

“College Instructors can greatly impact student success by giving student options on certain aspects of their learning. This will allow for making connections in the classroom between the instructor and the student. This invigorates learning. The concept is ‘Connections Before Content’ and impacts the students’ connection with the instructor so that students can feel confident the professor cares about the student as an individual.” *Theresa Byington, Ph.D., Ed.D. College of Education, University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

More Quick Points for Improving Student Engagement

from

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- Have music playing when students enter the room—switch it up for each day of class—take requests if you dare!
- Have an erasable board near the door and hang markers of various colors. Encourage students to write thoughts for the day as they come in. Start with a clean board each week of the course.
- Cover the desks with brown paper one day and encourage students to doodle. This can work when a class is doing a lab activity and waiting their turn.
- Finalize your course calendar/ schedule before the semester begins, to avoid constant tinkering, and to provide greater stability for your students
- Ensure that students “do” in every possible class session—write, speak, solve problems, create, etc.
- Design lessons and activities that have students interact and collaborate frequently.
- Share stories of learning how to learn; ask students to describe experiences with deep learning so they can tap into that experiential knowledge.
- Take care of yourself; accept the limitations of what a teacher can do. Work reasonable hours and set parameters around your teaching time.

In Counseling Sessions before or after class:

- When students “choose not to,” nudge, prompt, and hold the line that doing, engaging, and collaborating are paths to academic success
- Take action when students show disengagement. Draw their attention to their silence, inactivity, and unresponsiveness, and tell them the relationship between disengagement and academic struggles
- Demonstrate empathy, and be on the lookout for students who will benefit from an after-class nod, smile, or simple ‘Are you OK?’

- Make sure students are aware of vital campus services like mental-health care, financial counseling, food banks, housing help and encourage them to take advantage of these services

Thoughts on Improving Student's abilities to Read Textbooks:

- Do you assign textbook reading and then wonder why students don't do the reading?
- Do you see a student half-way through a semester with textbooks looking brand new like they have never been cracked?
- If you are OK with this, why are we even using textbooks?
- Why charge the student for a textbook without a purpose?
- Remind students that textbooks are difficult to read—certainly more than a social media post or a text msg
- Remind students that they are **NOT** expected to know and understand everything in a textbook the first time they read it
- Remind students the purpose of a reading assignment: to preview the material BEFORE the instructor presentation on the topic and to provide a general background on the topic—not for complete understanding of the topic/ subject
- **This is a vital understanding of purposeful textbook reading
- Remind students that you, as instructor, will clarify the material for the students during in-class or online presentations
- But it is important they preview the material because when you are presenting a topic, that shouldn't be the first time they hear about it; because they have previewed the material in the textbook.
- Remind students to highlight tables, photos, diagrams, & pictures in the textbook reading as these provide visual clues to your presentations and discussions.

How to encourage students to bring textbooks to class?

You can check for compliance and take off points, but even better...

1. During class you can refer to diagrams, photos, charts in the book
 2. Have students read aloud important sections that you feel really brings home the point—often textbook authors state it better
 3. Show students how to mark or highlight in a book—have a brief lesson on highlighting a textbook or marking the margins
 4. Call on students to explain what they see in a photo or table
- Be careful about using the textbook ONLY for homework assignments
 - That can create a dislike of textbooks as a “punishment”
 - If the textbook comes with a workbook—USE IT for certain homework. It creates less work for you
 - If you do assign homework from the textbook, for one or two assignment questions, have students respond to certain passages with an opinion paragraph; “On page 25, the textbook

author states...What do you think about this presumption? Do you agree about this research? Support your opinion”