

Explore ways to create a welcoming learning environment

Building community

- Early in the semester find out more about your students by having them provide information on an index card. Following the class, you can cut out the student pictures accessible in AccessPlus and tape or staple them to the cards to begin to learn the students' names. Questions posed to students can include:
 - Name according to the office of the registrar and if they wish to share preferred alternate names or gender pronouns. You can then update your attendance and other records with these preferences.
 - The reasons why they signed up for the course and what they are most looking forward to learning.
 - What are their goals after graduation and how will this course help them achieve their goals?
 - If applicable, the reason why they might need to arrive late or leave early to your course. This can help with seating logistics and minimize possible future disruptions.
 - Fun questions help to get to know students such as: If a song played when you entered the room, what would that song be? If you won one million dollars, what would you do first?
- Arrive to class a few minutes early, engage students in conversation and greet students as they enter the classroom.
- Arrange helping trios of students to assist each other in learning and growing or help students form study groups to operate outside the classroom.
- Seek suggestions from students for outside resources and guest speakers for your course topics.
- Consider using Brookfield's (2012) Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) to discover the effects your teaching has on students and to find out the emotional highs and lows of their learning. Using the CIQ gives you a running commentary on the emotional tenor of each class. Learn more from Brookfield's website (<http://www.stephenbrookfield.com/ciq>) or access Brookfield's (2017) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (Vol. Second edition) online from Parks Library (<http://bit.ly/2uOvD5g>).

Reflect

What did I discover in this section? Why is it (or could it be) important for my teaching?

Now, what am I going to do about (or with) what I have discovered?

Set a positive tone

- Download and use **CELT's Mindful and Learner-Centered Syllabus Checklist (PDF)** (<http://bit.ly/celtsyllabus>) to serve as a guide for your syllabi and use CELT's Strategies to Create an Inclusive Course (PDF) (<http://bit.ly/celt-strat>).
- Start your classes on time.
- Use transparent teaching methods help students understand how and why they are learning course content in particular way provides equitable opportunities for all students to succeed. Using methods outlined by the Transparency in Learning and Teaching Higher Ed Project (<https://tilthighered.com/>)
- **Set reasonable expectations:**
 - **Expectations for class time:** How will the student feel confident and competent in your classroom? Is the class discussion-based? Do you follow your syllabus, or do you improvise? Do they need to bring their books every day? Tell them what they can expect and how can they interact within those expectations to thrive in your classroom.

- **Expectations outside of class:** Provide them with an idea of what they will need to prepare for the course outside of class. Is their preparation primarily reading and writing individually, or will they be working in groups? Will they need to turn in assignments electronically outside of class hours? Give them enough information so they will be able to plan their schedules accordingly. Share effective strategies for success.
- **Establish what you will provide for your students to be successful in your class.** This may include in-class material, study guides, meaningful and prompt feedback on assignments, facilitation of discussion, attention to students with special needs, and a positive and welcoming classroom environment.
- **Assert your boundaries:** Let your students know how to contact you and when. For example, communicate or provide your office hours, office phone number, availability for instant messaging, email, and when you do not respond (evenings, weekends, and traveling for example). If you are traveling during the semester, you may want to explain the dates that you will not be available.
 - You may also want to alert your students to the events, habits, or situations that detract from your ability to fulfill your responsibility. For example, if late assignments, lack of participation, or sleeping during your lectures distracts you from timely and persuasive teaching, explain why you cannot tolerate these events and how you handle them when they occur.
- **Student responsibilities:** If attendance is required, participation is mandatory, or you want them to read the assignment before class, explain to your students that this is expected of them throughout the semester. Explain policies on absences, make-ups, emergencies, and accommodating special needs. You may also remind them that they are responsible for their success and communicating with you when they have need assistance or have other concerns.
- **Smile.** 😊 Just the simple act of putting a smile on your face can lead you to feel actual happiness, joy, or amusement.

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Encourage students to be prepared for class, keep up, and do well

- **Assessment:** How will you assign the course grade at the end of the semester? How many assignments will you grade? Do you have grading policies and/or rubrics or criteria for grading?
- **Make learning goals explicit** for each assignment; explain clearly what students are to do and how it fits into the course as a whole. Learn more from CELT's Basic Course Design webpage (<http://bit.ly/coursealignment>)
- Explain the difference between legitimate **collaboration and academic dishonesty**; be clear when collaboration is appropriate and when it is not. View the Office of Student Conduct's Academic/Research Misconduct for Faculty/Staff webpage (<http://bit.ly/armfacstaff>)

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Encourage active learning

- **Move around the room** to engage students and to discourage behavior such as chatting, browsing on a laptop/smart device, or newspaper-reading (use a lapel microphone if necessary).
- **'Chunk' a lecture into 10-15-minute segments.** Between segments engage students with active learning (discussion, problem-solving, informal quizzes, etc.) Stage a figurative "coffee break" about twenty minutes into the period: tell a story, invite students to put down pens and pencils, or refer to a current event.
- **Give your students time to answer questions;** count slowly (and silently) to 10 after you pose a question before you rephrase it.

- Download and read through **CELT's 226 Active Learning Techniques (PDF)** (<http://bit.ly/226-active-learning-pdf>)

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Provide support for students

- Use the resources and programs available through **CELT's Creating an Inclusive Classroom website** (<http://bit.ly/celtinclusion>)
- Spend time discussing university, department, library, or other resources for students to use in through the course of the semester. Share key student resources throughout the semester during key moments before projects, high stake exams, etc.
- **Promote student health and wellness**, "Iowa State University is committed to proactively facilitating the well-being of all students. We welcome and encourage students to contact the following on-campus services for assistance regarding their physical, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, environmental, financial, social, and/or emotional needs:
 - Student Wellness call 515-294-1099 or via website (<http://studentwellness.iastate.edu>);
 - Thielen Student Health Center call 515-294-5801 (24/7 Medical Advice) or via website (<http://www.cyclonehealth.org>);
 - Student Counseling Services call 515-294-5056 or via website (<https://counseling.iastate.edu>);
 - Recreation Services call 515-294-4980 or via website (<http://recservices.iastate.edu>).
 - Students dealing with heightened feelings of sadness or hopelessness, thoughts of harm or suicide, or increased anxiety may contact the ISU Crisis Text Line (Text ISU to 741-741) or contact the ISU Police Department 515-294-4428."
- In addition to the "**Access Statement for Students with Documented Disabilities**" in your syllabus, read the statement at the beginning of the first class, and remind the students a few times throughout the semester – especially before exams, assignments or other projects. If you or your students have questions, contact the Student Accessibility Services staff via the Student Accessibility Services website (<https://sas.dso.iastate.edu/>) or call 515-294-7220.
- Encourage students to use the **Academic Success Center** for help on study skills, resources, tutoring, academic coaching, Supplemental Instruction (if its available for your course), and more on the Academic Success Center website (<http://www.asc.dso.iastate.edu/>) or call 515-294-6624.
- **Be redundant.** Students should hear, read, or see key material at least three times.
- **Organize.** Give visible structure by posting the day's "menu" on the white/chalkboard, screen or online in Canvas.
- Employ the **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** as an approach to curriculum and teaching to provides equal opportunities for learning to all students. For resources view CELT's Universal Design for Learning webpage (<http://bit.ly/celtudl>)
- **If possible, be aware of students who are frequently absent.** Check-in with the student and/or notify the student's academic advisor, and/or the Dean of Students Office (515-294-1020) with your concern. You can learn who the student's advisor is on AccessPlus by clicking the "More" button next to the student's name on your class list.

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Adapted from the following:

- Center for Teaching. (n/d). First day of class. Vanderbilt University. Retrieved from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/cft/guides-sub-pages/first-day-of-class/>
- Lunde, J.P. (n/d). 101 Things you can do in the first three weeks of class. Office of Graduate Studies, University of Nebraska. Retrieved from <https://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/teaching/first-3-weeks>

