It won't happen often, but when it does…..

Making the Most of This Material

You can get a great deal out of the material in this book by working on it alone. However, you will get more out of it if you can entice one or two (not more than that) colleagues to join you on this quest. Having another person who has worked on the same material share her/his insights and questions with you opens your mind to thoughts and approaches that you might never have had on your own.

Finding approaches and thoughts that you might never have had on your own – the essence of education.

Introduction – "Good Enough" to "Great"

How good do you want to be? "Good enough" is fine with most teachers. "Good" is fine with a select few. "Great" is a designation few reach.

Truly great teachers know that they didn't get dropped off at the top of the teaching mountain. They had to work harder than most, work longer than most, think more deeply and broadly than most, and care more than most. And they know that there is summit on the teaching mountain, there are only comfortable places to rest. Comfortable places where most teachers stop, but great teachers never linger long.

If you know in your heart that you ARE a teacher, that your time in this life is because you are supposed to be A TEACHER, then you are beyond the "good enough" levels. You are aware that there is much more to do. John Izzo, in "The Five Secrets You Must Discover Before You Die" calls it "the knowing." Now we challenge you to begin the "going" – taking the steps that will lead you beyond "trying to be really good" to "being really good", what Izzo says is the step that stops most people. Most people simply do not want to work hard enough to move their work to another level.

Do you have the "go" to actually do more than most, longer than most, and harder than most?

That's a challenge. One of us was a coach long ago who told his players, "If you want to be the best you can be, you have to work harder than the other kids, learn

more than they learn, and always try to be better." And right here he thanks Mary Kate, Teresa, AnnKera, Katy, Selena, Vicki, Tracy, Jill, Frannie, Kristen and Jennifer for showing him what ordinary girls can do when they decide they don't want to be ordinary any longer……which showed an ordinary coach that he didn't want to be ordinary any longer either. They taught him.

Just like all superb teaching – it is all about working so that as many of your students as possible dare to take steps they might not otherwise take. Because of you.

A Word About Standards

How do you know if you are settling for "good enough" or even the much harder to achieve "good" standard of teaching – much less the "great" standard?

Where have you gotten your standards? A friend tells about his 5-year-old granddaughter going to school for the first time in an ordinary suburb in Connecticut. Two months in, they met with the teacher who gave the little girl great reports for all her personal traits and for working hard, "but you know, she is about 2 years behind the other children." Now, this little girl had gone pre-school at what was considered an excellent private school in a southern state and gotten high marks. She'd been a good student doing good work.

Was it the little girl? No. By May the teacher said she had caught up by at least 8 months (incidentally, caught up completely by the beginning of second grade, for those concerned!).

Standards. Compared to other schools in the area in her former state, that little girl went to an excellent pre-school. But …. not compared to even a normal, every-day suburban pre-school in Connecticut.

So, where do your standards of what good teaching is come from? Are you measuring in a pool similar to the one that school in the other state was working on? How do you know you have selected superb teachers to compare yourself against?

Go ahead, answer that question.

No, really. Write down what you are going to do to make certain you are setting high standards for what is "good teaching" and what is "great teaching".

Oh, one more problem – you must keep adjusting those standards.

As you mature into good and hopefully great teaching, you will discover that your standards will continually rise as well. You will realize that you must find teachers who are superb at different aspects of teaching to analyze, hone and raise your standards. Collaborative learning. Cooperative learning. Online discussions. Learning preferences. Multicultural learning. Working with difficult students. Advising. Challenging new students. Challenging experienced students. Working with young women. Working with older men. Improving student writing. Planning. Managing groups. Creating teams, and helping students learn to create teams. Using technology to expand horizons. Testing. Building creativity. Building self-efficacy. Challenging negative self-expressions. Setting and managing expectations. ….. and 1,256 more areas that can help students become all they can be.

We hope this book will help you adjust your standards, and give you hints about where you can find even higher standards for a teacher like you.

Your Priorities as a Teacher

There is one thing we would like you to do before you begin working with the "Top Ten Teaching Tips" material. Please identify what you consider to be ***your*** top 5 or 6 priorities as a teacher.

Let's Get Started

This book organizes a weekly series that we did a few years ago, "The Top Ten Teaching Tips on …" into groups of three that make sense to us. We ask you to read one of the weekly lists of 10 tips at a time and reflect upon how several may add to your teaching (we strongly encourage you to adapt and revise to fit **YOUR** teaching and **YOUR** students!!). After each grouping of 3, we ask some different questions, designed to help you to make choices, to sort, and to prioritize.

Our hope for you is that you will use this book to move your teaching and work with students higher up that teaching mountain – higher up towards becoming the best teacher you can be.

Let the journey begin.

Section: *Getting Started*

- **The All-Important First Day of Class**
- **Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier**
- **Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus**

The Pasture

I'm going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may);
I sha'nt be gone long. – You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young,
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'nt be gone long. – You come too.

Robert Frost

The All-Important First Day of Class

Think for a minute about why you love what you teach or why you think it is important for everyone to know or be able to do. Why not use the first class to create an experience for students that welcomes them as learners into this important subject and makes them feel like they belong in your class?

- ✓ Do the unexpected. When you surprise your students on the first day with an activity or approach to the course that they wouldn't expect, you create a memorable and intriguing experience (ingredients for attention and learning). You also shatter any expectations they have about school being predictable and boring and signal to them that this course will be different.

- ✓ Take the pressure off of yourself to go over the course syllabus in detail… or at all. Yes, students need and deserve to know the course requirements and your expectations, but you can highlight the important things during the last fifteen minutes of class and ask/require them to read the syllabus for the next class. Answer questions about the course and syllabus at the start of the second class. Give a syllabus quiz with prizes.

- ✓ Get students hooked on your subject right away by connecting it to their lives right now. Break them into groups and have them do something right from day one. Get them discussing or experience on a question, problem, or challenge. Are students already experiencing your subject without knowing it?

- ✓ Make students feel invested in the course by both knowing their classmates and being known in return. Play a name game that can be modified according to the ability profile of your students. For example, students can introduce themselves and share something about themselves in small groups, and the groups can nominate one person to introduce the group to the class (or another group). This gives you more opportunities to hear and learn your students' names and, more importantly, it lays the foundation for connections between them.

- ✓ Resist the urge to talk your way through nervousness or to establish control. Try this: appoint three students who tell you when you have talked for 12 minutes. If they catch you, stop talking and give students something to do. You'll use your time more deliberately, and more students will pay attention.

- ✓ If you are teaching online or using an online course platform at all, post an announcement that says that any student who e-mails or messages you three interesting things about him or herself will earn X points toward Y. This gets them using the platform and communicating with you.

- ✓ If you have repeat students in the room, be mindful of how you acknowledge or interact with them on the first day. Good rapport signals to new students that you are approachable and that other students like you. Too much familiarity or informality can suggest to new students that former students are trying to gain favor with you early or that you already have established favorites while new students must lag behind.

- ✓ Consider carefully how you will introduce yourself to the class, what you will share about yourself (personally or professionally), what you ask the class to call you, how you characterize your availability for help outside of class, and why you teach. If you share your credentials, ask yourself which ones and why. Whether you are formal or informal, ask yourself why.

- ✓ Pass out slips of paper or note cards and ask student to anonymously write down one thing about which they are most worried, wondering, or scared in terms of the course, you as an instructor, or college (especially for first-year students). Tell them you will read aloud and answer any appropriate questions. Then do it.

- ✓ Take your class on a fieldtrip to your office. If students see for themselves where your office is and can imagine you sitting in it, they will be more likely to come for help if they need it.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier

- ✓ Create a 'hand-in' folder and leave it on the table in front of the class. Tell students to hand in whatever they need to for homework, or in-class assignments at the end of class. Remind them only the first three weeks, after that tell them that is their responsibility. Saves class time.

- ✓ Create a 'hand-back' folder to hand back all student work. Give a large envelope to each student and have them write their name on it. Each week, everything handed back goes into their envelope, for privacy, and the envelopes go into the 'hand-back folder'. Leave the folder in the classroom at least 15 minutes before class starts so students can get their own work. Saves class time.

- ✓ Arrive in class 15 minutes early to talk to students, answer questions on material you have handed back, and 'warm up' everyone, including yourself! Also gives you a chance to make sure everything you need is in the room.

- ✓ Have students "buddy-up" for class notes – perhaps in groups of three. They need to share email addresses and then agree if one misses class, the others will make a copy of class notes to give the person. Keeps students from contacting you for "class notes" if they miss class.

- ✓ Set up any quizzes or weekly homework assignments so that you throw out the lowest grade. If a student happens to miss a class for any reason, that becomes the lowest grade and does not hurt their grade for that part of the course. Saves doing make-ups!

- ✓ Use Blackboard to post the syllabus, assignments, handouts, etc. for the course. Remind students early and often that it is available, and that you will post handouts as you give them out in class, so they can download any given for a class they miss. Saves emails and calls to get lost course material.

- ✓ Consider posting on Blackboard an "assignment in lieu of cancelled class" and telling students about it (even better note it on the course assignment sheet you hand out to students). In the event that class is cancelled for weather or other reason, students simply go to the course site on Blackboard and do that assignment. That way, you have automatically handled any administrative concern about how you will make up class time.

- ✓ Regularly post announcements on Blackboard and give students an incentive to read (5 points on a weekly quiz, or 10 points on that week's class assignment). This enables you to communicate easily with the class should the need arise.

- ✓ Take a calendar for the semester and put on it all major assignments, tests, and other activities that will require a lot of your work to complete. After putting all their work on the calendar, add in time for grading, class planning, meeting with students, etc. Spread out the work you must evaluate.

- ✓ Begin and end class on time– always. Make it clear that you are doing this and have activities at both the beginning and end of class that students must hand in (perhaps in small groups) – that you will NOT give at any other time. Remind students often that this is a major part of their "class participation" grade so that if they come late or leave early, it will hurt their final grade for the course.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus

A syllabus has three purposes: it introduces the course (not the subject, which is your job in the first class), it tells students the "rules you both will live by," and it protects you in the event there is a problem. However, as important as this document is, students often give it simply a passing glance at the beginning of the semester, and many forget that the document even exists by week three. Help students focus on and remember what is important, and be mindful of what your syllabus communicates to students.

- ✓ Keep everything short. Course description. Assignment listing. Students will invest in an experience; they will scan or skip a long paragraph. Convey the focus and importance of the course to them through experiences during the first class. Giving brief assignment descriptions initially gives you flexibility to adjust them based upon the students in that class (something you could mention to them).

- ✓ Welcome rather than scare students. Be personal and inviting. In fact, consider writing "Welcome" and signing your name on each syllabus. Consider whether the wording of your syllabus is defensive, presumptuous, or condescending.

- ✓ What does your syllabus reflect about you? Assume someone does not know you. What would a glance at your syllabus say about you, your personality, and the course? Is this what you mean to communicate?

- ✓ Ask colleagues if you can review their syllabi and pick out particularly useful ways of presenting information. Want examples of policies for attendance, giving tests, or papers? Ask colleagues.

- ✓ Consider developing a creative syllabus, particularly if you can use it to engage different learning styles. The internet offers many cool and creative ways to design and organize a syllabus.

- ✓ State only those rules that you actually intend to follow and then make sure you follow them. When in doubt, be a little stricter than you think necessary to give yourself a little room to adjust for extraordinary circumstances.

- ✓ Include pictures and visuals. A photo relevant to your discipline, perhaps? A funny cartoon that relates either to the course or an important point in

your syllabus? A photo of you to make the syllabus personal without self-aggrandizing?

- ✓ Try color. Colored paper makes your syllabus stand out, but colored ink makes it memorable. Everyone likes color, and it makes your syllabus alive and memorable. Dark colors are easy to read, provided that you use colored type creatively and judiciously. When choosing a font, always consider the readability of the font for weaker readers and other language learners.

- ✓ Give students the realistically best way to contact you. Do you check your e-mail incessantly, but your voicemail once a week?

- ✓ Ask students to review your syllabus, picking out what they believe are the most important items and any that are confusing. Make this a small group exercise in the first class and you both get students to know each other a bit, and to really review the syllabus. If you think something is important and your students did not seem to notice it, make it more prominent next time. Revise anything students find confusing.

Bonus!

- ✓ Know all the rules and required information that your college or department require in syllabi. Include this on its own page.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

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Section Debrief: *Getting Started*

- The All-Important First Day of Class
- Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
- Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

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Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #3 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: Getting More Students On The Path Toward Success

- **The Crucial Second and Third Classes**
- **Promote Effective Student Study Skills**
- **Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students**

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

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.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Promote Effective Student Study Skills

- ✓ Realize you may be part of the problem. Do you have great PowerPoint presentations that cover the readings? Do you carefully review the homework problems? Why study when your professor will do all the work? Instead of concentrating on providing information, spend class time developing new examples, working with students to determine ways to apply the new information, having them prepare material to "teach" what they are learning to others, or having them write and answer their own problems.

- ✓ In 100 level courses that use textbooks, teach students how to take their own notes from the reading. Taking notes is far more engaging for our brain than highlighting. If you do not know another system, use "3 colors". As they take notes, tell them to put major chapter headings in red, minor headings in green and detailed points in black.

- ✓ Reward students in a meaningful way for taking notes on their readings. An 'open-note quiz' at the very beginning of class rewards them for taking notes and encourages prompt attendance. Give 5 easy questions on topics in the chapter which, if they have notes, they should easily get a 100 on.

- ✓ If you teach a course that requires readings but not in a text, teach "active reading" which encourages students to "talk back" to what they read, rather than simply receiving information. Write in margins. Jot down questions. Note disagreements.

- ✓ Summarizing. Show students how to summarize and have them do this as they study. Reinforce their budding skills by forming small groups in class to share summaries on a particular concept and pick the best one to share with the full class. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of summaries that are shared so students begin to master this difficult skill. Give points for the best ones.

- ✓ Key points. For each new reading have students identify 3 key points. Give class time for small groups to discuss key points and decide their 3. Lead a discussion about why the points they identified were the key points, or not. Make sure, at the end of the discussion, to be very clear about your thinking process in identifying key points – this is a higher order thinking skill that students need to practice to get better at.

- ✓ Reward students who ask good questions on their homework. Have them hand questions in on index cards so you can put them in an order to answer during class. Discuss what makes a "good question" and give class participation credit for the best few each week.

- ✓ Study Buddies. Strongly encourage students to work with 2 or 3 other people in class to share notes, ask questions, and connect with regarding the course outside of class. "Study Buddies" really does work, provided they concentrate on studying, not socializing!

- ✓ Study Time Log. Show students how to create a log that records the minute they start studying and every time they stop studying. Caution that they must record *every time* their mind moves off studying. Have them review their logs with other students (or you) to discuss how to become more effective. Remind them that research shows that it takes about 20 minutes for our brain to fully re-engage after an interruption, so it is necessary to put their phones in airplane mode, shut off computer feeds, and have a quiet area when they are *studying*.

- ✓ Be very clear about the time it takes to do well in your course. Generally we use 2 to 3 hours of time OUTSIDE of class for every hour inside class as a guide. Be prepared for students to be shocked at this, but it is the standard.

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2.

Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students

Many of us assume our students know how to study. In fact, most of our students have terrible "study habits." We can help them immediately do better in our courses by sharing and reinforcing what we know are effective study habits. Helping students dramatically improve their study skills will improve their participation in class and their confidence. This, in turn, will improve their self-efficacy in relation to college courses. Share these ideas with your students.

- ✓ Put cell phones in "airplane mode" and, if working on a computer, disable *all* programs that interrupt studying. After an interruption, there is good research that it takes the average person 20 minutes to completely reconnect with what she or he was doing.

- ✓ Develop a weekly schedule of when they will study each subject, in a quiet place without distractions. Consider copying a calendar and handing it out, to make it simple for students to fill in their work times, study times, etc.

- ✓ Read through the chapter or reading assignment, without taking notes or trying to understand everything completely first, then go back and read for understanding. Giving our brains a general picture of something first aids in later putting new information in order.

- ✓ Stop after 10 minutes of reading and write down a few sentences explaining the main points of what they have just read. Stop. Think. Write. This engages their brain much, much more than simply reading and highlighting.

- ✓ After completing a reading assignment, urge students to explain, in their own words, what they consider to be the 4 key points in the entire reading. Read, think, write. It works.

- ✓ Go over class notes within 24 hours after class, to see if they make sense. Suggest they write a question mark next to anything unclear and ask you about it, via email or in class. In more advanced courses, give them some reflection questions to write about.

- ✓ Combine class notes with reading. You can help them do this by having them take notes on the readings on only one half of each piece of paper, so class notes on the same subject can be added right next to anything they wrote down from the readings.

- ✓ "Triple-up" with two other people. Each shares her/his study schedule for your class with the others. When finished studying each week, urge them to check in with each other to discuss material, make sure of homework assignments, and help each other out. The regular time puts pressure on to have homework done.

- ✓ Teach students to plan ahead for tests and other longer assignments, to help them start them well before assignments are due. If they have calendars, have them put reminders two weeks before due dates, and one week ahead of time – blocking out time to do work.

- ✓ Look over everything they get back from an instructor to see where they lost points, or had a problem, and figure a way to do better on the next assignment. Consider giving credit if they prepare a written "grade report" analyzing why and how they lost points and identifying a plan for improvement.

What works is ***immediate reinforcement*** of the study behaviors you are encouraging. Whatever you do, make it worth their time for students to do more than glance at the readings.

Now, how will you reward your students for studying the way you know helps them learn? You could randomly ask 7 students per class to show you their notes so you can give them extra credit for good notes. Or, perhaps have some hand in their explanations of the 4 key points.

The next page is a draft of a handout you may give students. Adapt it to your needs and your students!

Study Tips to Make You an Effective Student

Studying for college courses is hard, but not nearly as hard as most students make it. Learn how to study and you will (1) get better grades, (2) be a more effective student, (3) learn skills you can use to learn new material at work your entire life. Start now! Here are some ideas to get you started.

- ✓ When studying, put your cell phone in "airplane mode" and disable all "instant" notifications on your computer-- otherwise, you are only pretending to study. Take a break every hour if you need to, in order to get back to your friends.

- ✓ Don't be alone in the course. Form a "triple-up team" with two other classmates, share emails and ways to connect via texting, set up a time each week to contact each other on homework assignments, what is due, and questions about the course.

- ✓ Develop a weekly schedule of when you will study for each course, and follow it as if it was your work hours.

- ✓ Text, email or call your "triple-up team" when you have completed study assignments each week.

- ✓ Read through each assignment, without studying or taking notes, one time to let my brain get a general understanding of the topic. Then, go back and study the material, taking notes.

- ✓ After each ten minutes of studying the material, stop and decide what the most important points are and write them down in my own words.

- ✓ After completing the entire reading assignment, decide what the four most important points are and explain them in my own words.

- ✓ Go over your class notes within 24 hours of class to see if they make sense.

- ✓ Combine your notes from class with notes from homework so that they make sense, and to make it easier for you to study for tests.

- ✓ Examine assignments you get back from instructors and review their comments to see how you can improve. Ask instructors questions if they wrote something or had a grade you did not understand.

- ✓ Put all tests, long assignments and papers on a calendar so you can see what you have to do, and when, and plan accordingly.

Okay, look over the list and identify *three specific things* that you will work on *right now.*

1.

2.

3.

And, how will you and I know you are doing these things? What realistic reward should you get for achieving these changes in your studying?

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Section Debrief: Getting More Students On The Path Toward Success

- The Crucial Second and Third Classes
- Promote Effective Student Study Skills
- Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

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Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: *Building Rapport and Student Strengths*

- **Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them**
- **Observe Your Teaching Tendencies**
- **Ways to Build Your Students' Self-Efficacy**

"Sometimes one creates a dynamic impression by saying something, and sometimes one creates a dynamic impression by remaining silent."

Dalai Lama

Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them

Your students will respect you and therefore trust and learn from you if they feel that you respect them. Your goal as a teacher is not necessarily to get a class to like you, but here are a few tried and true, sure-fire ways to make it clear to students that you respect them.

- ✓ Return graded work promptly with reasonable but not overwhelming feedback. Nothing annoys students more than an instructor who doesn't return or comment on graded work in a timely manner. Nothing.

- ✓ Arrive in class early, not just on time. Don't get to your classroom on time but use the first three minutes of class to set up. A class that begins like clockwork communicates that you respect the commitment students are making to attend your class, and it makes students who arrive late stand out to the whole room.

- ✓ Respect their time. Finish class on time. Every time. If you communicate an awareness of the clock and an appreciation for their time, students will feel respected and will likely forgive that one time when you absolutely must go over by three minutes. One time. Three minutes. No more. They'll know it must be important.

- ✓ Respect their time. Only let class out early under rare circumstances. Students will no doubt like you very much if you regularly end class early, but they will not respect you, the course, its content, or your institution for charging them for credit hours that, as you would be demonstrating, aren't necessary.

- ✓ Respect their time. Don't act like the work of your class isn't burdensome or speak in cavalier tones about "college work." Instead, convey to students a realistic understanding of the time and effort that your course requires and then recognize and validate the time and effort that your students put into it.

- ✓ When you assign readings, always *use* them in class. Reward students who have read using reading quizzes. If students ask themselves "What did I read that for?" your stock (and the likelihood of them reading in the future) will fall.

- ✓ Respect your students' ability to help you teach them. Students respect a teacher who is so secure that he or she asks the class for feedback about how well he or she is teaching. Use the last five minutes of class to ask students to respond anonymously to questions like these: "What am I doing in class that helps you learn," "What am I doing in class that doesn't help you learn," and "What should I do the same/differently in class in the coming weeks?"

- ✓ Set clear guidelines for behavior in your course policies and then follow them. You can also invite a class to partner with you to create "ground rules" for the group at the beginning of a semester, unit, or project. What will the class policy be for cell phones, personal laptops, hand raising, challenging what another person says, disagreeing with someone, etc.? When students participate in creating group expectations, they take more ownership of the entire group's learning experience.

- ✓ If your assignments require subjective grading, explain your grading through written feedback or grading rubrics. If grading rubrics feel too rigid or limiting for the purposes of your assessments, communicate to students why their work earned the grade that it earned and connect those reasons to what your assignment asked them to do.

- ✓ Have a crystal clear policy in your syllabus regarding the submission of late work. During the early weeks of the semester, reiterate how clear and firm your policy is and then stick to it for the duration of the semester with no exceptions. If you accept late work for reduced grades, is there a way in which your late policy can facilitate learning rather than simply penalizing lateness? Keep in mind that most students who submit work late need more than an extra day or two, so consider an initial consequence followed by a grace period before an increased consequence. If students perceive you as inconsistent or if you accept late work without consequence from one student when others worked to complete the assignment on time, well, you guessed it…

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

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3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Observe Your Teaching Tendencies

Here's a new take on a teaching observation but without all of the anxiety that usually comes with it: observe yourself. Bring awareness to your teaching so that you verbally and nonverbally communicate to students what you intend to.

- ✓ Do you, in subtle ways, call on, validate, or convey a desire to help women more than men? Black students more than white students? Native English speakers more than non-native speakers? Older students more than younger students? Try to observe your tendencies and be willing to acknowledge what you discover. Do not judge yourself; simply bring awareness to your teaching.

- ✓ Do you have a tendency to teach your classes in a way that would most make sense to you? If you do, you're not alone, but recognize this as a well-intentioned tendency. Not every student thinks or learns the way you do. Explore some ways that you can engaged visual and kinesthetic learners, especially if you usually ask students to read and listen. Instead, what can you get them *doing* in class?

- ✓ Do your nonverbal behaviors send the same message as what you say? When you ask a question, what is your facial expression, where are your arms and hands, and where are you looking? When you answer a question, what is your tone, where are your arms and hands, and where do you look?

- ✓ Do you have any potentially annoying speech habits, such as the placeholders "um" and "uh"? Ask a student (in front of the whole class) to keep track of the number of times you say "um" or "uh" during a single class. Tell the class you are trying to become more aware of how you speak when teaching. Your students (all of them) will be freshly attentive and you will model self-awareness and a desire to grow as a teacher and person.

- ✓ Do you make eye contact with one side of the room more than the other? This is far more common than most teachers think. Do you make more eye contact with students who have established themselves as active participators? Bring your awareness to your eyes, where you direct them, and how you use them to engage *all* students in the room.

- ✓ Do you always call on the first hand that goes up? Does that hand always belong to one of the same four students? Ask yourself, especially early in the semester, if it is speed you are rewarding instead of a willingness to

participate. Try asking a question and then giving the entire class a minute to write down some ideas before sharing ideas, or ask the class to wait fifteen seconds (time them) before anyone raises a hand.

- ✓ Do you only "haunt" one part of the classroom? Classroom configurations including computer stations, desks, or lecterns can box you in if you let them. Keep a sheet of paper on your desk or table and keep a tally under "Left" or "Right" every time you go to each side of the room. Also note how often you go to the back of the room or down the sides and aisles. The closer students are physically to their instructor, the more they tend to be engaged.

- ✓ Are you comfortable with silence, or will you be the first in your classroom to fill it? If you tend to fill silence, you train students to not to take ownership of the discussion and their own learning. The same thing happens if you always call on that one student who will *always* raise his or her hand. Silence can be a powerful, thought-provoking experience. Don't avoid silence; *use* it.

- ✓ Do you validate students' ideas (and invalidate others) by what you write on the board? Before a class discussion, appoint a student to call on raised hands, tell the class that during the discussion each person gets to nominate an idea that someone else has just said for "publishing" on the board, and relegate yourself to simply "publishing" nominated ideas on the board as they arrive. This eliminates the tendency to validate some ideas and not others using the board.

- ✓ Do your assumptions about or experience with individual students in your class impact (perhaps unconsciously) how you evaluate them? For any assignment that requires subjective evaluations, consider having students put their names on the last page instead of the first or identify their work with a three digit number associated with them in your gradebook. If you have a good memory, go with a five digit number.

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Ways to Build Your Students' Self-Efficacy

One of the best predictors of student success in college is that student's belief in how good a student he or she is. Unfortunately, many of our students do not define themselves as good students. We can change this perception. The key is their "self-efficacy" in regard to what is required to be a good student. For our purposes, "self-efficacy" is a student's belief in her or his ability to successfully complete tasks required of good students. Here's how we can change a student's self-efficacy for the tasks needed to become a good student.

- ✓ How do you test? Most tests are designed to show people what they do not know. A great many college tests are basically "memory tests" – yet how many current jobs require extensive memorization? Consider alternative ways, perhaps showing your students how to take notes from reading and class and then giving "open note" tests that emphasize thinking about and using information.

- ✓ Are tasks in the course designed to build upon each other so that the hardest material is toward the end? What exists early in your course that is hard for many students, and can reinforce their perception that they aren't capable of mastering the content or skill? We want to make students work, stretch and even struggle, but not to create failure experiences that reinforce negative beliefs.

- ✓ Do you consciously provide more assistance to students at the beginning of the course, especially with the important lower level thinking skills of "remembering" and "understanding"? Showing students how to take notes, study the key points, and maximize their time studying is crucial to helping them develop the feeling, "I can do this." An added benefit is that then you can explain less in class and engage them in more thinking and applying tasks.

- ✓ The more we provide regular feedback featuring success-oriented reinforcement and constructive criticism aimed at areas they can immediately improve, the more we give students a chance to build skills, which builds self-efficacy.

- ✓ Grading. Is it fair to evaluate a new instructor using the same criteria as for a full professor with 20 years teaching experience? Of course not. So perhaps you want to consider giving hard tests, but grading progressively

harder throughout the course. Show students how to do well on your tests, and as they get stronger, grade harder.

- ✓ Answering questions in class. Often a few students provide most of the answers when we ask a question, reinforcing to others that they aren't smart enough. Consider two tactics. First, ask a question and tell everyone to think for a minute, then ask for volunteers and consciously track who answers. Second, ask a question and have two students collaborate on an answer, and then consciously call on different students.

- ✓ What happens when a student gives an incorrect answer to one of your questions? Students with high self-efficacy for their tasks are not intimidated, but how does someone react who thinks he or she is a poor student? Dig out value in the answer, use their answer to support their skill and make sure you call on them again in a future class.

- ✓ Where do the "good students" sit? You know. So, move students around a few times so they get to know others. Putting students in unfamiliar locations helps loosen the stereotypical behavior they have in their minds about what they do when they are in a classroom. As that happens, students are more likely to ask questions and participate more.

- ✓ Who talks to instructors outside of class? The "good students," right? Change that dynamic. Ask all of your students to make a short appointment to see you about the course, their career interests, and why they are in college. This breaks the pattern, and may even lead some to seek you out for other purposes, which is "good student" behavior.

- ✓ Show confidence in their ability to do well in the course. Examine your nonverbal behavior, emphasizing positive messages. Consider how you refer to your present and past students, everywhere since negative thoughts lead to subconscious actions. Go to class early and engage different students personally, use information you know about them to connect course content to their lives. Think of six other ways.

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Section Debrief: *Building Rapport and Student Strengths*

- Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
- Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
- Ways to Build Your Students' Self-Efficacy

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

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What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

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Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: *Intentional Lesson Development*

- **Components of a Well-Planned Class**
- **Laddering Thinking Tasks**
- **Components of a Complete Learning Experience**

"Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Ghandi

Components of a Well-Planned Class

Whether you have every class planned to the minute before the semester begins or you outline the semester but plan each class the night before, a good lesson plan should focus not simply on the material you want to *cover* but instead on constructing a learning *experience* for students for the duration of the class meeting. Here are the essential components of an intentional, student-centered learning experience.

- ✓ Bridge-in. You know your discipline and course content forwards and backwards with a great memory lesson sequencing, but your students do not. Bridge them into the current lesson by establishing context and reminding them of the material, discussions, or skills practice that they experienced during previous classes. You can also use this portion of the lesson to warm the class up the focus of the lesson in a real-world way that invests them immediately in the learning experience.

- ✓ Objectives or outcomes. We are often guilty of knowing what we want our students to learn or be able to do by the end of class but not sharing these goals with them, as if they were Dorothy and we were telling them to pay no attention to the wizard behind the curtain. Instead, share clear learning objectives or outcomes with students at the beginning of every class. This communicates a goal for the lesson and empowers students to monitor their own progress toward that goal.

- ✓ Pre-assessment. Using a brief class discussion, get a sense of how much your students already know (or think they know) about the focus of that day's class. Students may know more than you think, or they may have misconceptions, or they may lack skills or background knowledge that you presume they had. You can then refer to what students shared during the pre-assessment later in class to validate, correct, or involve what they already know.

- ✓ Participatory learning. Simply put, create a lesson that makes students as active and involved in their own learning experience as possible. When students *experience* content and *practice* skills, they remember that content and develop those skills. Breaking the class into small group discussions, giving students a task or a problem to work on, and asking students to write in class are all forms of participatory learning. If you tend to lecture or feel pressure to cover content from textbooks, consider the "flipped classroom" technique. Google it.

- ✓ Post-assessment. Did your students actually learn what you wanted them to learn? If you don't ask immediately, you won't find out until a formal assessment or graded assignment, which often arrive too late for you to gauge when the learning broke down and how you might address it. A quick post-assessment of learning can come in many forms, but what you're assessing is simple: if the lesson had clear learning outcomes and objectives, simply ask students to demonstrate those outcomes. It's as simple as that.

- ✓ Summary. Help them understand the experience they just had in your class and contextualize that experience in terms of what came before it and what will come next. Reminding students of what they have just learned can be powerfully effective in terms of lesson scaffolding, skills acquisition, and fostering metacognitive skills about the learning process. Summarizing the lesson brings an experience to a close and helps students to know what they know.

If you find these lesson plan components helpful or familiar, they are part of an active learning lesson plan model known as BOPPPS, an acronym for the six steps listed above. If you want to sound cool at teaching parties (or get invited to an active learning teaching party), we recommend using BOPPPS as a verb:

"Are you BOPPPSing yet?"
"I just BOPPPSed my class, and it went great!"

You've probably noticed that there are only six tips in this *The Teaching Top 10* installment. Whoops. We owe you four!

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Laddering Thinking Tasks

Why do our students struggle so much to analyze? Why do students simply *define* or *describe* concepts that we've asked them to *compare* or *apply*? Why do some students tell us that they have "no idea" what an assignment is asking them to do? Understanding a hierarchy of thinking tasks and creating a ladder of assignments to progressively help students develop thinking skills will both help them and lessen your frustration.

- ✓ Remember. Key verbs: *define*, *list*, *name*, *recall*, *tell*. Students *must* remember content, information, or ideas before they can do anything else with them cognitively. *Don't assume that your students remember as much as you think they do.* Try to create quick activities aimed at assessing and jogging students' memory of previous content or reading assignments. Don't skip this.

- ✓ Understand. Key verbs: *explain*, *outline*, *summarize*, *compare*, *illustrate*, *rephrase*, *show*. Ask students what they think they understand and what they think they don't understand about a topic, reading, etc., and then ask them to brainstorm in groups what they remember about it. Ask the groups to report out on what they remember so that entire class can use this collective remembering to move towards understanding. In lower level courses with many new students, this may be a significant amount of what you do in class.

- ✓ Don't confuse *remembering* with *understanding* and *don't take it for granted that students understand content or reading that you've assigned.*

- ✓ Apply. Key verbs: *apply*, *develop*, *solve*, *utilize*, *model*, *experiment with*, *construct*, *build*, *plan*. Give students examples of how to apply material to real world scenarios. As the course progresses, ask them to generate applications more and more on their own.

  Many a seasoned instructor makes the mistake of jumping right into *application*; that is, we ask students to *apply* an idea, concept, or term before they *understand* it. We all use what we *remember* (life experience included) to *understand*, just as we use our *understanding* when we *apply* our knowledge in new ways. Granted, we come to *understand* something more broadly and deeply by *applying* it, but we must have a basic understanding in place before we apply.

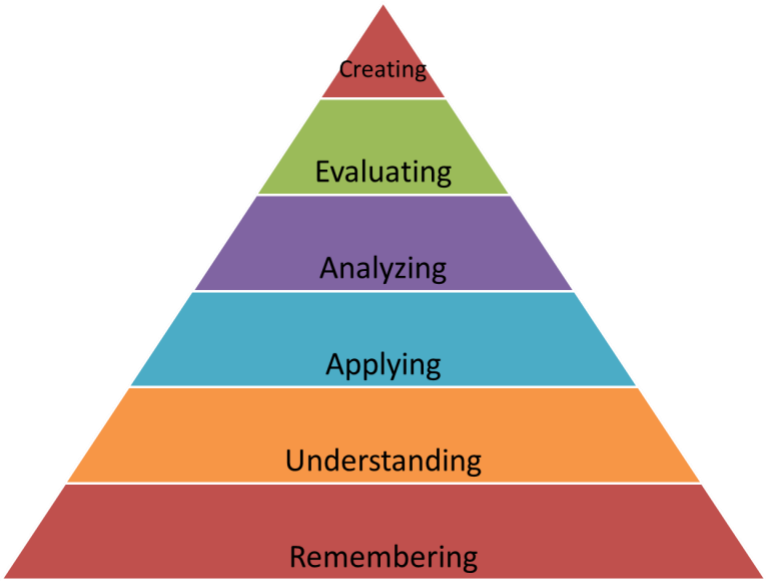
- ✓ Analyze. Key verbs: *analyze, examine, distinguish, classify, infer, simplify, discover, compare, categorize.* The quintessential college thinking skill. What are we asking students to do when we use this word? Do they understand it the way we do? Try this: write a one-sentence assignment that contains the word "analyze" on the board and then ask students to write down and then share what they think the assignment is asking them to do.

  Discuss the word "analyze" itself and identify and address confusion (especially if you notice students confusing *analysis* with *understanding, applying, or evaluating).* Ask students to list three specific things they should do when they are asked to analyze. ***Do not take it for granted that your students understand the word "analyze" the same way that you do.***

- ✓ Evaluate. Key verbs: *evaluate, criticize, judge, interpret, conclude, determine, decide, prioritize, rate, recommend, justify, disprove, assess.* Are we asking students to evaluate something they have not fully come to understand through *application* and *analysis*? This is a very high-level thinking skill for a first or second-year course, so pick one or two specific evaluation tasks, prepare students well for it, and allow them the time that this advanced thinking skill requires.

- ✓ Create. Key verbs: *create, build, compose, design, develop, invent, imagine, propose, formulate.* This is a very high-level thinking skill. Most students have never been asked to do this and will experience uncertainty and confusion when they asked to create. Developing these assignments may be easier in some disciplines—say, the creative arts—than others like the sciences.

This hierarchy of thinking skills is based on Anderson and Krathwohl's update of the Cognitive Domain of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives developed in the 1950s:



Don't just use this hierarchy and thinking skills ladder to inform your planning and teaching; *show it to your students and help them to see the thinking skills that they are practicing in relation to each other*. Help them to understand what different thinking tasks involve and require.

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What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

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Components of a Complete Learning Experience

A complete learning experience must involve experience, reflection, ideas, and application. David Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle gives us a structure that guides students through stages in which they both experience and then make sense of what they are learning. By planning lessons with the Learning Cycle in mind, we can help students experience, reflect on, understand, and apply what they learn.

- ✓ Concrete Experience. Many community college students are most engaged by and thus begin learning best through concrete experience. Create an *experience* for your students that immerses them in the lesson's focus and/or connects explicitly to their lives or the real world. Concrete experience invests students in what they are learning and gives them a sense of why they are learning it.

  If you tend to begin lessons by teaching or lecturing, try flipping things around. Have students experience an activity first and *then* learn the ideas that will help them understand it. Discussion in small groups can be a concrete experience, but make sure that the topic of discussion is concrete, real-world experience, not a concept or idea.

- ✓ Reflective Observation. Once students have a learning experience, they must have the opportunity to reflect on it. Reflection is not just a qualitative activity; it's the way that many students process or make sense of experiences and new information.

  Reflective Observation can take the form of a full-class discussion after an activity or it can be done with a short, informal writing assignment (*Top 10* #10). Discussions help students learn from others and bond as a learning group, while reflection through writing is more personal and self-exploring. Either way, the focus should be *reflection*: What did you notice? How did you feel? Did anything surprise or confuse you? What would you do differently? What did I learn? What difference does it make?

You can combine a Concrete Experience and Reflective Observation by asking four or five volunteer students to discuss or debate a concrete issue in a circle while the rest of the class observes from the outside. Following the discussion, the observers share what they observed (use questions like the ones listed above). After a few minutes, the members of the volunteer group can share their

observations as well. Be mindful that most of the class will only have Reflected/Observed, not had a Concrete Experience.

- ✓ Abstract Conceptualization. Give your students a context for understanding abstract concepts before explaining new ideas and theories. We love our disciplines and want our students to, so give them an experiential context for new material first, then ask them to grapple with the more abstract concepts.

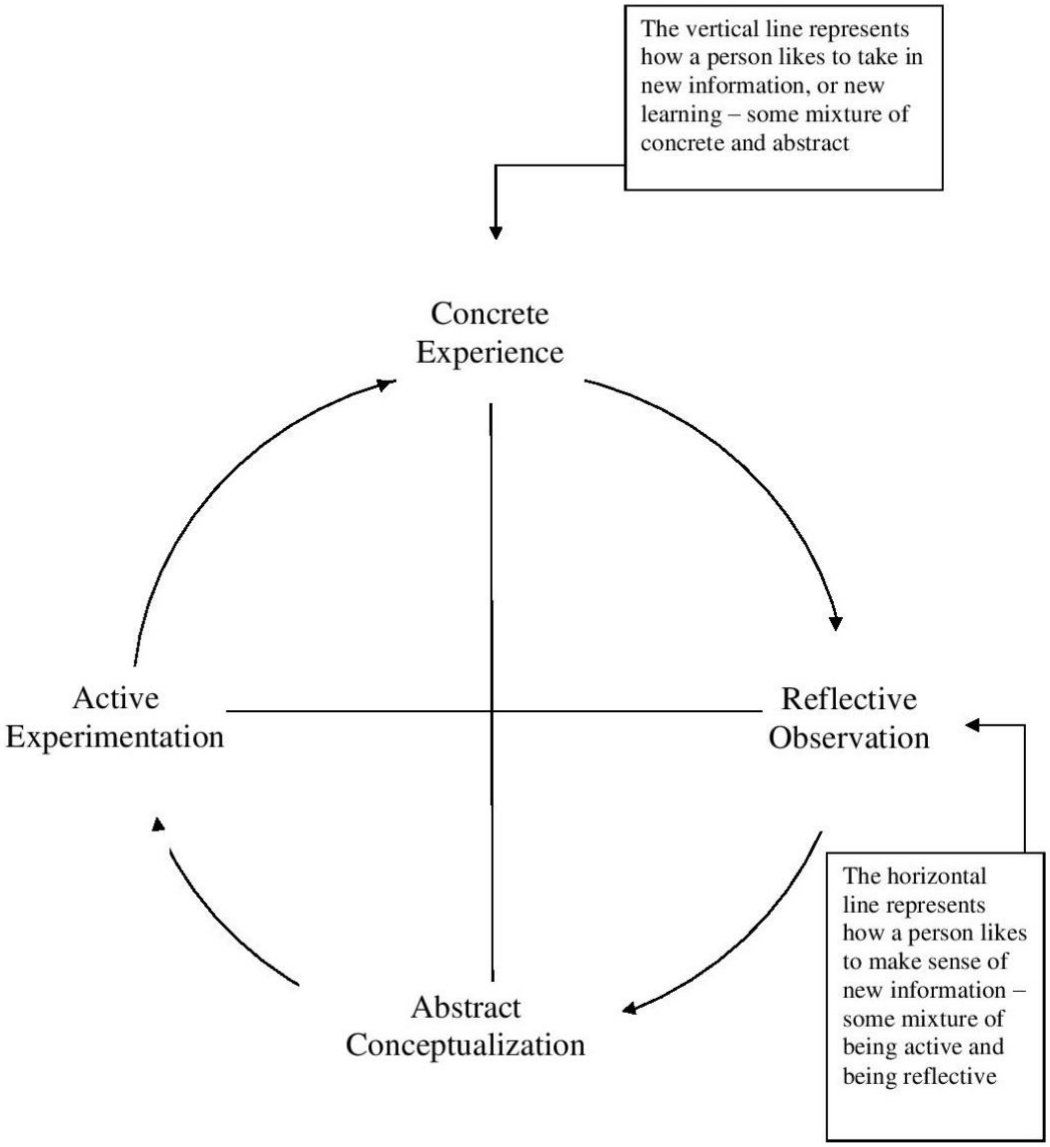
  Many college faculty mistakenly think that students have a context with which to understand abstract concepts, ideas, and theories. Unless clearly defined as specific thinking tasks, "analysis" itself is an abstract concept for most students. Think of it this way: most college faculty want to see the world using ideas; most college students want to see ideas using the world.

- ✓ Active Experimentation. Active experimentation is the trying out stage of the learning cycle. What can/should students do with what they've learned in order to deepen their understanding? Don't deny your students the chance to actively experiment; it's a cornerstone of *active* learning! This should be the fun part of learning. Ask students to apply what they've learned to their intended careers, personal life, a case study, a reading, other course material, or a new Concrete Experience!

Though the Learning Cycle has four "stages" (Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation), there is no "right order" for a learning experience. Try starting with an experience and at other times with an explanation of a theory. Move from either of these to giving students reflective exercises and other times asking them to apply or experiment with the material.

This introduction to the Learning Cycle is based on the work of David Kolb, who developed theories focusing both on learning styles and a learning cycle that moves students through various stages of thinking, feeling, doing, and watching. For more information, visit *http://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html*

Learning Cycle



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Section Debrief: *Intentional Lesson Development*

- Components of a Well-Planned Class
- Laddering Thinking Tasks
- Components of a Complete Learning Experience

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

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Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

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What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

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Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

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Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Give yourself a standing ovation

No, really. We mean it. Stand up and cheer for yourself. You have just done a LOT of work! Congratulations!

Now, two important things to do. Remember, rewards are important!

*One action you will take to **recognize yourself** for what you have done.*

*One action you will take to **reward yourself** for what you have done.*

Section: *Connecting and Adjusting*

- **Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students**
- **Engaging Different Input Preferences**
- **Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching**

"When you know who you are; when your mission is clear and you burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will; no cold can touch your heart; no deluge can dampen your purpose."

Chief Seattle

Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students

We know what we are doing when we teach, but how are students experiencing it? Does how we teach actually help students in a particular course learn? Stop guessing and start getting information from the experts: your students.

- ✓ Keep it simple. Ask students no more than three questions that focus directly on how they experience your teaching. If you want feedback on your teaching in general, for example try these "One big thing that you do that really helps me learn is…" "One little thing that you do that really helps me learn is …" and "One thing that you do that gets in the way of my learning is …"

- ✓ Tell students that you are using their feedback to better target your teaching to their particular needs. Targeting instruction is the mark of an excellent teacher! This also gives them a reason to give you honest feedback. For example, perhaps you need feedback on how you provide feedback on their papers, or quizzes, or team assignments. Keep the questions open-ended, such as "Your feedback on my papers is …" and "One thing that you could do when providing feedback to me on my papers is …"

- ✓ Compile responses quickly, review with the class, and tell them how it will affect your instruction. Within a week compile the results and share them with the class. This demonstrates your commitment to using their information. Sharing how you are modifying your instruction based upon their feedback motivates them to provide future constructive feedback.

- ✓ Keep questions open-ended unless you *really need* targeted feedback. Asking students "The best thing about the course site on Blackboard is …" "One thing that would make the course site on Blackboard more effective for me is …" gives you the broadest information. Follow up with specific questions later.

- ✓ Stick to one subject. Mixing subjects, for example asking questions about the online discussion segment of your course along with how you assign small group projects will produce confusion and less significant input on both. Select the area of instruction that will have the most impact. Remember, quick and simple!

- ✓ Ask for specific information about how they personally experience your instruction. Teach them what "specific" means. For example if you are asking about how you end a lesson, the response "I like the way you end class" is not as helpful as "having us summarize the 3 key parts of the lesson with a partner helps me focus and gives me another perspective."

- ✓ Ask *at least* twice during the course. You get feedback, mention how it will affect your teaching, make the changes (or at least think you do), and now you need feedback to see if your changes work! Doing this during the semester allows you to make adjustments for the students who are providing the feedback.

- ✓ Consider dual purpose feedback. This feedback provides you with information *and* helps students think about some aspect of the course. For example, after a test ask "My biggest surprise on the test was …" "One thing that I plan to differently to prepare for the next test is …" and "The best thing about the test was …" You can ask exactly the same type of question about papers, or significant team assignments. In their responses, you are looking for patterns that indicate areas where you can help them as a group. For this type of feedback only, having them include their names is important because you can return their answers to use for personal improvement.

- ✓ Consider asking about "best practices" from other instructors. Students take courses from others, and you can benefit from this. Ask, for example, "One big thing that another teacher does that really helps me learn is …" and "One little thing that another teacher does that really helps me learn is …" It is probably best not to ask for instructor names.

- ✓ Improving feedback to you. Providing students with everyone's feedback and then having small groups rank the top five comments under each question may provide surprising results. Sometimes only one student mentions something, but when all see and discuss it, many agree.

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Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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Engaging Different Input Preferences

Our first instinct is usually to teach something in way that makes sense to us. However, each of us has natural preferences for how we take in information, and many of our students' preferences are different from our own. One way to conceptualize input preferences is to consider visual, aural, read/write, and kinesthetic learning. Here are some tips for engaging these input preferences.

- ✓ Visual – Learners who prefer to take in information that is presented visually. PowerPoint presentations do not engage visual learners if slides are mostly text. Just how "visual" are your presentation slides? Try incorporating images, graphs, charts, diagrams, cartoons, and video clips into your presentations.

  Incorporate short videos into your classes. Smart classroom technology combined with YouTube and libraries' video databases give you instant, free access to an enormous selection of short videos related to your course material. These engage students who prefer to take in information visually, and they are also fun, as learning should be.

  Put students in groups and task them with presenting a certain concept from your course to the rest of the class, except that they must communicate the concept entirely visually. Large sticky pads and markers help.

- ✓ Aural – Learners who prefer to take in and make sense of information through listening and speaking.

  The more you can build conversation, not just full-group discussion, into your class, the more you will engage students with auditory learning input preferences. If you talk for more than 10-12 minutes straight, you will likely lose the attention of even your auditory learners (others may have stopped listening after just a few minutes of sustained talking).

  Have students interview each other about course content or "quiz" each other. Better yet, have students develop a technique for quizzing each other in pairs as a way of studying for an exam and have them practice and refine their techniques in class. Pairs then present to the entire class either what they've learned or the techniques that they've come up with for effective studying.

Stage a mock trial class in which a group of students ("the jury") listen to other students who try to convince them of something about the course material. Students can explain, argue, or debate different sides of a topic, concept, or argument. Do this activity a few times on different days and vary student roles so that everyone gets to both speak and listen.

- ✓ Read/write: Learners who prefer text as the medium for taking in information.

  Even though most college faculty are fairly strong at taking in information through reading, comparatively few of our students prefer to take in information by reading text. Since so much college coursework integrates reading and writing and since we've already dedicated another Top 10 list to brief writing activities, we're not counting this one as a tip!

- ✓ Kinesthetic – Learners who prefer to take in information by physically doing and experimenting.

  For controversial issues, have students literally "take sides" (as in change their place in the room) or assign them physically to "sides" for debate. For key topics, ask students to pick the one they are most interested in, and then separate the class physically to discuss/debate/question.

  Ask your students to come up with 3 – 4 applications of a key concept and write briefly about it, or have them determine specific applications in their own life. The more kinesthetic learners consider practical applications and things they can *do* with concepts, the more engaged they will be.

  Many people mistakenly assume that kinesthetic learners must not have strengths in reading and writing. This is not true. Ask your kinesthetic learners to write about an experience *doing* something (especially a physical activity), and they will very likely surprise you.

If you liked these ideas (and in case you don't know already), these tips capture the essence of the VARK model of input preferences. More information and the free VARK questionnaire can be found here:
http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp

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Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching

We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to know our discipline, be prepared for questions, and both establish and maintain authority and control of our lessons. We want to be right, and we want students to respect us. However, we can also be deliberately vulnerable in ways that demonstrate that we make mistakes, try new things, and admit what we do not know. By doing this, we can appear confident while modeling the very learning behaviors we want our students to adopt. Here are some ways to be intentionally vulnerable.

- ✓ Admit when you do not know something. Embracing the moment when a student asks a question to which you do not know the answer, admitting it, and asking the class for help demonstrates your self-assurance and that you value students' prior knowledge. It also demonstrates your openness to learning and that self-efficacy (*Top 10* #18) does not rely upon knowing everything.

- ✓ Laugh at yourself. Part of the reason why we try so hard to protect ourselves when we teach is because it's tough to stand before a class and never embarrass yourself. When you say something funny, pronounce something wrong, spit, sweat, drop something, or write the wrong thing on the board, laugh at yourself and invite students to join you. Laughing at yourself demonstrates security. No one is perfect, and your students already know this.

- ✓ Teach something in a way you've never taught it before. If you've ever found yourself thinking something along the lines of "it would be really interesting or fun to try X when teaching Y, but I'd never try it with an actual class," *do it. Try teaching it that way.* Tell students what you've done afterward, and ask for their feedback on whether it helped them learn or not.

- ✓ Share something you struggled with when you learned what they are learning. A brief, vivid personal story is a very effective Bridge-In (*Top 10* # 6) for new material. You will be amazed by how long your students remember it and how much confidence it gives them.

- ✓ Share with students which parts of your course are challenging for you to teach. Invite them to partner with you to help you learn how to teach it better and better every time.

- ✓ If you thrive on planning and order, try throwing out the plan for once. Ten minutes before class begins, throw out your usual lesson plan (yes, this will be difficult). Begin class by writing the focus of the lesson on the board and telling the class that you need their help to figure out the best way to teach the lesson.

- ✓ Mix it up. Tell students that they will be responsible for deciding the structure of the next class by suggesting in-class activities to help them learn the content. Emphasize the importance of flexibility when learning and modeling that flexibility by giving them a role in designing their own learning. Tie this back to self-efficacy (*Top 10* #18) and show them how when they struggle with something new and ultimately do it, it builds their ability to handle new challenges.

- ✓ Don't be afraid to try talking like a younger generation. Teachers can score major points (and student engagement) by trying or even *asking* about the latest slang, especially if it's clear that youth culture's phraseology doesn't exactly roll off your tongue. Leaving your comfort zone and entering theirs earns their respect and attention. Begin a sentence with "yo" and you will have every student's attention.

- ✓ Make classes own silence. We naturally feel vulnerable during silence because we are the chief talkers in our classes, but silence can be a great teaching tool. Allow classes to sit with silence after you've asked a question. Don't fill the silence. Many students need time (10-15 seconds) to process the question. Train classes that the burden of silence rests on them, not you.

- ✓ Ask students for anonymous written feedback. Use a Classroom Assessment Technique to get feedback on your teaching and what you are doing that helps students learn. Share results with the class and explain how you are changing as a result of their feedback. This models an openness to lifelong learning like nothing else.

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Section Debrief: *Connecting and Adjusting*

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- Engaging Different Input Preferences
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Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: *Keeping Students Engaged*

- **Ways to Keep Your Students Learning**
- **Mixing Things Up in Mid-Semester**
- **Learning-Based Ways to End Lessons**

"I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance
Never settle for the path of least resistance
Livin' might mean takin' chances, but they're worth takin'
…
And when you get a chance to sit it out or dance,
I hope you dance"

Song popularized by Lee Ann Womack
Written by Tia Sillers and Mark Sanders.

Ways to Keep Your Students Learning

Sometimes we get on a roll and our excitement about our subject gets us talking, giving examples, explaining intricate points and making wonderful connections between different concepts. But are students learning? We are talking, but what are they doing? Try some of these ideas to help ensure that students are learning, not merely listening.

- ✓ Who cares? Ask students at the beginning of a lesson or module why they care about learning this? Be prepared to help them be clear and honest, but don't offer quickly – make them think. The more they think about what is in it for them, the more they are engaging in deeper thinking that increases the likelihood of their learning!

- ✓ Quiet yourself! Do not talk more than 12 minutes straight (10 is better). There is good research that the average person's attention waivers after 10 – 12 minutes, no matter how interesting the subject or speaker.

- ✓ 3 Questions! Give students three questions related to the lesson that you plan to help them answer by lesson's end. Refer to the questions as you progress through the lesson. This can be a way of presenting "learning outcomes" for a lesson, without calling it "outcomes" (remember the BOPPPS lesson planning format?).

- ✓ Stop and Don't Pop! When you ask a question, give everyone time to think for a minute or two. This will seem like a long time, but you want to accomplish two things. First, some people do not think quickly, and this gives them time to come up with a question. Second, students drop into old habits. If they usually do not answer instructor questions, they simply wait for someone else to! Disengaged. Ask everyone – emphasize everyone – who has an answer to raise their hand, so you can change who gives the first answers.

- ✓ 2 Questions! After students have studied something and before you have gone over it in class, ask them to work with 2-3 other students to identify 2 questions they have and hand them in to you. Putting them on separate index cards allows you to sort them in order.

- ✓ Answer This! As a variation on the one above, after teams develop their questions have them trade and answer each other's questions. Have teams report out – briefly – explaining the question and their answer.

- ✓ Teach this! Assign "buddy projects" – consider something like "a friend misses this lesson and asks you to explain , write down what you will tell him/her." Have some groups of 2 share with the class as you gently critique. The more you do this, the better students will be at assessing how much they *really know* about new material (an important thinking skill).

- ✓ What do you know? Before automatically giving that PowerPoint or story to illustrate a concept, ask students to rate on a scale from 1 – 5 whether they think they understand (and hold up their hand as you call out numbers). If students think they understand, but you aren't so sure, give them a "buddy project" (as above, for example).

- ✓ A picture is worth 1000 words! Form student teams and have them create diagrams related to the lesson. Perhaps they can diagram key parts of a chapter, or how key concepts connect with each other, or simply diagram the components of a concept. The key is to make it visual!

- ✓ Applications, applications! Ask students to identify 3 ways they can *use* what is being covered in the lesson. Demonstrate how to do this and have them write applications multiple times as this is a difficult thinking skill.

BONUS!

- ✓ What's important? After they have read new material and before you have identified what you believe the most important points are, ask students to determine the 3 or 5 most important points in the lesson. You will have to do this regularly to help them practice. Perhaps add in a group activity where they share key points and their reasoning why something is important.

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Mixing Things Up in Mid-Semester

Mid-semester. Students cannot quite see themselves making it to the end of the course. This is one of the "red zones" where we can lose students. Breaking the routine of even the most student-centered course freshens the course and can reinvigorate students to make that final, crucial push.

- ✓ "Flip the classroom" by having students outline how they would teach key points to someone who knew nothing about the subject.

- ✓ Start the lesson by having students interview each other. Depending upon the topic, questions can be about their personal experience with some key points, or their reaction to key points. Have everyone share one significant thing their interviewee mentioned so you can weave their backgrounds and understanding into the lesson.

- ✓ Ask students for their ideas. Tell them that you are looking for input about different things to do to mix up the lessons. Ask them what particularly engaged them that another instructor did.

- ✓ Start a lesson by asking students to work together in groups where at least one student has a smartphone. The task is to generate ideas about using the phone to learn more about what they are studying, such as creating an online scavenger hunt with course topics. After groups share their ideas have the class vote on which one to actually do in class.

- ✓ Creating a script for a scene in a pretend movie which explains key concepts in the lesson engages students on many levels. Assign small groups to create a scene for a horror movie, action-thriller, comedy, musical, or perhaps using a Disney family theme.

- ✓ Working in small groups, have students create a set of visuals that teach key parts of the lesson. If you have access to computers, they can use PowerPoint, but remind them to be almost entirely visual.

- ✓ Ask small groups to create a superhero representing the lesson. What powers does the hero have, what weaknesses? What does the superhero fight against?

- ✓ Music engages many senses. Appeal to the inner songwriter/musician in students by assigning small groups to each compose a song that explains or applies some key concept(s) in the lesson.

- ✓ Ask students for feedback on your teaching by creating something that illustrates when they think you are at your teaching best. A song? A diagram? A picture? A short script? Not an essay! (And, pay attention to what they do NOT feature.)

- ✓ Change the physical venue. Go outside. Switch classrooms with someone who uses a classroom set up very differently from you.

Bonus!

- ✓ Have music playing when students arrive that features something covered in the lesson. The first person to correctly name the song and artist gets to privately request the song for the next class.

- ✓ Give extra credit for being in class for the full period for all sessions from now until the end of the course.

- ✓ Bring in an outside speaker. As an alternative, use Skype or a similar service to bring an outside expert to the class. Perhaps students can find someone to "bring" to the class via Skype?

- ✓ Have students diagram key concepts in the lesson and how they link with each other. Doing this alone first, and then improving upon individual diagrams by you doing one during the lesson enables students to strengthen this important thinking skill.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

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Learning-Based Ways to End Lessons

Endings are as important as beginnings. After all, this is what students will most remember until the next lesson. Perhaps you recall that we suggest planning lessons using the *BOPPPS* format (*see the earlier listing*), where the "S" means "summarize." Well, there are a variety of ways to "Summarize" - close a lesson!

- Use the final *10 minutes* of class in a way that helps build student self-efficacy and brings the lesson to a deliberate, planned close.

- Do the unexpected. Ask teams to list songs that relate to the material being studied, or even to make up a little song about the lesson. Or, ask teams to draw pictures illustrating key points. Boring is as boring does!

- Get feedback about how well you identified the key points in a lesson by asking your students to write briefly on "the 3 most important points I've studied this week are …" Compare this to what *you hope they will list based upon your lesson plan* to see if you need to make adjustments (and to get insight into each student's level of engagement and thinking).

- When you suspect/know that the lesson covers confusing material, ask students to list the most confusing point(s). Compile the results, using those points that many students mentioned to provide a *B*ridge (BOPPPS again!) into the next lesson (tell them how their input influenced you).

- Diagrams help many students. After showing them how to connect concepts that they are studying several times, *have **them** draw diagrams* that capture their sense of the connection between the 3 – 5 key ideas covered in a lesson. Discussing this in class allows you to make additional comments about how key concepts link together.

- Give students a question to answer on the material they will study next that connects it with what they have just studied. This both helps you think like your students as you consider the next lesson and gives you something to focus the next lesson around. To promote more collaborative learning, have students prepare their answer in teams of 2 – 3.

- Develop reflective learning skills by giving your students a question to reflect upon based upon the lesson. For example, if the lesson is on diversity, a reflective question might be "how are you different from other

people in this class"? An advantage of a reflective question is that you can then link the next lesson back to their answers.

- Instead of you developing the reflective question as above, have your students create a reflective question on the lesson. This is difficult so start by having students pair up to develop a question.

- After showing students how to summarize, have them summarize what they consider to be a key point of the lesson for a student who could not attend. Thinking how to summarize *for someone else* requires much more complete summarization. Or, working in groups, have them outline how they would teach the material to someone not in class (which also gives you insight into how they like to learn).

- Working in teams, have students pretend there is a test coming up, and create a "cheat sheet" on the material studied. This enables them to compare ideas by discussing what they are studying (always good!) and learning from each other.

- Applying learning is a high level thinking skill. Have students write about "3 ways I can apply what I have learned this week to my life. " You will need to help them with applications the first couple of times. Asking students to share ideas gives others an even larger range of models.

The more we help students solidify their learning, the better most will feel about their ability to learn – increasing their self-efficacy as students (and the more they will REMEMBER). Demonstrate that these kinds of activities are important by randomly having some responses handed in for extra credit. This provides incentive for students to put significant effort at the end of class when their energy and engagement risks being lowest.

BONUS!

A handout combining several ideas for "fixing" learning is attached. Modify it to fit your specific needs.

Class Analysis

It is often useful to do a bit of summary thinking when we finish something like a class. Please be as complete as you can be, while also being brief. The key is to grab a few key points while we still remember them!

What do you consider to be the main topic we discussed in class today? Please explain it as well as you can.

What are the two most important things you learned in class today? Write a sentence each please.

Do you have any questions about anything we covered today?

What did you do to help other students learn and/or participate today?

Name:

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Section Debrief: *Keeping Students Engaged*

- Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
- Mixing Things Up in Mid-Semester
- Learning-Based Ways to End Lessons

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #3 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

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Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: Engage, Engage, Engage

- **Getting More (and Better) Student Questions**
- **Using Student Groups to Promote Learning**
- **Ways to Use Visuals for Learning**

"The problem is not to get students to ask us what they don't know; the problem is to make them aware of the difference between what they know and what they don't know."

John Holt

Getting More (and Better) Student Questions

We want students to ask questions, but does our teaching behavior send a different message? Being intentional about getting good questions pays big dividends – you can do things to significantly improve both the quantity and quality of student questions.

- ✓ Remember, if you talk they cannot ask questions. If you want questions you must tell students that, often. You must also act as if you expect questions. How? Ask, and then wait. Use open hand gestures, give students time to think. Ask them to come to class with at least two questions.

- ✓ If you find you are not getting questions from many students, try Question Roulette. Everyone writes down a question. Upon your signal they all pass their questions to another student, continuing to do so until you say "STOP." Randomly ask students to ask the question in their hand. This assists students who are reluctant to speak to a full class. An added benefit is that you can provide constructive criticism about how to improve a question because no one knows who asked it.

- ✓ Teach students how to ask good questions. It is not true that "there are no bad questions" and students know this. Especially in lower level courses, provide model "knowledge" questions, such as "what did Lincoln say about freeing the slaves before the Civil War?" Also model "understanding" questions, such as "how does the economy impact an organization's specific environment?"

- ✓ At the end of a lesson, have students identify one question that they have on the material they studied, and tell them that you will answer at least five.

- ✓ Encourage "applications" questions by modeling them. From "identify *3* ways that learning Spanish can help you in your career" to "identify exactly how knowledge of attribution theory can help you when talking with your friends," get students thinking and understanding that what they study directly impacts their lives – if they let it!

- ✓ Give constructive criticism when students ask questions, to help them strengthen their questions. This is tricky because some students will be intimidated by even the most positive critique. Counter that intimidation

by having students work with 2 or 3 others to develop questions and say up front that you will be helping them improve these questions.

- ✓ Encourage students to send you questions via email, or use Blackboard's discussion application, and answer them. Some students do better with electronic communication because they are less intimidated.

- ✓ Model questioning. Before introducing major topics, identify the question(s) the lesson will explore and seek to answer. This gives you another chance to clarify what a "knowledge question" is, or an "application question" for example.

- ✓ Make certain students know that asking questions *will not prolong* class time. In fact, consider rewarding students taking an on-ground class when many good questions are asked *by letting them out 5 minutes early*. For an online class, consider dropping some activity if there are many "good questions" on a lesson.

- ✓ Reward excellent questions. Make the reward fit your personality and their interests. Perhaps for each "really good" question, a student gets a boost in class participation grade, or candy, or locally grown apples in the fall. Use your imagination.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

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Using Student Groups to Promote Learning

Properly used, assigning learning tasks to groups promotes student engagement and learning. Group tasks give students a far less threatening situation in which to share ideas, disagree with each other, and push each other to understand more deeply. They also promote appreciation for the way others think. For shy students, they provide an opportunity to raise questions, or even to speak up in class as a spokesperson. How can we help students work effectively in groups?

- ✓ Give groups important work to do. Students quickly learn when instructors mainly give students busy work, or throw something to groups at the end of class. Groups can help identify key questions students have on the lesson, develop charts of key points, make connections between ideas, and be integral to the learning experience.

- ✓ Group size. 3 to 5 members works best, but 5 might intimidate shy students, can lead to side conversations and some students slacking off as others do all the work.

- ✓ Expect *some* socializing. When groups are first formed, people have to get to know each other. Factor that time into your tasks

- ✓ Composition. We are social creatures, and it does help students when they connect with others in class, but too much socializing and not much gets done on the task. Particularly with younger students, mix and match people yourself. Watch and listen to early interactions to see if there is a decent mix of socializing and task orientation.

- ✓ Help students work well in groups. Make suggestions for how to make their group work effective. Even better, ask the class to build a list of ideas with you. See if they come up with a timekeeper, someone to take notes, some way to stay on track, and sharing emails. Suggest they have a rule about hearing everyone out, and sharing speaking time. Make sure to get the list printed up, and consider giving an assignment where you only email clues to one person in each group, whose responsibility it is to contact the others (nice incentive to share emails!).

- ✓ Use groups often. The more different times you assign tasks to groups, the more students will learn how to work well in groups. Start with shorter tasks of 3 to 8 minutes. Remind them to have a timekeeper, and give them notice when they have only a minute left.

- ✓ Use groups throughout class. Spreading group work throughout class sends a message that this is serious, that you expect groups to help with learning tasks. In fact, *start* some classes with group work.

- ✓ Don't help all the time. Resist the temptation to help groups, or to give your opinion in disputes. On the other hand, do not distance yourself. Consider helping a bit, but then creating a norm where if a group wants your help or input, someone raises their hand and asks you to come by as their "consultant." Remind them you are not a referee!

- ✓ Have group projects handed in periodically. There is no need to have everything handed in, but collecting group reports regularly sends the message that these are important. Make comments to the group on their work. Suggest ways to improve.

- ✓ Regularly grade group work. Students know that what really counts in class are things that are graded, so collect and grade group work regularly. Be clear how group work contributes to their overall grade.

Bonus!

- ✓ Ask regularly for your students' help by requesting input into how you give directions and use groups in class. Make it clear that you want to help their groups succeed.

- ✓ Expect some problems and have relief valves. One relief valve is to schedule group evaluations where members can speak with each other about their participation. Another relief valve is to say that after XX weeks, you will move people to new groups. Another is to say that groups that are struggling should get in touch with you to discuss the problem. Involve students by having them help you create a group experience review form for the class.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

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Ways to Use Visuals for Learning

Most college faculty members are read-write oriented. We had to be, to get through graduate school. But, is the world so read-write oriented? Are our students? Not so much. Yet how much of our teaching, class exercises, or tests and evaluations are read-write oriented? Adding visual projects to your class and assignments assists students who are visually oriented and improves everyone's visual learning skills.

- ✓ Visualizing success. Top athletes know that visualizing themselves succeeding helps actual performance. It works. Ask your students to visualize themselves doing *extremely well* on their course paper or the next test. Prompts might include "what are you doing," "how do you feel," "where are you" – urge them to be very specific and detailed. Then, have students sketch what they see in their minds. Try doing this several times and urge them to continue to do it.

- ✓ Pictures of concepts. Start by finding some images that illustrate concepts in a lesson. Show students how images can trigger memories and how our brains use images to link ideas. Move to having students find images that illustrate course concepts or content. Give extra credit for especially good ones.

- ✓ "Remembering" Charts. Charts can be wonderful short-hand tools to help students remember new material. Show students how to create "remembering charts" on their own. After showing them, have students create their own "remembering charts." (See *the Top Ten on Thinking Skills for* "remembering" thinking skills).

- ✓ "Understanding" charts. Moving students up from "remembering", have students work in small groups to create "understanding" charts – charts that assist a person new to the material in understanding it. Perhaps ask students to analyze images as if they were text. (See *Top 10 on Thinking Skills* for information on "understanding" thinking skills).

- ✓ Analytic diagrams. Improve student analytic skills by having them identify how key concepts are linked together. After demonstrating how to do this several times on the board or large paper, have students create their own diagram that shows how they think key concepts link together. Consider having students then discuss their diagram with 2 – 3 others, to get different approaches.

- ✓ Diagram quizzes. Instead of read-write quizzes, assign students to create diagrams or charts to illustrate key concepts in the readings or class discussions as a quiz.

- ✓ Cartoons for feedback. Ask student groups to create a cartoon strip that illustrates best how you teach. Tell them to be honest. An option is to have them create a strip showing them studying.

- ✓ Evaluating diagrams or charts. Find diagrams or charts in the reading and show students how you would improve the diagram or chart *for students like them.* Do this several times, taking them through this significant thinking skill, then have them do it. Choose a particularly obtuse chart or diagram and assign students the task of making a new one that makes more sense *to them.*

- ✓ Applications visuals. Another complex thinking skill is applying new learning to one's life. Do a visual of how some concept in the lesson has affected your life, talk them through the process, then have students create their own on a concept studied previously in class. This will take time and practice, so do this several times!

- ✓ Summary-response diagram. Put a key concept in the center of large pieces of paper. Hand separate sheets to different students and have them summarize what they think the concept means. They then hand the sheet to another student who comments upon their statement, perhaps clarifying something. Continue until 4 student's comments are on the paper, and then review as a team.

Note: Most of these student activities work equally well when assigned as homework, as an online assignment, or when done in a physical class.

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Section Debrief: Engage, Engage, Engage

- Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
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Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

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Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Give yourself a standing ovation

No, really. We mean it. Stand up and cheer for yourself. You have just done a LOT of work! Congratulations!

Now, two important things to do. Remember, rewards are important!

*One action you will take to **recognize yourself** for what you have done.*

*One action you will take to **reward yourself** for what you have done.*

Section: *Moving Learning Up A Level*

- **Using Short Writing to Assess Learning**
- **Things to Know About *Students'* Locus of Control**
- **Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments**

"Acquire new knowledge while thinking over the old, and you may become a teacher of others."

Confucius

Using Short Writing to Assess Learning

Everyone agrees that college students must write better. We also know that practice makes perfect. This means all of us must include more writing in our courses because writing is a way of getting students to think *through* the course content. Many faculty hesitate to use writing as a learning assessment because they fear it will be burdensome or frustrating to grade. Here are suggestions for how to use short, easy-to-evaluate writing to assess learning and thinking.

- ✓ Ask students to consider a career they may pursue and write about the writing that people in that career must do, and why. If your course is career-focused, ask them to write about why writing might be important for human service workers, educators, nurses, police, etc. This invests them in the importance of things like clarity and grammar in terms of career concerns and real-world implications.

- ✓ Use practical examples to emphasize why good, clear, organized writing matters in real life. A nurse's notes need to be clear. A police officer's report influences a conviction. Many, many jobs require people to use e-mail at work. In terms of academics, choose accessible writing samples from your discipline as models for how you'd like your students to write for your class. What are biologists currently writing about? Economists? Social workers?

- ✓ Consider using short, informal writing assignments half a page long or less. For directions, use a single, clear sentence that asks students to briefly explain, describe, compare, etc. The simpler your prompt sentence and the clearer its verb, the easier the writing is to assess.

- ✓ Swap out multiple-choice questions for short answer or short essay questions on every test you give. Again, use a single, clear sentence for directions that asks students to briefly explain, describe, compare, etc. Short answers don't require elaborate organization, but they allow you to assess whether your students can think about and clearly articulate course content.

- ✓ Have a plan for how grammar issues will impact your assessment of the writing, and communicate that plan clearly to students and then hold them accountable to your standards. This doesn't mean that you have to teach writing if you aren't an English teacher, but it does mean that students will see that writing standards matter for more than just English teachers.

- ✓ Get students to both write questions and answer them. Try this: break your class into groups that each write one question about the course content that another group will have to answer. Then randomly assign each question to a different group that must now answer the question in a clearly written paragraph. Every group member must contribute. If possible, project the final products so the class can discuss which answer is the best and why. This is learning *through* writing.

- ✓ Before studying a key concept, have students write about what they believe they already know about the subject. This activates prior learning and allows you to skim their responses to inform your teaching and discover any assumptions or misconceptions you need to address.

- ✓ Require students to e-mail or message you informal writing assignments about course content or any questions they might have. For example, extra credit for students who analyze one strength and one weakness about the way they prepared for the test and what they will do differently next time. 2 -3 paragraphs max. sent directly to you. When students think and write about their own learning, they build self-efficacy and self-regulation skills.

- ✓ Many community college students are kinesthetic leaners or learners activated by concrete experiences and active experimentation, but that doesn't mean that they are hardwired against writing. Asking students to write about the real-world implications of course content gives them an entry point they can relate to more and reinforces for the entire class that your course relates to their world!

- ✓ Have students search the Internet (tell them nothing from the first three pages that come up in Google so they learn that there is more than that first page or two of results!) for information relevant to your subject, then summarize what they learned. Summarize, not plagiarize. It's a basic skill.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

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What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

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Things to Know About ***Students'*** Locus of Control

Getting students to take responsibility for their own work is a major component of building responsible learners. A psychological concept called "Locus of Control" helps explain why some students resist taking responsibility for their work and grades. "Locus of Control" relates to whether a person takes personal responsibility for what happens to her/him or attributes responsibility to forces outside his or her control. Theorists postulate that individuals basically fall into one of three categories: *Internal* or *External-Other* or *External-Chance.*

- ✓ Individuals who believe that they control most of what happens to them have an *Internal* Locus of Control. Successes are because of what they do and failures are because they missed something. "I got a C- because I did not study enough," is a typical comment. Encourage an *Internal Locus* by asking them to analyze what they did right and what they missed after giving back a test, paper, or team assignment. Reinforce that they are in charge of effort.

- ✓ Individuals who believe that what happens to them is because of what others do have an *External-Other* Locus of Control. Their successes or failures are not based upon what they do. "Prof Hard gives brutal tests so I did poorly." Counter this by having students at the end of a course write advice to future students about how to do well (give extra credit and they will gladly do this and remember no names on the pages you will provide future students).

- ✓ Individuals who believe that what happens to them is because of chance have an *External-Chance* Locus of Control. Their success or failure has little to do with what they do. "I lucked out this semester because my classes are all easy." If you grade on a curve you contribute to this because the particular students in a class are random. Counter with grading that is based upon rubrics that you share. If everyone does well, everyone does well.

- ✓ Fortunately, there is evidence that circumstances can affect a person's Locus of Control. We can move students toward an *Internal* focus by continually showing them how to read assignments, think about them and come up with questions they have that will help them understand – and use those questions in class.

- ✓ Review everything you do from the lens of how it affects students with high *External-Other* or *External-Chance* orientations. Words count. Tell students they earn the grades they get – you don't give grades, you only record them, good or bad. Remind them of the direct connection between solid study habits and grades. Check out the relevant "Top 10"s" for ideas about for study tips.

- ✓ Reinforce that they are in charge of how they spend their time. Give course assignments well in advance. Tell them to look ahead, plan their time, look at major assignments in all their classes and plan accordingly. Remind them that they are in charge of the results.

- ✓ Reinforce good study habits with class activities that give them control. "Pop" quizzes, or "pop" writing assignments actually reinforce an *External-Other* or *External-Chance* orientation. Reward studying. Make the connection direct by doing predictable (not "easy") activities that reward studying such as a regular 2 paragraph writing on "the 5 key points in the reading" or doing an exercise where they design a chart based upon part of the homework using only notes.

- ✓ Teach students how to prepare for your tests. Reinforce that they are in charge with specific study tips, talk about the amount of time to study, share past tests and good test answers. Show students how they can improve their grade by doing what you state.

- ✓ Assume students want to learn from their successes and mistakes. Give them a set of questions to answer to analyze why they got the grade they did on a test or major project/paper. Review it with them. This reinforces that THEY are responsible for their grade and that you believe they can increase their grade.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments

Many faculty who assign writing face this dilemma: we want our writing assignments to be rigorous, but we know that most students will struggle with them. Students must be able to write clearly *and* demonstrate learning and critical thinking, and we want to help them without lowering our standards. Here are some strategies for doing just that.

- ✓ Clarify your grading criteria for writing assignments with explicit outcomes and/or rubrics. Give students your grading criteria/rubric *before* they begin work on the assignment. Students must know exactly what an assignment asks them to *do* as well as how your grading will reflect how well they *did* it. Many faculty think in terms of *ideas* or concepts; most students tend to think in terms of the *tasks* they're asked to *do*. If "outcomes" and "rubrics" sound too confining for your discipline or teaching style, search the internet for approaches to writing and assessing "expressive outcomes."

- ✓ Avoid unstated or assumed grading standards or criteria. If you have high grammar standards, communicate them clearly to students in terms of how grammar will impact their grades. If your assignment includes a critical thinking component, describe the required critical thinking task(s) and your standards for evaluating them. Don't surprise them with standards and expectations *after* they have submitted an assignment.

- ✓ Require students to grade their own assignment or project… *in writing*. Give students your grading rubric in advance. Require them to submit with the assignment a projected grade along with a *written* rationale that uses the rubric to justify the projected grade. Once you grade the assignment, discuss the differences between your assessment and theirs using the rubric. This focuses feedback on areas where students may not perceive their own struggles. Use examples (see tip below) that correlate with the high levels of competency on the rubric as a comparison.

- ✓ Show students examples of good student work on writing assignments. You have a context for evaluating student work. Students do not. Showing them examples of good work on rigorous assignments *and breaking those examples down into their successful components or attributes* shows students what you are expecting.

- ✓ Give second chances on writing assignments. Allowing students to revise and resubmit a writing assignment doesn't mean "going easy" on them; it means giving them additional chances to *learn.* You can also require students to meet with a college tutor or visit an academic skills center before they resubmit an assessment. Students have more incentive to work hard when they know the grade they will earn if they do not improve. Require students who resubmit an assignment to include with it a one page "revision summary" that describes, in detail, the changes they made in this revised version of the assignment.

- ✓ Try doing your own writing assignment. Pay close attention to your exact assignment language and draw only from the material you have covered up to that point in class. When you do this, you put yourself in your students' shoes and discover things you might be taking for granted about your own assignment. You might also discover any presumptions about what your students know or can already do that are implicit in your assignment.

- ✓ Break down or scaffold the higher-order thinking skills of a writing assignment into their component parts or prerequisite tasks. If you are assigning a paper, what are the five big things that students must be able to do as writers (or readers) in order to successfully write the paper? Ask them to do practice or demonstrate each of those things in small assignments that receive your feedback before they write the paper. If you want students to develop an original argument or analyze a problem or case study, what must they be able to do first, second, and third in order to "analyze"?

- ✓ Model your own writing process for students. When you share with students your own strategies for generating and organizing ideas, you are foster their metacognitive skills. When you share the things you struggled with as a student, you acknowledge that learning is difficult and reinforce students' self-efficacy. *Show* them how *you* read, study, and write. (See *Top 10* #18 and #22).

- ✓ Be consistent with your feedback. Aside from not getting graded work back in a timely manner, nothing confuses and frustrates students more than inconsistent, contradictory, or vague feedback. If X means 10 points off, then X means 10 points off. Don't forget praise; everyone needs it.

- ✓ If students regularly struggle with your writing assignments, ask them for help. You can get feedback from your students after they have read

assignment instructions, after they have begun working on the assignment, and/or after they have written it. Use the last five minutes of class to ask students to *write* and anonymously submit to you answers to prompts such as "it helps me the most when you…," and "it helps me least when you…," "the thing about this assignment that most confuses(ed) me is…," or "the part of this writing assignment that I struggle(d) with the most was…" If you discover patterns in where they are struggling, you can develop ways to clarify your assignment language, target your instruction and class activities, and rethink your assumptions.

A special thanks to our colleague Jon Andersen of Quinebaug Valley Community College for inspiring a few of the suggestions above!

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Section Debrief: *Moving Learning Up A Level*

- Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
- Things to Know About *Students'* Locus of Control
- Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #3 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: *Positive Endings*

- **Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching**
- **Helping Students Stay the Journey**
- **Ways to End Your Course**

"You can't be what you can't see."

Marian Wright Edelman

Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching

Whether you have taught the same lesson many times before and are looking to try something new, you have a lesson that never quite works the way you want it to, or you're relatively new to teaching and looking to experiment, taking risks can invigorate your classes. Take risks with your teaching as you plan the next semester. When you take teaching risks, both you *and* your students learn.

- ✓ Sit in the back of the room for an entire class. Ask for volunteer students who will write or draw on the board. The board-writers call on raised hands, but the class must decide on and revise information that gets written on the board. Students work as a class to outline the key ideas or concepts from the reading. The same can be done for drawing and labelling graphs, charts, and diagrams and for solving math problems. If the class accomplishes remembering and understanding through discussion and outlining, refocus them on application and analysis tasks.

- ✓ Teach something in a way you've always thought would be fun or interesting but have never tried. We've heard many teachers say how interesting it would be to try teaching X using Y, or doing C in class in order to show students D, but they've never tried it in an actual class. Unless it's dangerous or obscene, *try it*. If a lesson idea excites you, *try it*, even if you think it's crazy or it might not work. You'll learn something, and we're betting your students will, too.

- ✓ Completely change the configuration of your classroom. If you normally teach students at short tables, rearrange the room into a circle or a U so that all students are facing each other. Or push all tables to the walls and sit in a circle of chairs. Hold class for a day in a room with round tables or in a computer classroom. How is the configuration of the room appropriate *to the content of your course*? Better yet, ask your students.

- ✓ Play games in class. Games work. Get a book of games for teaching or training and try a few in class. Tap the experience of your colleagues by asking around and finding colleagues who use games to teach. Work with them to develop ideas for your class.

- ✓ Visit the classroom of instructors whom you admire. We don't spend anywhere near enough time in other instructors' classrooms. Ask both colleagues who teach in your discipline and those who teach other subjects

if you can visit their classrooms. Good teaching techniques and ideas often translate across the disciplines.

- ✓ Invite colleagues to your classroom and ask them for feedback. Informal, non-evaluative observation from a trusted colleague can give you invaluable feedback from another pair of eyes in the room. A colleague you respect and admire can make you aware of classroom dynamics and teaching behaviors of which you might be completely unaware.

- ✓ Switch classes with a colleague. Teach her class and have her teach yours. Don't give the person your lesson plan, and don't take one of theirs. Use your own approach to the subject. Listen to his students. Get feedback from his students about how they received what you taught.

- ✓ Use music. Arrived 5 minutes early to every class and have music playing as students enter. Smart classroom technology helps. The first student to name the artist gets to e-mail you a song to be played at the start of the next class, and so on. Offer bonus points to any student who finds and e-mails you a link to song whose lyrics connect in some way to the content of your course. Play for the class the songs that earn bonus points.

- ✓ Teach a class without speaking. This requires a little planning, but it forces you to be deliberate in your lesson and activities and to use sounds and physical motions to teach. You will observe much, much more about your class when force yourself not to speak. It also places the burden of participation squarely on your students and forces them to be more active learners through discussion and activity.

- ✓ Go to a teaching workshop or conference. Almost every college offers local teaching workshops or discussion groups each semester, and the statewide Center for Teaching sponsors Pathways Workshops, the Spirit of Teaching, Instructional Skills Workshops (ISWs) and the Barnes Seminar in teaching each year. Also, the New England Faculty Development Consortium (NEFDC) meets each fall in Worcester, MA. Go!

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you need not do anything but answer these questions.

Which three of these will you try out?
1.

When?

2.

When?

3.

When?

Now, which 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you ***least likely*** to do? Note that we are giving you more space for these answers. Wonder why? Think about it.

1.

Why?

2.

Why?

Now, please reconsider. Perhaps you need to move one of the activities that you would never consider doing up to the "will do" list. Usually, we get the most learning out of an activity that is far outside our comfort zone. Is it time for you to stretch your horizons?

Helping Students Stay the Journey

What role does your course play in your students' college careers? It is often dismaying how little students know about their own degree program or where our course fits. This causes hit-or-miss course selection, confusion about course sequencing, taking unnecessary courses – all mistakes that too often result in dropping out. We can change this dynamic by teaching our students how to take an active role in planning and managing their college careers.

- ✓ Ask your students to identify what degree/certificate they are enrolled in. If there are students not formally enrolled in a degree explain why it is important to select one, even if it is a temporary decision – point out that they can always change degrees! (This is important because students in a specific degree are more likely to stay in college).

- ✓ Based upon the information immediately above, bring appropriate degree/certificate requirement sheets to class. Show students what requirement your course fulfills. Next, have them check off other courses they have completed or are enrolled in. This particularly helps students new to higher education understand how degree programs work, and encourages them to be active in academic planning by identifying what else they must complete to get their degree/certificate.

- ✓ Invite a college counselor, a transfer advisor or a program coordinator to visit with your students to discuss degree programs, transfer articulation agreements and the like, either in person or online.

- ✓ Ask students to write down the name of the counselor/faculty advisor they talk with about courses. For all those who do not have a specific name, mention that it is beneficial to work with a consistent person who knows the student and understands her/his strengths and weaknesses.

- ✓ To get students thinking about the future, ask them to identify 20 careers that robots (or other technology-based systems) will possibly wipe out in the next 20 years. Have students brainstorm ideas about how they can stay ahead of developments and the kinds of skills that will be needed to work with future technologies.

- ✓ Talk with your students about course sequences and what course numbers mean. For example, we know that lower100 level courses are introductory, but many students do not. Mentioning that course numbers often relate to

how students should progress through a subject/discipline and that 100-level courses should be taken first helps students avoid jumping into advanced courses without adequate preparation.

- ✓ Especially if you teach a 100-level course, put students in small groups to share how to find course descriptions at the college website (mention how important it is to read course descriptions!), check prerequisites (tell them what a prerequisite is), find next term's classes and times, etc.

- ✓ Show students how to access their personal information, and get an updated unofficial transcript. If the college has a "transfer admissions page" of articulation agreements with other colleges, show them how to access that as well.

- ✓ As a class identify key criteria to use when evaluating transfer institutions and the best people to get information from. Unfortunately, many students base transfer decisions upon information from unreliable sources. Make sure to provide your valuable input!

- ✓ Have students identify transfer institutions that interest them, and give three reasons why they are looking at each institution, along with the degree(s) they are thinking of pursuing. Then, form student groups based upon differences in where they want to transfer to discuss their choices – focusing upon institutional strengths and weaknesses. Ask students to be skeptics, helping their classmates justify their choices. Have students not interested in transferring identify how their potential careers will change over the next 20 years, then compare ideas about how college can help them develop needed new skills.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Ways to End Your Course

How do you end your course? Most of us spend time working out the best ways to start a course because we know first impressions are crucial. Fewer of us remember that last impressions are equally important. Leaving your students with a clear focus on what you consider most important, and providing an emotional ending both leave a lasting impression.

- ✓ What do you want your students to remember most about the course content? Give students 5 minutes to write, anonymously, what they consider to be the 3 – 5 most important concepts. Collect and list so all can see. Lead a short discussion, including sharing what you consider most important (if there is wide disparity, revise your course to better focus next time on what you want students to remember).

- ✓ What do you want your students to remember about themselves? Perhaps you teach a course that includes affective outcomes. List those outcomes and ask students to reflect upon how much they have changed, what hasn't changed, and why. Analyze the "why" comments for hints about how to modify your course for more impact next time.

- ✓ Do you want to inspire your students to continue, do more, work hard, and change their lives for the better? Give each one an inspirational quotation, with a little "thanks for taking the course" or "thanks for contributing to the success of our class" from you.

- ✓ Have students write a "letter to next semester's students" telling them how to get the best possible grade in your course. Promise anonymity by having them hand their letters to a trusted student who merely checks their name off. Make several packets for next semester's students and/or scan them and place them on the course site. Review what students wrote to see if there are any "holes" in your course that you do not intend!

- ✓ Tell students what you have learned during the course. What better insights do you have as a teacher, what have you learned about your subject? At the same time, you might tell your students what teaching them has meant to you.

- ✓ If you use consistent small groups regularly for class projects, have group members write a letter of reference for each other, highlighting what the person sees as the strengths of the other group member. The recipient gets

feedback regarding their strengths as a team member, and the writer engages in critical reflection.

- ✓ Perhaps now is the time to practice the higher order thinking skill of application. Have students identify 3 things they have learned that they are either already applying in their life, or will soon. This is especially important if you are teaching a General Education required course.

- ✓ Have students complete a self-examination of how they performed in class, with no relation to your grading. What did they do well, what did they do poorly? Perhaps your prompt is "what would you do differently in this class if you were starting over, and what would you not change?"

- ✓ Get a final feedback on your teaching by having students anonymously reply to the prompt "*Two things you (the instructor) do that help me learn are*". As an alternative, ask your students to use their critical thinking skills to analyze the course (after all, if we teach critical thinking skills it is only fair to have students apply those skills to something important to them).

- ✓ If you gave a pre-test, give a post-test so students (and you) can measure their own progress. If you didn't do a pre-test connected directly to the course outcomes, consider doing so in the future.

BONUS!

- ✓ Bring in food, or even better have them bring in food. Shake everyone's hand and thank that person for taking your course. Tell students how much you appreciate their hard work. Create a class video of "top 10 tips for succeeding in [the course]". Ask 2 – 3 students to come to the first class next semester to talk directly with new students about how to best succeed in your course.

What do you think? Were some of these interesting? Right now you do not need to do anything but make a list. After every 3 "Top 10's" we will ask you to work with them.

Which ones of these seem to fit best with the ways you think students learn – ideas you might adapt to fit your teaching?

1.

2.

3.

What 1 or 2 tips from the list above are you *least likely* to adopt or modify?

1.

2.

Section Debrief: *Positive Endings*

- Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
- Helping Students Stay the Journey
- Ways to End Your Course

Now you begin serious work about how and when you might be able to work with some of the ideas you have selected. Please look back over the tips in the section you just completed that you listed as those you thought *most likely* to adopt/adapt.

Pick up to three that you want to use or modify to fit your students' particular learning needs and your teaching style.

1.

2.

3.

Now look back at the ones listed as *least likely* to try out and choose the one that you would never do, or that you believe is just not useful to you and your students.

Why?

For #1 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you do to make time to implement this new idea?

Do you think this technique is more teacher-centered or more learner-centered?

Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #2 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you believe will find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, background, learning preferences, ability, etc.)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience (again try to be as specific as possible about student characteristics)?

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Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

For #3 (or as you are modifying it):

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

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Why?

Any additional thoughts? Is there perhaps someone who might help you implement one of these ideas, or who might be a good sounding board to listen to how you plan to implement one that you feel will be difficult for you?

Do any of the other teaching tips in this section simply *intrigue* you? Give you pause? Maybe something to come back to at a different time to consider? Please list (no more than 2)

Section: *Wrapping It Up!*

- **Resources for Learning and Teaching**
- **Teaching to Inspire**
- **Paths to Mindfulness**

"Internalize this idea of excellence. Not many folks spend a lot of time to be excellent."

Barack Obama

Resources for Learning and Teaching

The time between semesters is not just a time to refresh personally; it is also the time when we tend to think about the ways we can improve our teaching or something we might do differently to try to engage more of our students. It is time when we are most open to inspiration. Here are ten online resources that are sure to help you explore new approaches, techniques, and learning paradigms.

The Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence & Educational Innovation, Carnegie Mellon University. This extensive site has fantastic resources focusing on topics such as course design, informal and formal assessment of both teaching and learning, and educational technology. *Want to rethink how you design or assess a course or lesson?* This site is for you. http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/index.html

The Faculty Development Teaching Tips Index, Honolulu Community College. Simply put, this site is a compendium of just about every practical thing that makes for good teaching (other than experience!). *This site has it all.* http://www.honolulu.hawaii.edu/facdev/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm

Tools for Teaching Diversity, School of Education, USC Rossier. This site is dedicated to exploring the ways in which instructors create an inclusive classroom environment. *It links to articles and resources that focus on teaching in racially diverse college classrooms, managing student resistance, identifying your own biases as an instructor, as well as numerous articles on the effect that gender, sexuality, religion, and ability status can have on college students' learning experiences.* http://rossier.usc.edu/tools-for-teaching-diversity/

The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University. You don't have to teach at Harvard to benefit from this site, and students at any college would benefit from instructors who draw from the Resources available here. *Interested in reading tips on active learning, grading and feedback, syllabus design, or how to lecture well.* http://bokcenter.harvard.edu/

The Center for Universal Design, University of Washington. Universal design (or inclusive design) in higher education refers to ways that instructors can design courses and instruction so as to make them universally accessible to students of varying ability statuses without the need for academic adjustment or accommodation. http://www.washington.edu/doit/CUDE/app_postsec.html

The Foundation for Critical Thinking. Yes, there is a foundation for critical thinking! This site is dedicated to great faculty resources for fostering and

assessing critical thinking. *This site also has resources for college students that emphasize the function of critical thinking and focus them on things like "how to study and learn" or "the art of close reading."* http://www.criticalthinking.org/

The Walker Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Chattanooga. A great site with lots of teaching resources. *Interested in course redesigns, critical thinking, instructional technology, and teaching tips?* http://www.utc.edu/walker-center-teaching-learning/#li02

Instructional Development at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. *Interested in managing classroom behavior, developing written tests, increasing student motivation, or creating interactive lectures?* http://www.bcit.ca/idc/resources.shtml

The Cooperative Learning Institute. One of the most clearly defined approaches to active learning is "cooperative learning". Cooperative learning means that student must work together, that projects must require them to work together in significant ways, and that the group's project is graded as just that – a group project. *Here are the people who first pioneered the cooperative learning idea.* http://www.co-operation.org/home/introduction-to-cooperative-learning/

The Eykamp Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Evansville. This is another great compendium of teaching resources from multiple institutions, *including tips on topics such as reducing student anxiety, office hours, active learning, and diversity and inclusion in teaching.* http://www.evansville.edu/offices/cte/onlineresources.cfm

We hope these resources are useful as you plan and innovate.

Try something new!

This “Top 10” is different from the others because it does not involve your teaching, so we won’t ask you the typical questions.

However, how about identifying 2 – 3 that you feel particularly useful and sharing the sites with several colleagues? Or, perhaps, invite some colleagues to do a “Lunch and Learn” and each share a particular teaching/learning website that they find useful?

How about sharing one or two of the sites with part-time faculty in your field? How else might you be able to assist these important teachers who rarely have the time to find websites like these?

How else might you help colleagues find useful teaching/learning sites?

Teaching to Inspire

An oft-overlooked aspect of community college teaching is that we, more than any other teachers, need to inspire some of our students to change their lives. We are not the "second chance" institution for these students, we are their last best chance. If they miss their chance with us, some will miss a chance at a decent life. This imposes a tremendous burden on us.

Understanding this and willingly shouldering this burden is what separates *great teachers* from those who are *good*. And the time to think, to make significant improvements in our practice, is while we have time to think: summer. Consider working on these questions, preferably with a colleague.

Start with an approach grounded in Appreciative Inquiry.

When I am at my best as a teacher, what am I doing? How am I acting? What do I say? What do I do? What am I not doing, not saying? Is it related to specific content, or a specific course or type of course? Perhaps a certain type of student? Is time a factor? Be as concrete and specific as possible.

When at my best and I am inspiring students, what are the demographics of the students I reach best? Be as specific as possible about the type of students you believe you inspire the most? Are they young? Older? White? Hispanic? Afro-American? To reiterate, be as specific as possible.

When I am at my best, where am I doing this great work? Am I in a classroom, and if so what is the configuration? Am I in my office, or in an informal setting? Am I online? Be very specific.

How can I create more of these best experiences, for me and my students? As above, be as specific as possible. How can you reach more students, more different kinds of students?

Now switch to a reflective practice approach and finalize your thinking and ideas for the future with these questions.

What have I learned about teaching and learning this year?

What have I learned about myself and *why I teach* this year that can inform how I approach my students and my teaching?

What have I learned about ways to inspire others this year?

How will I *apply* what I have learned this year in my work with students, in class, online, and as an advisor or mentor?

How has what I have learned and experienced *changed the paradigms I work within* as a community college teacher? How am I changing the very way I approach working with students?

Lastly, how will you maintain a commitment to continue to ask yourself these questions?

How will you reward yourself? This is extremely hard work. You need to make certain to reward yourself, and not in a small way. Perhaps you can convince your college to send you to the Hawaii National Great Teachers Seminar in Kilauea National Park, or the Canadian National Great Teachers Seminar near Banff, or …

Good luck! Teaching to inspire is the hardest part of moving from good to great. Constant improvement is hard to sustain. Working closely with a colleague on the heart of great teaching is energizing and daunting. We know. We've worked together all year. Thanks for the opportunity!

Once more, this Top Ten is somewhat different from the majority, so we will not be asking you the typical questions. But, how will you take at least a few of these questions and integrate them into your practice?

1.

2.

3.

Paths to Mindfulness

It's not time on task, but the *quality* of our *attention* during an experience that results in significant learning. Deep learning enhances concentration, encourages focus on key points, and promotes thinking. "Contemplative pedagogy" focuses on using mindfulness techniques to enhance our teaching and our students' learning. Few of us were trained in mindfulness techniques, but the good news is that they are easy to learn and just as easy to share with our students.

- ✓ Focus. Before class, identify no more than *three* crucial things that you want every student to remember or be able to do after the class. Focus intently on how to get students to remember or do those things. Do this for every single class or online lesson.

- ✓ Center yourself. Reserve 5 minutes for yourself right before you teach. Prioritize this. Do not schedule anything in the 15 minutes before class. Find a place that you can be alone, close your eyes, and concentrate on your breathing. Walk slowly outside if the weather is nice. Don't think about your class; simply bring your awareness to your breath and the present moment. Centering yourself *before* you teach will make you more present, aware, and focused *when* you teach.

- ✓ Breathe. Many teachers put so much pressure on themselves to talk that they don't breathe anywhere near as much as they should. Take a deep breath before answering any student question and tell them you are doing so. When you ask a question, teach students to first take a really deep breath and then think. Give them time to do this. Before making a key point, take a deep breath. Practice. Practice. Practice. You (and your students) will soon realize that slowing your mind allows for deeper thinking.

- ✓ Show students how to center themselves. Our students have many things that hinder their attention and concentration in class. Begin every class *on time* and use the first 2 minutes as a quiet time for students to close their eyes (if they are comfortable doing so) and simply breathe and bring their attention to the present moment. Ask students to bring their awareness to how the chair feels, how the air in the room feels, and to what sounds they hear. Emphasize that nothing requires them to act or respond. If this sounds like too much, simply ask them to breathe deeply and think about the most beautiful place they have been. The goal is simply to slow distracting thoughts and concentrate on the present moment.

- ✓ Show students how to silence their inner critics. Show them how to intentionally use their inner critics and not allow their inner critics to use them. This is especially impactful before a stressful or intimidating activity like an exam or the drafting of a writing assignment. As part of the tip above this one, ask students to bring their attention to their "inner critic": thoughts that are negative, self-conscious, critical, or skeptical like "I'll never pass math" or "I'm not a good writer" or "what's the point of this activity?" Have students practice parking their inner critic in a safe place for the moment.

- ✓ Stop. Take "silence breaks" after you cover a key concept. Ask students to be silent and focus their minds on what they just learned. What does the concept mean to them? Can they play around with an idea or see the idea in a concrete thing or task? Give students *time* to *think*.

- ✓ Hum. Don't knock it 'til you've tried it. Tell your class that you need a way to get the group's attention after small group activities and discussions or to begin class. Tell them you're going to hum and ask them to simply try to match your pitch. Joke about how there aren't any points off for humming talent. This feels risky, but students *will* go along with it, and it works. It's centering, and the vibrations from humming are also relaxing. If student buy-in with this lessens during the semester, you know their focus is slipping.

- ✓ Play music. It can grab our attention while calming our minds and centering our thoughts. Play music that does this for you, and ask students to bring in ideas for music that can help calm the brain and center thinking.

- ✓ Use short, reflective writing. Journaling, reflective writing, and freewriting aren't just for English classes: they are centering experiences and can be an important component of a complete learning cycle (see *Top 10* #24). Have everyone stop, breathe deeply, sit silently for a minute (eyes closed if comfortable), and then write a reflective paragraph on a key concept that they just learned.

- ✓ Do not over-plan a lesson. When you outline or plan a class too thoroughly, you sacrifice *flexibility* and *responsiveness*. Determine the 1 – 3 key things you want students to learn, practice centering yourself, and breathe deeply. Then go to class prepared to listen at least as much as you talk. Meet your students where they are. Yes, the task of focusing a lesson

on your 1-3 key things can seem to be at odds with being flexible and responding to students. That's why teaching is an art!

- ✓ Our society encourages multitasking, and we are bombarded with information on a daily basis. Creating a mindful classroom requires consciously incorporating mindfulness techniques in your courses, which means practicing them yourself (that's what summers are for!). Try some of these ideas. Reflect on how calming your brain allows you to center yourself and improve your concentration, awareness, and thinking. Becoming a mindful, reflective teacher who inspires students (Top 10 #29) is very hard work, but, ultimately, it's also the most rewarding kind of teaching there is.

THANK YOU to all who have responded to our *Teaching Top 10* lists this year *and to everyone who is working to become a better teacher*. Thanks to the Center for Teaching for distributing all thirty *Top 10* issues. We trust you have noticed that Joe has (partly) restrained Bill's propensity to sprinkle commas like raisins and that Bill has (almost) convinced Joe that one's life is not extended one minute for every word that one writes. That is to say, we hope that you enjoyed reading them as much as we enjoyed writing them.

"Get their hearts first, and their minds will follow."

Joe Finckel & Bill Searle
May 2015

Once more, this Top Ten is somewhat different from the majority, so we will not be asking you the typical questions. But, how will you take at least a few of these questions and integrate them into your practice?

1.

2.

3.

Congratulations!

You have completed an amazing professional development activity – one that very few of your colleagues has completed! You are moving from that comfortable ledge on the teaching excellence mountain up to more difficult terrain. Keep caring, keep working to *be the best you can be for your students*. They notice.

You are DONE!

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Whoops. Ahh, not quite. We've added some additional activities. Want to move from the ledge you are on now, up the teaching excellence mountain a little farther? Turn the page.

What Intrigued You?

Go back to the pages where you listed ideas that *intrigued* you. Make a list of them right here.

It is useful to spend some time thinking about why each intrigued you – but did not attract you enough to even think you might commit to trying it.

Got some thoughts you want to write down?

Are there one or two you want to revisit?

1.

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you think would find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, educational background, learning preferences, ability, gender, etc. – be a specific as possible when identifying student characteristics for both this question and the next one)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you *not do* in order to have time to implement this new idea?

2.

In what course and exactly when in the course will you introduce this tool?

What type of student do you think would find this to be a great learning experience? Be as specific as possible about student characteristics (age, maturity, educational background, learning preferences, ability, gender, etc. – be a specific as possible when identifying student characteristics for both this question and the next one)?

What type of student *may not* find it a useful learning experience?

What do you expect to happen as a result of you adopting this technique? Said differently, can you identify 2 – 3 consequences of you adopting this?

What will you *not do* in order to have time to implement this new idea?

Developing Your Own "Teaching Top Ten"

It is time for you to move up another level. Becoming the best we can be *for the world* [as opposed to trying to be the best *in the world* – think about the differences between those two phrases] means figuring out what makes you more able to keep "getting one more" student on the road to success. This means determining those small things that may impact only a few students, those next ones you want to reach. Doing this means exploring more of yourself and thinking more deeply about your students, your college, your subject matter, and where you want to develop.

Is teaching really that specific, that particular? When you reach an upper level it certainly is. Perhaps an analogy. Think of teaching like gardening. Good gardeners pay attention to the climate of their area. For most, this is good enough. However, the best gardeners know that the particular micro-climate of the exact place they plant a particular variety of plant, bush or tree may be a little different. They learn how to pay attention at a significantly deeper level than the "good" gardener.

We think teaching is similar. Using good teaching techniques, understanding how students learn, engaging student in learning and energizing your classes moves us to a higher level. But the highest level is where a teacher begins to understand the particular micro-climate in a given class, with the actual different students sitting there, the exact content being taught, and his or her own strengths at that particular time.

Ready to take another step? Develop your own "Teaching Top 10" ideas. How about getting started. A suggestion. While working on your own will deepen your understanding, working with a few respected colleagues will add even more, and will help build a team of teachers seeking to move to a higher level. Are there some colleagues you could invite to join you on this journey and perhaps meet every two or three weeks to discuss?

What are your 'Teaching Top 10" tips for a ***new part-time*** teacher?

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What are your 'Teaching Top 10" tips for a ***new full-time*** teacher?

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How about your 'Teaching Top 10" tips for a ***mid-career*** teacher?

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Your 'Teaching Top 10" tips for a ***well-experienced*** teacher (note how *The Old Guy* carefully wrote those words for an oldish teacher!)?

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Your Priorities As A Teacher

Right here, list your top 5 priorities as a teacher please.

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Is it time to revisit your priorities as a teacher? Probably. See if your priorities as a teacher are consistently reflected in the lists you made on previous pages (and perhaps look back further in the book to see what tips you chose to attempt to use, and which ones you passed over – it is in what we **DO**, not what we **THINK** or **SAY**, that our priorities become clear).

Are there differences? Identify them.

Explain:

Should you revise your priorities?

Your Teaching Top 10 - #I

Pick two of the ***topics*** we covered and develop your own "Teaching Top 10" tips for that topic. Use some of ours if you like (they aren't that bad, are they?!), but make *at least* half of the tips your own.

Topic:

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Your Teaching Top 10 - #2

Topic:

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Topics?

Please review the *topics* we covered. Think about what makes a teacher really good, or if you prefer what moves a teacher from being good toward being great. What *topics* did we miss that you think should be included? First list some of the topics, and then develop your own "Teaching Top 10" for each topic (and please share them with colleagues).

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Reflective Questions

It is almost impossible to get much better at something without reflecting upon what we do. You know the popular idea - "10,000 hours of practice" needed before someone has the possibility of being an expert in something. Well, if you are going to spend 10,000 hours working on teaching, make them count. Reflection helps the hours be relatively different, rather than spending the same 100 hours, over and over again 100 times.

To you, what is the difference between being a "good teacher" and being a "great teacher?"

How do you *inspire* your students?

Reflect back on this year. When you are at your absolute best as a teacher, what are you doing, how are you doing it, and who are you doing it with?

What specific things can you do, right away, to help you move toward your "great teacher" – the one who *inspires* and is absolutely the best you can be?

Thanks for taking this journey with us. We hope it has been as professionally fulfilling and involving for you as it has been for us!

Whoops. We forgot. There is one more thing

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10 Habits You Wish You Had Developed As A New Teacher

What do you now do that you wish you had done as a beginning faculty member? Be careful. This might be another of those topics where, once you have completed your own, you may wish to get some colleagues together to collaborate on a helpful publication for new full- and part-time faculty!

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Where to from Here?

Now that you are considerably on your journey, what other resources are available to you? Well, first remember your local Teaching/Learning Consultant and the Center for Teaching. Have you taken advantage of the activities offered? Check out your local activities and also ask about regional and national programs they are aware of.

The annual ***Barnes Seminar on Teaching***, held after the Spring Term, is 3-day immersion into positive small-group and individual talk about teaching, students, and learning that many faculty have found both refreshing and inspiring over the years.

Have you attended an ***Instructional Skills Workshop***? These 3-day events are a different type of immersion in teaching. With attendance limited to only 5 participants, with 2 leaders, the teaching and feedback provided can be a huge boost to your repertoire.

After an ISW, consider attending the 5-day ***Facilitator Development Workshop***. Designed to provide advanced teaching/learning and leadership skills to those who seek to run their own ISW workshops, this is a different type of immersion. It is also the most rigorous and 'direct' of all the events. Leaders in this program do not 'pull punches', but, rather, provide direct feedback on all aspects of your teaching and leadership.

The ***New England Faculty Development Consortium*** also provides two annual conference days with workshops presented by faculty for faculty. This regional workshop has the advantage of exposing you to college faculty from throughout our region.

The next page provides brief descriptions of all state-wide Center for Teaching programs.

Center for Teaching Programs

Barnes Seminar

The Barnes Seminar is a two-and-a-half day residential program built on the Great Teachers model. It is broadly interdisciplinary and inter-generational; the workshops allow faculty to share teaching challenges and successes and in the process identify innovations in teaching. Barnes is held in the late spring.

Spirit of Teaching

Based on the ideas expressed in Parker Palmer's Courage to Teach, this one-day program is aimed at teachers who wish to deeply consider their own values, motivations, and experiences in light of their teaching. Participants are encouraged to explore their feelings about teaching and reflect on why they chose teaching as a career. The Spirit of Teaching is held in the early fall.

Teaching Pathways: The Road to Teaching Success

Center for Teaching Pathways: The Road to Teaching Success program is a program free and open to all faculty and staff in the Connecticut Community College system but is especially directed to faculty within their first three years of full-time employment. The focus is on teaching strategies and innovative learning opportunities, practical in nature.

Hodgkin-Searle Institute for Instructional Skills

The Hodgkin-Searle Institute is a faculty lead professional development program designed to enhance the effectiveness of teachers and to provide them with the opportunity to become facilitators and leaders.

> The ***Instructional Skills Workshop*** is an intensive, multi-day, small-group experience in which participants are given information about a variety of specific educational theories and methodologies. Participants then prepare and present mini-lessons that incorporate this new information, and receive feedback from the other participants.
>
> The ***Facilitator Development Workshop***, or FDW, is a five-day training event to prepare experienced teachers to lead the Instructional Skills Workshop. Participants continue to refine their teaching techniques through the mini-lessons, with guided practice and feedback, as well as develop leadership and group facilitation skills.