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6-26-2017

5 Tips for Cultivating Engaged Students

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Recommended Citation

Carder, B. (2017). 5 Tips for Cultivating Engaged Students. Retrieved from <https://fuse.franklin.edu/i4blog/39>

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5 Tips for Cultivating Engaged Students

June 26, 2017 | By Barbara Carder
Teaching Effectiveness

I have been teaching primarily in the online environment during the past several years, but this trimester I am teaching a face-to-face class. I very much enjoy being in the classroom, even though it does make for a long day. Most of our students are working adults, so I can commiserate with them on what a marathon it is to attend class after working all day!

So, what can we do to keep our tired and harried students engaged? Here are 5 tips:

1. Limit each lecture segment to 10 minutes. Set a timer if you have to, but don't talk for more than 10 minutes without some interaction with students. Many easy-to-use activities require little preparation or supplies. Comment below if you would me to send you information.
2. Incorporate technology into your classes. Perhaps lecture for 10 minutes and then have students find a specific piece of information using their smartphones. You could ask students to work with a partner to find answers to a scavenger hunt of questions. Think about whether you could incorporate a polling program ([Poll Everywhere](#) and [Kahoot](#) are two free programs) into an activity.
3. Use a game. This is a great way to actively engage your students and show them that learning *can* be fun! Most people are competitive and will interact with the game even more than required. There are many free programs available to create games. For example, google *Jeopardy Game Maker* and several free programs and apps are returned from that search.
4. Ask students what their hobbies are, or what activities they enjoy doing in their spare time. Some students might reply that they don't have any spare time because of school, but you should get some valuable information from this question, and use that information to start a discussion. For example, if you are teaching a finance class and you have several students who say they enjoy camping or nature, how can you tie those interests in with the course subject matter for an interesting and relevant discussion?
5. Midway through the course, ask students to assess how they are doing. I send an email at the end of week three (in a six-week course) and ask students to answer four questions. See sample email and questions below.

Hi everyone -

I like to ask for student input halfway through a course, so I can see how you are doing. This is something extra I do, not a course requirement, and it is optional for you to respond, but I really care how you are doing and this input helps me be as

effective as I can while working with you.

Please take a minute to answer the following questions. Just reply to this email, number your responses, and answer as briefly or with as much detail as you like.

Thanks very much!

Barbara

1. Are you finding the reading interesting? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel any assignment instructions need clarification? If so, please provide details.
3. How do you feel you are doing with the project due in week 6?
4. Is there anything I can do to assist you more as we work through this course?

Make it easy for students—ask them to hit *reply* and provide you with as much or as little information as they like. You will get lots of good information to help you as you proceed through the second half of the course, and the students will be grateful that you care about their success.

This week will be final class for the course I am teaching. Our students at Franklin University are asked to complete a course evaluation at the end of each course. Plus, during the wrap-up segment of the class, I will ask students for their suggestions on how this course could be improved and what they liked best about the course....engaging them to the very end!

About the Author

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Barbara Carder holds a Master of Science in Marketing & Communication and a Bachelor of Science in Applied Communication, both from Franklin University.