**Favorite Activities for Engaging Students in Learning**

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Students learn best when they are actively engaged in learning through discussion and the sharing of ideas. Here are some suggestions for engaging students in face-to-face and hybrid classrooms.

**Establish Guidelines for Civility**

Faculty can create a positive atmosphere for learning in which all students feel appreciated and are willing to contribute their ideas. All faculty and students are to be treated with respect and courtesy.  Having mutual respect and civility will make sure that all have the opportunity to participate and learn, and that each faculty can teach the course. Here are some suggested rules of engagement to assure a positive learning environment:

1. Help students to get to know each other and find out what they have in common. This reduces anonymity and the likelihood of personal attacks.

2. It is acceptable to agree to disagree.

3. If you disagree with another student or the professor, do not attack or label the idea or the person. Just state your alternative view.

Example: I disagree. I think that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Encourage students to understand and appreciate different perspectives.

5. Do not interrupt others while they are speaking.

6. Do not monopolize the conversation. Provide others the opportunity to speak.

7. Do not interrupt the classroom with side conversations or using your cell phone.

For students who do not follow the rules of civility, meet with them privately as soon as they show uncivil behavior and remind them of expected behavior.

**Provide Positive Reinforcement**

Encourage discussion by providing positive reinforcement to all students who participate in the discussion. Here are some examples:

Good!

Thanks for that idea!

Yes!

I agree!

This can be difficult if you do not like the response, disagree with it, or the response provides incorrect information. Give students in the class the opportunity to correct or add to the information presented in a respectful way. Be creative in thinking of responses that provide positive reinforcement for participation while guiding students to understand the curriculum. Here are some examples:

Thank you for your answer. Does anyone want to add to that?

That's an interesting idea. What do the rest of you think about it?

That's a controversial topic. Does someone have a different point of view?

Thanks for getting the discussion going. Let's hear some more ideas.

**Preview the Topic**

Previewing the topic increases interest and helps students build on prior knowledge.

Briefly introduce the main idea of the lesson. Divide students into groups of 4-5 students. Ask them to brainstorm everything they know about the topic.

Here is an example:

What do you know about financial literacy?

Appoint a recorder and a reporter for each group. The recorder takes notes on the ideas. The reporter shares ideas with the class.

Set a quota of 10 ideas in 5 minutes.

At the end of 5 minutes, have each group share one idea. Once an idea has been presented, it cannot be repeated by another group. Alternate groups until there are no more new ideas.

**Think, Pair, Share**

This activity involves posing a question and asking students to think about the answer for one minute. Then ask students to share their ideas with one other person in the classroom. As a last step, ask at least 5 students to share their best ideas.

**Group Discussions**

Give clear directions for the group before students start moving into groups.

Set a definite time limit for the group. Most discussions should be 5-7 minutes. Remember that the task expands to fit the time available, and some students will lose interest or run out of ideas in longer discussions.

Establish a quota of what is to be accomplished. Challenge the group to come up with 10 ideas in 5-7 minutes.

Get students into groups quickly and have a method for getting students into a group. There are many ways to get students in groups.

Each row is a group.

Count off as in sports teams.

Use a deck of cards. For example, all the 4's are in one group. The number of cards distributed should match the number of students in your course.

Divide students into groups of 4-5 students. Have students number off 1-5 as in sports teams. Assign students these roles:

1. Student #1 is the reporter. The job is to report on the best ideas. They can report verbally after the discussion or write the best ideas on the board.

2. Student #2 is the note taker. The job is to write down the best ideas of the group and share these ideas with the reporter.

3. Student #3 is the group leader. The job is to repeat the question being discussed and keep the group on track.

4. Student #4 is the timekeeper. Most discussions should be completed in 5-7 minutes.

5. Student #5 is the discussion leader. The job is to make sure that all members of the group are participating by asking the question, "What do you think about \_\_\_\_." For groups of four students, the group leader and discussion leader can be combined.

After 5-7 minutes, the reporter shares the best ideas either verbally or by reading the best ideas written on the board. Rotate roles for the discussion.

**The One Minute Paper**

Pose a discussion question and ask students to write anything about the topic in one minute. After one minute, ask students to underline their best idea. Share at least 5 best ideas with the class.

Another variation of the one-minute paper is to summarize the important information learned in the class each day. Here are some suggested questions:

What is one thing that you will remember from class today?

What was the most surprising idea in today's discussion?

What was the most useful idea discussed today?

Would you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

What was the major objective of today's class?

**Intentions for the Future**

Another way to summarize the important points learned in the class is to challenge students to make intention statements for their future. Ask students to write five intention statements in five minutes.

For example: To avoid too much debt in the future, I intend to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

After five minutes, ask for volunteers to share intention statements with the class.

**What Do You Think?**

This exercise gets students out of their seats and focuses their attention on the discussion.

Ask students to vote on whether they agree or disagree with a statement or if it is true or false. They can stand up if they agree or you can reverse the procedure and have students stand up if they disagree.

Example:

Money does not buy happiness because the more you have, the more you want.

Another variation is that students can use a thumbs up if they agree or thumbs down if they disagree. Point thumbs to the side if they are undecided.

**Brainstorming**

The purpose of brainstorming is to engage students by rapidly generating ideas. Here are the rules of brainstorming:

1. Set a time limit of 3-5 minutes.

2. Set a goal, target, or quota of items to be generated. Aim for at least 10 ideas.

3. State the question for the brainstorming activity. For example, "What are the components of financial literacy?"

4. Write down any idea that comes to mind. This can be done individually on a sheet of paper, or as a class with the instructor writing the ideas on the board.

5. Do not censure yourself or others. Don't judge the quality of the ideas. The goals is generating a quantity of ideas.

6. After brainstorming, pick out the best ideas. If all your ideas are best, you have not given yourself the freedom to write down everything that comes to mind.