

Small changes Can Improve Class Community and Student Course Evaluations

A well-organized, carefully planned course is critical for effective teaching, but attention to small details contributes to rapport with students and a classroom experience that supports effective learning.

Corbett and LaFrance (2013) offer suggestions that improve the learning for students and the teaching experience for instructors.

- **Arrive early and linger after the class meeting time** – make adjustments to lighting, set up your technology for the session, chat with students before and after class to learn about events outside of class that might influence their in-class learning and continue topic-related conversations while you walk back to your office.
- **Create a positive attitude during class meetings** – leave your own life stresses at the door when you teach. We can't always be our best selves every day. Life stresses and department politics can intrude on our thoughts. But try to protect class time from these worries. Similarly, do not allow sullenness in students to ruin your enthusiasm. Your enthusiasm and attitude can be contagious, although the effect will not be immediate.
- **Respond promptly to student email messages** – you need not respond immediately. Tell your students when they can expect a response (on the first day of class, in your syllabus) and honor this promise.
- **Surrender control of the class occasionally** – choose your battles for control. Some activities and rules for class management are not negotiable. But if you can allow students to determine how some things work, you create a sense of community and shared responsibility for classroom learning. Identify class policies that you feel comfortable allowing students to determine what is acceptable. Explain why other activities or course policies cannot be altered.
- **Remember to tell students when they are doing well** – students need feedback to correct errors but they also need feedback to let them know when they are on track. Remember to recognize progress and successes.

When we adopt one or more of these small changes, teaching becomes a more pleasant and rewarding activity and our students become more engaged and motivated with the class.

Resources:

Corbett, S. J., & LaFrance, M. (September 9, 2013). It's the little things that count in teaching. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. [Retrieved 9-10-2013: http://www.Chronicle.com/article/Its-the-Little-Things-That/141489/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en]

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