From The Beginning:
First Day Strategies and Activities to Improve Student Learning All Semester

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What’s on students’ minds?

Students want to know:

- How will the course work?
- What are we going to learn?
- What kind of teacher are you?
- How will you evaluate their performance?

In addition, many students are anxious.
In the background...

- First impressions
- Not only about the instructor, also about peers and themselves
- Interactions are producing a mix of positive and negative perceptions
Why does the first day matter?

The first day has lasting effects

Figure 1. Motivation across evaluation Days 1 through 5. Error bars represent standard error of mean (SEM).

Figure 2. Grades after second and third tests and the final exam. Error bars represent standard error of mean (SEM).

Why does the first day matter?

Student Motivation!

Some Recent Research:


Motivation Continuum

The Self-Determination Continuum

Motivation
- Amotivation
- Extrinsic Motivation
  - Introjected Regulation
  - Identified Regulation
  - Integrated Regulation
- Intrinsic Motivation

Regulatory Styles
- Non-Regulation
  - External Regulation
- Internal Regualtion

What is the source of the motivation?
- Impersonal
  - External
  - Somewhat External
  - Somewhat Internal
  - Internal
- Personal
  - Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis With Self
  - Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction

What regulates the motivation?
- Nonintentional, Nonvaluing, Incompetence, Lack of Control
  - Compliance, External Rewards and Punishments
  - Self-control, Ego-Involvement, Internal Rewards and Punishments
  - Personal Importance, Conscious Valuing
  - Congruence, Awareness, Synthesis With Self
  - Interest, Enjoyment, Inherent Satisfaction

To support student’s motivation...

- Autonomy
- Competence
- Relatedness

Motivation
Relatedness in the 1\textsuperscript{st} Week

- Perception that the instructor cares
  - “Knows my name”
  - “Wants to know how to help me learn”
  - “Wants to know what interests me in the course”

- Sense of connection with peers
  - “I’m not alone in feeling...”
  - “My peers can help me learn”

- Challenge: Inclusiveness across diversity
Competence in the 1st Week

- Sense that one can effectively navigate the environment
  - “I know what is expected of me in class”
  - “I can figure out how to use the technology and resources for the course”
  - “I am intellectually capable of learning this material”
  - “I know who can help me with this course and how to get help.”

- Challenge: To develop competence, not just answer questions
Autonomy in the 1\textsuperscript{st} Week

- Sense of control within the course
  - “My actions can make a difference in the outcome”
  - “I can make important choices about what I do”
  - “I can shape my learning environment.”

- Challenge: Balancing your authority with their autonomy
The Reciprocal Interview

1. Create small groups of 4-6 students
2. Students individually answer questions about themselves from the instructor, discuss as a group, and a delegate reports out answers.
   ▪ (10–15-min. discussion; 15–20-min. interview)
3. Students as a group develop list of questions for the instructor and select a new student to ask instructor
   ▪ (5–10-min. discussion; 15-minute interview)
Designing Your First Day
What students expect

- Instructor is a subject expert
- Instructor has enthusiasm for topic and teaching
- Clear understanding of how the course works
- Substantial work will not be covered

Do’s and Don'ts Based on “First Weeks of Class” Handout developed by Chris Price, CELT Director, SUNY College at Brockport
Some Don’ts

- Don’t hand out the syllabus and leave
- Don’t do a full content lecture
- Don’t declare that this is the first time you have taught the course
- Don’t declare that you are unsure about any or all of the content
Some Do’s

- Do arrive early and greet students as they enter
- Do discuss why you are enthusiastic about the topic of the course
- Do learn students names or engage in another icebreaker that communicates you care
- Do have students meet other students
- Do set the tone for interactions
- Do create routines
- Do explain why...
Possible activities

- Reciprocal Interview
- Knowledge Survey
- Syllabus Quiz
- Reflective Writing: Why are you in this class? What are your goals?
- Brainstorm Activity: How to earn an A in this course?
- Metacognitive Awareness Inventory

Fit an activity to your class

1. Identify an activity for the first day.
2. Do you need to modify the activity for the context of your class?
3. Brainstorm ways you can use this activity to increase your students sense of:
   - Relatedness
   - Competence
   - Autonomy
Assess, Reflect, and Share

As you try new activities and strategies, how will you know if they make a difference? Think in advance how you might look for changes in student behavior or learning. Are there existing tools to measure this? Do you have records from past courses to compare with? Are their relevant items on student evaluations? Can you find colleagues who are exploring same teaching move or challenge?