Creating a sense of belonging in your classroom

Can you think of a recent time when you felt like you truly belonged? That your presence was necessary and that you felt seen, valued, and appreciated? A sense of belonging is a universal characteristic and a basic human need (Maslow, 1962). In his terrific book *College student’s sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*, author Terrell Strayhorn tells the story of sharing an elevator with a young man gasping, out of breath. When asked, “where are you rushing off to,” the student replied:

“I’m off to class…and we can’t be late for THIS class.....THIS professor told us at the beginning of the term that we can’t be late....he really needs us there every day. He said he can’t teach without us. And if you’re not there, he contacts you by phone or email to find out what happened. He called me once when I was out and told me he missed me, that class really wasn’t the same without my perspective. He always says that he has a lot to teach us, but it won’t matter much if we’re not in class. He does a lot of discussion, debate, and stuff....and you can’t really do that without students (laughing). If I’m late or not there, I’ll feel like I’m letting him down, you know.”

What if every student felt like they truly belong at Iowa State University? That being in class mattered to themselves, to their fellow students, and to the instructor. While you may not be able to learn every student’s name in your class, (particularly if you have a very large number of students), there are strategies that you can employ that help students feel like they belong.

- Ensure class materials are available and ready to interact with on the first day of the semester.
- Arrive to class a few minutes early, engage students in conversation and greet students as they enter the classroom.
- Set clear expectations within your face-to-face and online portions of your class. Tell students what they can expect and how they can interact within those expectations to thrive in your classroom.
- Let your students know how to contact you and when. For example, communicate or provide student hours (also called office hours), availability for email, and expectations of when you will reply (within 48 hours, not after 8pm etc). If you are traveling during the semester, explain the dates that you will not be available.
- Describe how course grades are accumulated. Do you have grading policies and/or rubrics or criteria for grading? Ensure your grades are up to date and not a mystery to students.
- Smile. Just the simple act of smiling can lead you to feel actual happiness, joy, and amusement and help others feel welcome in the classroom.

We have a fantastic opportunity to help create conditions that foster belongingness among all students. If you, yourself, are looking for a place to belong, come check out all of the CELT Programming for the spring semester [here](http://bit.ly/celtevents).

With a joy for teaching,

Sara Marcketti, Director  
Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching

CELT Faculty Spotlight: Amy Popillion
In our teaching tips, we are highlighting the work of successful instructors and staff from across Iowa State University. We have asked them to share their highlights from the classroom, ideas for successful teaching and learning, and share their favorite CELT program.

Amy Popillion, Professor of Teaching in Human Development & Family Studies and Sociology suggests the following advice: "Teach with enthusiasm, always see your students as individuals, and enjoy learning from your students."

Dr. Popillion expresses an appreciation for "having an opportunity to surround myself with others who care about teaching" and finds that "having space to discuss and process teaching strategies with others builds community and support, which ultimately builds more confident and successful teachers". Be sure to read our upcoming programs below for opportunities to become part of the CELT community.

Inclusive Classroom Training
Starting spring semester 2020, CELT will conduct annual training in each department on Strategies to Create an Inclusive Classroom. Inclusive teaching includes course design, teaching strategies, and evaluation practices that cultivate a learning environment where all are treated equitably, have equal access to learning and feel supported in their learning.

CELT has presented the Inclusive Classroom workshops to over 400 individuals since 2015. In the President’s Message for Inclusive Classroom Training YouTube video (https://youtu.be/SbnUd-AZTSY) President Wendy Wintersteen, Senior Vice President Provost Jonathan Wickert, and Faculty Senate President Jonathan Sturm share a thank you message to the instructors at Iowa State University for participating in the Inclusive Classroom initiative led by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT).

If you would like to learn more visit CELT’s annual Inclusive Classroom training webpage (http://bit.ly/celtinclusion). We look forward to learning with you!

Learning Assessment Techniques
Why should I assess? I'm already grading!
Although grading is an integral part of teaching, grades rarely can identify those elements of teaching that are effective or need improvement. Learning Assessment Techniques (LATs) are short and simple strategies for assessing student learning throughout the semester.

Dr. Ann Gansemer-Topf (Associate Professor in the School of Education and CELT Faculty Fellow for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) will facilitate this session which describes the process of implementing LATs, offers examples of LATs, and provides an opportunity for instructors to develop their own LATs. Attendees will also discuss how LATs can be used to complement course evaluations and grades.

How to Register
Register via the Learn@ISU website (http://learn.iastate.edu) or email your name, department, event title, and date of the event to celt@iastate.edu.

Learning Online: Canvas and Beyond
Use Canvas to foster an inclusive classroom
Canvas can support your in-class efforts toward inclusion, as well as create a sense of belonging for online students. • Use the Start of the Semester Checklist (http://bit.ly/canvas-start) to ensure materials are available the first day of the semester.
• Use Discussions (http://bit.ly/canvas-discussions) and Studio recordings (http://bit.ly/canvas-studio) to engage online students and set the tone of the online environment.

• Use the Syllabus (http://bit.ly/canvas-syllabus) to set clear expectations for your course. Establish the best way for students to communicate with you. Tip: Using the Canvas Inbox (http://bit.ly/canvas-inbox) means students can find everything they need for your course in one location.


Need help?
Stop by our CELT Open Labs. Visit CELT’s Canvas Open Labs webpage (http://bit.ly/canvas-open-lab) for days, times, and location or contact Canvas 24/7 support by clicking on the ?Help icon on the Global Navigation menu (far left of your screen) in Canvas for the 24/7 support options.

CELT’s Upcoming Programs
To view our program descriptions and the most up-to-date schedule, visit CELT’s Event and Registration webpage (http://bit.ly/celtevents):

• CELT Spring TA Seminar, Jan. 10 (9-11 a.m.)
• Seminar, ISU Online Learning Community (ISU-OLC), Jan. 10 (11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.)
• Workshop, Learning Assessment Techniques, Jan. 28 (12:10-1:00 pm)
• Meeting, Team-Based Learning (TBL) Teaching and Learning Community, Jan. 31 (1:10-2:30 p.m.)
• Teaching and Learning Circle, Powerful Learning Tools: Unleash the Science of Learning, Jan. 29 (3-4:40 pm)

How to Register
For in-person events, register via the Learn@ISU website (http://learn.iastate.edu) or email your name, department, name of the event, date of the event to celt@iastate.edu.