"Your First Class: How to Make it First Class"
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“Your success during the school year will be determined by what you do on the first days of school. . . . Your purpose is to affect lives and effective teachers affect lives.”

Am I valued here? Do I fit in here? Do I belong?

Ron Dahl, Neuroscientist, expert on adolescent development
Centering
Overview

• Warm-up

• A Perspective for 1st Day/Teaching & Some Tips
  • Human Connection & Learning Environment
  • Ground Rules/Guidelines
  • “Flavour Scene” - Setting the Tone

• Examples of 1st Days

• What “The Best College Teachers” Do
“Eventually I realized that I am a microcosm of the core issue behind this cricket conundrum. In our hearts, we all deeply want to connect with other human beings. At a cellular level, we want to move toward others; if you put two pieces of human protoplasm on a slide, they will rally to unite. Yet, concomitantly, we harbor a profound fear of rejection. ..
... Consider that not long ago in human history, if we were pushed out of the herd, it portended almost certain death. I believe that fear also lives in our genes. I felt a yearning to connect with students and a wish for them to connect with each other while experiencing hints of terror when I felt my attempts failed.”
One of the most fundamental principles in effective teaching is increasing teacher/student contact and connection (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Lowman, 1995).

"[People] want to know 'Do you see me, do you hear me? Does what I say mean anything to you?' Try it ...-- validate them. 'I see you. I hear you. And what you say matters to me.'"
Ground Rules & the supporting conversation
"Developing a shared vision of how the classroom is run increases student buy-in."

"Creating a shared sense of values and norms sets the stage for a restorative, rather than punitive, approach if a discipline issue arises."

Community

• Teaching students vs. A discipline/Content

• Start with the students
Teacher as Host?

A life-affirming leader is one who knows how to rely on and use the intelligence that exists everywhere in the community, the company, the school, or the organization. A leader these days needs to be a host—one who convenes people, who convenes diversity, who convenes all viewpoints in creative processes where our intelligence can come forth.

Margaret Wheatley, The Berkana Institute
“Hospitality Intelligence”

- Loving Heart
- Gentle Spirit
- Respectful Attitude
- Open Arms
What are your concerns about teaching?

What are your students' concerns about learning?
1st day as "Flavour Scene"
There's only one first day of class. Here are some ideas for taking advantage of opportunities that are not available in the same way on any other day of the course.

- It's students' first introduction to the course content. Catalog descriptions of courses may be accurate, but they aren't all that good at conveying why the content is important, relevant, and useful; why students just may find it interesting; and why a few in the past have actually fallen in love with it. A good introduction provides a bit of background; it builds connections by identifying shared experiences and common interests. The details offered in a good introduction motivate continued conversation.

- The first day gives you the chance to explain why this course and the content of this field matter to you. Of all the potential majors, you chose one in this field—how did that happen? Did you choose well? Why?

- Most courses develop important skills—concrete ones like how to calculate the Doppler shift and less specific ones like how to evaluate evidence or construct a persuasive argument. The first day is a
Lessons available?

• Know your students
• Relationship-community first
• Promises and exploration
• Battle? Journey together?
• Your role?

Introduce the Instructor
Set a Positive Tone/Atmosphere
Course objectives/expectations
Conversation vs. Performance
“... the routine many outstanding teachers follow the first day of class... they usually talk about the promises of the course, about the kinds of questions the discipline will help students answer, or about the intellectual, emotional, or physical abilities that it will help them develop. ... inviting colleagues to dinner rather than ... a bailiff summoning someone to court” (Bain, 2004, pp. 36-37)
intended Learning Outcomes

What do you want students to be able to do (knowledge, skills, attitudes) by the end of the course?
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