

Teachable Moments

Creating teachable moments that engage and connect students with course content is paramount for student success and can be more difficult to achieve in the online classroom. The work begins with course structure and navigation. Instructors must prepare for every learning style and take into consideration exactly what the theme of their learning components will be.

A welcome email from instructors to students prior to the first day of class should include a self-introduction and preferred communication methods. Once class has begun, complete a thorough review of the syllabus with students to eliminate any misunderstandings. A small quiz at the end of the review can verify student understanding. A form can also be placed at the end of the syllabus stating students have read, understood, and will concur with the syllabus. The syllabus should cover an attendance policy and the conduct expected in the classroom. Assignments placed in the syllabus should detail how and where to locate the assignment. A grading scale, course objectives, and expectations for the course should also be included.

Facilitation and Instruction

Best practices for online teaching include methods of facilitation, instruction, and interaction. Facilitation is successful when the instructor is on time to the remote classroom, office hours, and one-on-one virtual meetings. Grading papers promptly and consistently goes a long way in developing a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Instruction can be delivered in many forms: audio or video recordings, PowerPoint, or a combination of these and other elements. Student assignments can incorporate these delivery methods through a virtual scrapbook that can include photos, audio recordings, and videos. The virtual scrapbook can then be compiled into a Prezi or PowerPoint presentation and submitted to the instructor or presented to the class. Assignments like the virtual scrapbook allow students to improve their technology skills in addition to exploring course concepts.

Interaction

Interaction involves observing group discussions and debates among students or working with students as a team.

The group format can involve virtual discussion boards on your college's learning management system (LMS) or the breakout room feature in Zoom. Zoom can be set up to place students in groups manually or automatically. Instructors can also choose the number of students per group and the amount of time the groups will convene. The instructor can pop in at any time to check on how each group is doing.

When using a virtual discussion board, consider changing the name to "Chat Board" or "Chapter Feedback." This change can make a difference in how students approach these discussion boards and encourage more dialogue. Instructors can also change the name of tests to "Assessment Probes" or "Chapter Digs," which helps students who struggle over the word "test."

Creating a discussion board called "Room Temperature" is valuable for sensing and perceiving the atmosphere of the class. This allows students to express their feelings, fear, and concerns. Instructors can also ask students to list something positive that has occurred during the pandemic.

Interaction can also consist of working together on a final exam study guide. Using Zoom or the LMS, instructors send an invitation to students to join the study session. Once there, students work collaboratively as a large group or in smaller breakout rooms to explore answers to sample test questions. If dividing students into smaller groups, be sure to reconvene them at the end of class so groups can compare answers. Students are more apt to re-open, review, and study their notes on these study guides before the final exam.

Conclusion

Since students learn differently and at different paces, instructors can expand students' learning abilities by creating teachable moments that are interactive, efficient, and focus on learning objectives. Using tools and practices that enable group learning while honoring individual learning styles results in a dynamic learning environment.

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