

Teaching Messages Collection 2024-25

13 Teaching Messages from 10 Institutions



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Getting to Know My Students

I tell my students I want to know them beyond an academic number. I keep the information totally private so there is not any violation of privacy.

I ask them where they live and the size of their town; the attendance of their church and their involvement; their employment status. I also ask if they are married and have children and what they enjoy doing for hobbies.

I put this data into an Excel spread sheet that I have easily available when I am grading assignments. I check my information, "Oh, this is Missy who goes to a small church in a rural area of Georgia." This helps my heart connect with them.

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A Relationship-Rich Education and Student Success

When I think about student success, I tend to take the long view. When I think about student success, I think of alumni, 10 or 15 years post-graduation, who are working at a job in their field. They are financially secure, or getting there. They are living in a community where they have roots, and they're in good health.

My thinking evolved to think about student success this way in 2014, when the first *Great Jobs, Great Lives* [report](#) was published by Gallup and Purdue. It reports on a survey of over 30,000 college alumni, in which they were asked about their college experiences, their current employment, and five different areas of wellbeing (the [Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index](#)):

- **Purpose Well-Being:** Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals
- **Social Well-Being:** Having strong and supportive relationships and love in your life
- **Financial Well-Being:** Effectively managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security
- **Community Well-Being:** The sense of engagement you have with the areas where you live, liking where you live, and feeling safe and having pride in your community
- **Physical Well-Being:** Having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis

What they found, initially, was unsurprising: life *in* college matters for life *after* college. But there was a surprise: based on the data, they concluded that it's not *where* you go to college that shapes your life. It's what you *do while you're there* that matters. Particularly important was that, as students, they felt supported and had various deep learning experiences. The more of these experiences students had while in college, the better their long-term outcomes after college.

Feeling supported had to do with relationships with professors and mentors. Specifically, alumni cited having a professor who made them excited about learning, having a professor who cared about them as a person, and having mentors who asked them challenging questions to help them really consider their goals, and encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams. *Deep learning experiences* are often experiential, for example, an internship or a job where students are applying what they've learned in class. Other activities that fall into this category include working on an extended project that runs one or more semesters in length, or being actively involved in extracurricular activities and organizations.

Let's dig deeper into relationships with professors and mentors. That's what Peter Felten and Leo Lambert (2020) did when they interviewed nearly 400 students, faculty, and staff at 29 institutions, eliciting their thoughts and experiences about the power of relationships in enriching a college education.



Building an environment that fosters these relationships is something that each of us can do. There are four principles underlying a relationship-rich education.

- First, **all students must experience genuine welcome and deep care**. This builds a sense of belonging and lays groundwork for students to thrive.
- Second, **relationships are a powerful means to inspire all students to learn**. In class, share your excitement about the topic. Share why you got into this field, and what you hope to pass on to your students. Sharing your own excitement, combined with an interest in your students' success, is a powerful motivator to learn.
- Third, **all students must develop webs of significant relationships**. The expression "it takes a village" holds true when it comes to seeking mentors. Not only do different people provide different perspectives, they also give students access to multiple networks. This web of relationships leverages the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) and enables what Felten and Lambert call "warm handoffs" – for example, connection to a faculty member who is looking for students to join her research team.
- Fourth and finally, **all students need meaningful relationships to help them and to challenge them to explore the big questions in their lives**. Questions like, who am I? What is my purpose in the world? What gifts do I have to offer the world? What gives meaning to my life?

Relationships take a little time but they don't cost anything. Building relationships with our students is one simple thing we can do that helps them feel that they matter in this classroom, they matter on this campus. So I leave you with this thought: what can you do to create a relationship-rich environment in your classroom?

Note: New York Tech Libraries has purchased the e-book; you can access it and download a copy to read offline at <https://bit.ly/RREatNYIT> (New York Tech login required).

Resources:

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Exploring the Limits of Generative AI in Disciplinary Contexts: Empowering Students' Human-Centric Skills

Since the global launch of ChatGPT in Fall 2022, instructors faced a new question in higher education: will we incorporate large language model generative artificial intelligence (i.e. ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, etc.) into our pedagogy? The *Chronicle* and *Inside Higher Ed* offer frequent discussion of how instructors nationwide continue to learn about the logistics of generative AI, debate ethical implications engaging these tools, and address intellectual property and data security concerns. Research suggests students, however, have different concerns. 72% of students think their college or university *should* prepare them for AI in the workplace; specifically, students prioritize understanding how to engage with gen AI ethically and critically (Flaherty, *Inside Higher Ed*, 2024).

The following assignment will enable instructors across disciplinary fields to support student interaction with gen AI while empowering students to see how their humanness can enhance those tools in their future jobs (Bowen & Watson 2024).

1. Prompt gen AI (e.g. ChatGPT, Perplexity, etc.) to write an essay based on course content.
2. Give students the generated essay for an exam or during an in-class activity.
3. Task students with answering some of the following questions in writing or in class discussion about the generated essay:
 - Assess Accuracy: If you were grading the generated essay for accuracy/correctness, what grade (A, B, C, or D) would you assign it and why? Use concrete examples from course materials in your response.
 - Identify at least two pieces of correct evidence in this generated essay and indicate what sources you read, watched, or studied that I assigned for this class that informed your assessment.
 - Identify at least two places in the generated essay where ChatGPT 3.5 is incorrect. Correct the information. Indicate what source you read, watched, or studied that I assigned for this class that informed your ability to correct this information.
 - Evaluate Information Literacy: If you were grading the generated essay for how successfully it generates and uses terminology we've learned in this class, what grade (A, B, C, or D) would you assign it and why? Use specific examples from the essay and that we've discussed in class in your response.
 - Additions and Deletions: What other additional information would you add or delete to improve the generated essay? Why? Be sure to explain your reasoning for making these changes. (This might be a good space to identify any biases if you think that they are present in the generated essay.)

Assessment questions in this assignment intentionally link assigned course materials to the artificially generated essay. In doing so, we foster student critical thinking, inviting students to fact-check generative AI, build information literacy, and assess the AI tool itself. We also offer students an opportunity to explore the capabilities and limits of generative AI in the specific disciplinary area.



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Having the Talk: Unauthorized AI Use at the Dawn of the AI Era

Maybe you've talked to your students about AI from day one of the semester, clarifying acceptable use in your course. Still, you suspect that a student in your class has used AI in ways that you have not permitted. Talking to the student under these circumstances is absolutely necessary.

How we approach this discussion matters. Given that higher education and society as a whole are still working through the ramifications of these technologies, old models based upon how we deal with plagiarism and other forms of student misconduct may not apply. The all too common underlying metaphor is one of policing, where we play the cop and treat students like criminals. This approach will only inhibit our ability to adapt and grow in this new learning environment.

Instead, consider focusing on how you can turn the unauthorized use of AI into an opportunity for both you and the student to learn and grow. A calm, honest conversation about why and how the student used AI tools can provide you with insight into how the student perceives both the AI tools and your course. This information is far more valuable than any satisfaction to be gained by busting the student. So instead of playing gotcha with the student, seek answers to the following questions:

1. What motivated the student to use AI to cut corners? Were the directions for the assignment difficult to understand? Were the stakes too high grade-wise? Did activities intended to scaffold the assignment not achieve the goal of preparing the student for success? Or were there outside factors at play?
2. What tool or tools did the student use? How did they make use of them? At what point in the process was the tool employed? How many rounds of prompting were required to get to the final submission?

In this early period of AI adoption, this information is crucial to you and your colleagues. Better to grant wide leniency and gain the inside scoop than punish a student for failing to navigate these new waters. Once the student has provided detailed answers to these questions, you can turn to addressing how you can help the student and what the student can do to document their learning without violating your guidelines. Try asking the student what they think they could do to fix the situation before you rush to apply some sort of penalty.

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Teaching Ethical Use of AI in the Classroom

Last fall, I came to realize there is no use in fighting students using AI. They are going to use it, and usually they will use it poorly. I also recognize that they likely will be expected to use AI in the workplace. With this in mind, I began working with my first-year students learning how to get the best out of chat bot AI like Chat GPT and Gemini.

In the spring term, once a week, I picked a topic for them to ask their favorite chat bot about that was part of our course content. I'd give them the starting question. We'd compare answers and have a conversation about what they got back—was the output correct? Was it clear enough? Did we need to ask reframing or focusing questions to get a better answer?

What the students realized within the first couple of iterations of this activity was that what these bots spit out is almost always either overly generalized or incorrect. They enjoyed finding better questions to ask it to guide it toward better answers. I always asked the students to refer back to our readings or videos to support their claims of whether or not the bot was correct or why they were asking a different question about the topic, as well.

The last couple of weeks, I let them suggest questions for us to input to get the best answer on the first try. They were pretty good at it. By that point, I no longer needed to prompt them to double check the information in their course materials. Because one of the final chapters in that class's book was on ethics, we had a really good ethical discussion of when it was and was not appropriate to use AI in at school and at work, and how to discuss with an instructor if you had an idea of an ethical way to use it for a project if that instructor had not already discussed AI use in class.

I truly do not feel that we can “win the war” against AI. I feel the ethical thing for me to do as an educator is teach how to use it wisely. I look forward to seeing the new ways my students—from first year students to doctoral candidates—think AI can be helpful (in an ethical way!) to them in their work.

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Academic Accommodations AND Universal Design for Learning Practices

As you're settling into the new semester, it is a good time to review some strategies for supporting students who receive academic accommodations for a learning disability, sensory, or physical disability or other impairment. Even more importantly, this teaching tip includes some ideas for structuring your course and class sessions to be inclusive of all learners, using a model called Universal Design for Learning.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) requires universities to provide reasonable accommodations when a student's disability has been verified. At most universities, there is a department or office that is responsible for working with students to ensure that they have access to appropriate accommodations.

Usually, once the disability resources office or department determines that academic accommodations are required, they create a document that describes a list of accommodations to which the student is legally entitled. While specific accommodations can vary, they typically fall into one of three categories:

- Learning accommodations (e.g., notetakers, reduced courseloads)
- Testing accommodations (e.g., extended time for exams, reduced distraction testing location)
- Access accommodations (e.g., physically accessible classroom, alternative formats for textbooks)

The American Psychological Association (APA) has compiled a [useful list of examples of accommodations by type of disability and a list of accommodations for specific academic activities](#).

Interpreting and providing approved academic accommodations within the context of a specific class can be complex. Here are some practical strategies for how to work with a variety of academic accommodations.

- **Review the accommodation notification letter** for the specific accommodations that have been approved for the student. Accommodations are not specific to each course. Consider the accommodations that will be most relevant to your class and assignment structure. Keep in mind that an accommodation for extended time on an exam may not be relevant to the assignments in your course. Be sure to review the accommodations carefully, for example: extended time on a timed exam is not the same as extended time to submit all graded assignments.
- **Meet privately with the student** to discuss how they would like to proceed with their approved accommodations. *Please note: it is never appropriate to ask a student to identify their specific disability.* The notification letter provides all the necessary information for faculty to proceed with adjusting course structure and materials. However, many times, students will have several approved accommodations, but they don't intend to utilize all of these on a regular basis. It is appropriate to ask them to describe more specifically which accommodations they anticipate being the most utilized, given the structure of your course and assignments.
- **Ask them** if they've utilized these accommodations in other educational settings in the past and if so, which ones were most beneficial for them. They may have an accommodation for



a notetaker but may describe that they found that having access to the instructor's lecture notes was more useful than a fellow student's notes.

- **Discuss how you think their approved accommodations will interface with your course content and structure.** As examples: if you plan to have spontaneous quizzes and your student has an accommodation for extended time on timed exams, you will want to talk with them in advance about how they can utilize their extended time accommodation during quizzes. If they have an accommodation for a front row seat, you will want to talk with them in advance about whether this seating is necessary during small group work, if you typically move students around the room for these in-class small group activities. If they indicate that remaining in their front row seat is the most beneficial, ensure that you provide instructions for how to arrange into small groups in such a way that the student with the accommodation isn't singled out for their inability to participate in a particular manner. (Don't invite students to organize themselves anywhere around the room, for example).

And now, let's talk about how you can structure all your class sessions to be inclusive of all students, without having to make significant numbers of accommodations for individual students (recognizing that you will, of course, need to follow all approved accommodations as well).

The [Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) framework is designed to ensure that all learners can participate in meaningful and challenging learning opportunities. The UDL guidelines provide concrete suggestions for how to offer multiple options for engagement and knowledge demonstration, how to provide alternatives for visual or auditory information, and how to provide graphic organizers, templates, and note-taking guides to help students keep information organized. An updated set of guidelines ([version 3.0](#)) was released in July 2024. Broadly, this iteration ensures that UDL is recognized as an asset based pedagogy and emphasizes the need to address barriers that are rooted in biased systems of exclusion.

Here are a few UDL aligned suggestions that you can implement in your next class session:

- Use Closed Captioning on all videos and use [PowerPoint's "Real-Time Subtitles"](#) option when you are lecturing in person. For virtual classes, ensure that you turn on the captioning (live transcription) option in your virtual platform. Here is an introduction for how to [start automated captioning in Zoom](#).
- Use the ["Accessibility Checker" in Canvas](#), (other LMS platforms have similar options) to make sure that your [Word documents are accessible](#) and [use an OCR \(Optical Character Recognition\) program](#) to ensure that images of text in your PDFs are machine readable. All of these are helpful for individuals who use screen readers.
- For students who have limited mobility, ensure that there are multiple ways to participate in the interactive components of your class. Use a peer coach or observer role that doesn't require being highly mobile. Assign peer coach or observer roles to several students, so the student with limited mobility isn't singled out for their inability to participate in a particular manner.

Happy teaching!

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Save Time Teaching with Scalable Learning Templates

Quality curriculum planning is key to enhancing student learning experience and success. But how can institutions achieve this while there is too much to be checked on the to-do list? Teaching templates emerge as the game-changing method to help faculties reduce workload, save time, and achieve better outcomes.

[The FeedbackFruits Learning Design Community](#) is created to be a central platform of tried and tested templates for learning activities, assessment rubrics, and learning journeys. With the Learning Design Community, educators can:

- Access and customize over 50 templates ranging from learning activities, comprehensive learning journeys, and detailed rubrics, created and shared by institutions worldwide
- Engage with educators around the world to share insights, resources, and best practices
- Choose and implement any learning templates with just one click. Streamline your workflow, minimize unnecessary tasks, and dedicate more time to what truly matters – the students.
- Explore use cases and examples detailing how other institutions worldwide are applying the templates. Participate in community discussions, share your templates, and collaborate with other educators to continuously improve and innovate your teaching practices.

The Learning Design Community will continue to grow with more templates so make sure to check it out regularly.

References and resources

- All templates can be accessed and downloaded on [this page](#)
- Read more about how FeedbackFruits templates [in this article](#)
- [This article](#) explains in detail the Learning Design Community

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Facilitate Authentic Assessment with Pedagogical Technology

Here is an outline for a learning journey that will support students in developing real-life as well as academic skills. It's a new take on problem-based learning, allowing for meaningful peer-to-peer interactions and one-on-one discussions between instructors and students.

Step 1: Case study analysis

Instructors upload case studies to the [Interactive Study Materials tools](#) that outline a real-life problem and annotate the materials with explanations, questions, and discussion threads. Students work in groups to discuss the use case and respond to the prompts.

Step 2: In-class clarification

After students have studied the content, instructors hold a clarification session to address the knowledge gaps and questions of students.

Step 3: Group discussion and first draft

Based on the previous research and discussions, groups can then discuss solutions to a case study problem, and then draft written reports.

Step 4: AI-generated feedback on the first draft

Students submit their first drafts to the [Automated Feedback tool](#), which analyzes the report and provides instant, formative feedback on students' technical writing aspects such as grammar, spelling, citation, etc.

Step 5: Peer feedback on the first draft

Students then submit the first draft to the [Peer Review tool](#) and provide feedback on other groups' submissions based on a set of criteria.

Step 6: Final draft and submission

Students improve and finalize their writing based on the feedback and insights from the teacher. They then submit the work and receive teacher feedback within the [Assignment Review tool](#).

Step 6: Group presentation and teacher feedback

In addition to their written report, each group delivers a presentation on their solutions. Peers and instructors provide feedback here as well.

Step 7: Self-reflection and group evaluation

Finally, students have the opportunity to reflect on their own and others' contributions to the group work based on a set of collaborative skills criteria in the [Group Member Evaluation tool](#).

Reference and resources

- This learning journey can be downloaded for free [here](#).
- For details regarding the tools mentioned in this teaching tip, you can refer to [the tool website](#)

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Improving Student Chemistry Understanding through Gamification

“Fun from games arises out of mastery. It arises out of comprehension. It is the act of solving puzzles that makes games fun. In other words, with games, learning is the drug.”

--Raph Koster, Entrepreneur and Game Designer

In educational literature, there has been extensive exploration into innovative teaching methodologies focused on enhancing student learning and improving knowledge retention. A prime example is the integration of “gamification” into the classroom, where elements of games are infused into traditional lessons or activities. Remarkably, gamification has been shown to aid in cognitive development and to significantly heighten the level of engagement in classrooms.^{1,2}

As someone deeply immersed in the fields of Education and Chemistry as well as someone who loves games, I couldn't help but to be fascinated by studies delving into gamification strategies. While reading into studies involving these strategies, I became interested in developing chemistry lessons that utilize this gamification methodology to motivate students while also increasing retention and scientific literacy. I decided to embark on the journey of redesigning some of my assignments in organic chemistry to include some “game-like” elements. My strategy involved incorporating “clues” into each of my ten take-home assignments. Each assignment, upon completion, gives a student one digit to their random ten-digit code. If a student successfully completes their mystery code, they would be rewarded at the end of the semester. The rewards can vary depending on the preference of the instructor. This innovative approach aimed to make learning more engaging while fostering a sense of excitement and achievement amongst my chemistry students.

In the initial phases of implementing this approach, students have displayed a great deal of enthusiasm. When I initially developed these assignments to give students a fun and interactive organic chemistry experience, I hadn't anticipated the extent of enjoyment it would also bring to me. The satisfaction I have gained from crafting this gamified teaching strategy far surpasses the hurdles associated with creating new and impactful assignments. An example of an assignment is given below.

Hidden Clue Assignment Example:

The first assignment of the semester is on chemistry nomenclature, where students attain a list of chemical structures that they must name correctly and find in a word search. Once the word search is completed, the code is revealed using the letters that were not circled or crossed off. By revealing the code, the student is then able to attain the first digit of their code.

Submitted by:

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Do I Have to Teach that Class Online? Perusall: A Tool for Social Online Learning

A few months ago I was asked a dreaded question, “Have you ever considered teaching that class online? There is a real need for an online section.” My knee-jerk response was, “No way, I hate discussion boards, and the class is discussion-based.” I know there is a need to offer courses online, but I always swore I would never teach them. I had worked hard to develop discussion-based classes that are friendly and collegial and make the most of face-to-face discussions. There was no way I could translate that into an online environment. However, a colleague introduced me to [Perusall](#) and the concept of social online learning. Perusall is an online platform claiming to “transform nearly any type of course content into a social learning experience, driving meaningful engagement and deeper understanding.” After watching a demo and hearing testimonials from several colleagues, I was willing to give Perusall and that online class a try.

Perusall has a tiered pricing scale that allows instructors to adopt a book from their online catalog, purchase an institutional license, or use the site license free when using free resources. I was using free resources and was pleased to know I would not have to add a cost to my course. Additionally, Perusall can connect directly with your LMS to make it more accessible for students and faculty. Once an instructor uploads readings or videos into the Perusall library, they can create dated assignments and add questions or prompts throughout the materials that form a social media-like thread. Students can then answer questions in the thread, tag classmates in their responses, and add hashtags. While the resulting discussion is not exactly like a face-to-face classroom setting, the thread allows students time to consider their answers without the pressure of a spur-of-the-moment in-class comment. All students, even the most introverted, can comfortably participate in the discussion, and the ability to tag classmates in discussion points helps build the collegiality you often see in an in-person class. Instructors can generate analytics reports, including student engagement reports, that show how many comments or responses a student has made, and the average amount of time spent on a given reading or module.

I am about 75% through that online class that I was hesitant to teach, and it is going spectacularly! Students are engaged with the material and the social threads in a way I did not expect and even the most introverted students are engaged in class discussion. Is Perusall a replacement for in-class discussion? No. However, it is a wonderful tool for building a collegial, active, engaged online class.

Submitted by:

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How to Mindfully Reflect on Your Teaching Practices

This teaching tip emphasizes the value of taking a mindful pause to reflect on our teaching practices within the context of middle or end of semester student evaluations.

Most higher education settings have some process for gathering student feedback on courses and faculty members. There are many research articles that describe the benefits and limitations of course evaluations, which is not the point of this teaching tip (but if you want to dig deeper into thinking about how to design, administer and use student feedback, [here is a link](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6630867/) (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6630867/) to a 2019 study(i), and [here are some tips](#) for building a culture of feedback (ii).

For now, let's step back from the points and counterpoints about course evaluations to acknowledge that your students are experiencing your course and they do have feedback for you. The benefit of reading your evaluation report, flawed though it may be, is that you are then aware of how they're experiencing it and thus, can determine how you want to approach the course and your teaching in the future.

Being a reflective instructor means approaching all aspects of teaching in a mindful way. There are many types of practices that ground us at the start of each semester or before or after each class session. · Writing down goals for the semester is one evidence-based approach. This works best if you regularly check in with yourself (bonus points for checking in with an accountability partner, like a TA, co-instructor or faculty colleague) about how those goals are being implemented and modified in real time, based on the needs of your students and course content.

You may find it useful to practice a short meditation before a class discussion that you know will draw out differing perspectives. With a contentious US election and other global events happening now (and always) there will be lots of these types of class discussions. Try this 3 minute option or this 12 minute option. Just breathing deeply before walking into the classroom counts too! · Using a structured debrief tool with TAs or co-instructors can help us understand what was driving discussion, or the lack of it, around a specific topic.

Now, back to those course evaluations! Reflective teaching practices include approaching student evaluations with equanimity and objectivity. (Learn more about equanimity by watching this 11 minute video). You will probably find it helpful to center yourself before opening your evaluation reports, using something like this 9.5 minute video. After reading the evaluations, you might find it helpful to do another meditation, like this 10 minute one, focused on letting go.

Understanding the learner experience through student feedback is just one element of being a reflective instructor (iii). Having other reflective teaching practices makes it easier to see the value of some or all of their feedback.

Happy teaching!

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Conquering Test Anxiety: A Growth Mindset Game Plan

“I just have test anxiety,” a student tried to explain after receiving a C minus on the first test of the semester. Shaking her head in defeat, she concluded, “I never do well on tests.”

In recent years, test anxiety has become a thing (Lovett et al., 2024; Sawchuk, 2024). In a 2022 survey of 54,000 undergraduate college students, a shocking 77% reported experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress (College Transitions, 2024). As a result of such statistics, some experts have advocated for protecting students from the test-taking experience by offering alternatives such as group projects and presentations (Coates, 2024). This trend has rapidly extended from the classroom level to the institutional level. As of the 2023-2024 academic year, 83% of four-year colleges and universities in the United States had adopted ACT/SAT-optional admissions practices (Nietzel, 2023), relying instead on things like high school GPA and personal essays to determine prospective students' likelihood of success in college.

Fixed Versus Growth Mindset

But allowing test anxiety to become a perpetual excuse for poor testing performance signals faulty reasoning and activates self-fulfilling prophecy. Settling for “I’m just not good at taking tests (or doing math or giving speeches)” is evidence of a fixed mindset, defined by Dweck (2015) as the belief that intelligence is limited by genetics. When a person becomes convinced that they can’t do something, it is almost guaranteed that they won’t be able to do it. This is a weak position for any college student to occupy – and an irresponsible position for college instructors to endorse.

A growth mindset, on the other hand, is the belief that intelligence can be developed throughout one’s lifetime (Dweck, 2015). Put another way, practice makes perfect. Maier and colleagues (2021) found that the greater a student’s self-efficacy, the lower their test anxiety. Claybourn (2023) asserts, “Some stress can be healthy and motivate students to be productive, but preventing it from becoming overwhelming requires a game plan” (para. 6). Helping students develop a game plan is exactly where we, as college instructors, can help students conquer test anxiety as opposed to enabling it.

But first, a few examples. Does anyone remember their first kiss? Driving a car for the first time? Answering questions during an important job interview? There are times in life when we are anxious, but we deal with our anxiety in order to accomplish a goal or desire. When we are motivated toward something, we prepare, we practice, we rehearse. We take risks. We are open to feedback. And when we don’t succeed the first time, we try again, learning from our mistakes. Admittedly, taking a test is not half as motivating as kissing someone, but the concept is similar. If you want to pass a course – and if you want to pass with an A or B – you need to make an effort. You will have to take risks. You must be open to feedback. And if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.

Help Students Develop a Growth Mindset Game Plan

So, how can we help our students conquer test anxiety? It begins on the first day of class.

1. When you review the course syllabus for the first time, let students know exactly when they will be taking each test or quiz along with the general content (e.g., chapters 1-4) they will be expected to know, understand, or demonstrate at that point in time. Reassure students from the beginning that the information they will be tested on will



come directly from required course readings, class activities, and assignments – and be sure to make that happen.

2. At least two weeks prior to each test (ideally sooner), provide students with a test-specific study guide that transparently lists everything students must know and be able to do in order to perform well on the test.
3. Following each class session, or at least once a week, summarize the content covered and suggest what students should be doing to master the content in preparation for the test:
 - In preparation for class, students should closely read the assigned readings – possibly more than once.
 - During class time, students should actively listen, take notes, participate in discussions and activities, and ask questions.
 - Following class, students should review notes, presentation slides, handouts, and other information.
 - In preparation for the test, students should use the study guide as a tool for reviewing and reinforcing knowledge and understanding of the course content.

Show Students How to Study

As each test date draws near, spend some time in class showing (and later in the semester, reminding) students how to study.

1. Students should use the course study guide to prepare a customized study guide by re-wording each item on the guide into a question. Then, students should compile definitions, examples, or other information from the course readings, handouts, their own notes, etc. to answer each question. For essay questions, they should prepare a brief outline of main points.
2. Days before the test, students should spend time memorizing (yes, memorizing) all of the questions and notes on their customized study guide.
3. Immediately before the test, students should get a good night's sleep, eat a healthy breakfast, and engage in positive self-talk and relaxation exercises. Students should allow plenty of time to get to class for testing so that they do not arrive in a harried state.

Does all of this seem like a lot of work? Yes, but after all, earning a college degree requires a bit of work. Will all of this effort lead to lower test anxiety? Maybe not at first, but it is likely to once students see the first few test questions and realize that they know the answers. Will students walk away following the test in a daze as if they have just experienced their first kiss? Absolutely not, but they will feel a sense of relief, satisfaction, and perhaps hope. These feelings can be positively reinforced by you – the college instructor – by praising students for their efforts (regardless of their resulting test scores) and encouraging them to persist. In addition to helping students succeed in the here-and-now, you will be equipping them to overcome test anxiety when it's time to take professional licensure exams and graduate school entrance exams in the not-so-distant future.

By helping undergraduate college students develop a growth mindset game plan and taking time in class to show them how to study, we might not be able to help them conquer test anxiety once and for all, but we can prepare them to face it head-on – and eventually, to prevail.



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Thinking Critically: Collaborating between Studio Art Practice and Art History

Students who are art majors are required to take a capstone course, **Art Studio Seminar**. This course, as in many other courses across the disciplines, helps prepare students for their professional careers in their field. While the emphasis in the course is focused primarily on reading, discussion, and written analysis, I have added more experiential assignments to give students real world experience as artists.

The final project in the class is for each student to create a small exhibition of their most successful work done during their time at the college. Each student receives a specific space (approximately 4 x 8') to present their work without faculty input on either the works chosen, or how the work is installed, culminating in a group exhibition consisting of individual student displays. Each student is required to post an exhibition list of works (following museum/gallery protocol), and an artist statement related to the work in the exhibition.

This year, I changed the assignment to have each student in the course collaborate with a student in our **Modern and Contemporary Art History** course. Studio students were randomly paired with an art history student. The art history student met with the artist for a studio visit to see their work and hear the artist talk about their ideas. This meeting gave my students an opportunity to discuss their work with a stranger, and learn how to articulate their ideas to someone who was not a regular member of their studio critiques. While many of the art history students were art majors and familiar with studio practice, others were students in unrelated fields who were taking the course for GE Humanities credit and only familiar with looking at art works within the course content. After meeting, the art history student was required to write a critical essay on their partner's work which would be displayed along with the work.

This collaboration benefited both groups of students as it gave them real world experience, moving beyond the theoretical into the practical. Students had to share ideas, listen closely, ask questions, think deeply about another person's work, reflect, and write critically.

Advantages of the project for both sets of students:

- Students had an opportunity to understand and practice the skills that they will need in their careers and gain understanding of their discipline specific practice, whether presenting their work in an exhibition or writing critically about previously unknown work.
- Allowed students meaningful and practical engagement with course material.
- Students had an opportunity to meet and talk to a peer with similar interests and collaborate together, while overcoming the fears of sharing personal information about their work or ideas.
- Students learn to write effectively to convey their ideas to an unknown audience.
- Students move from the theoretical to the practical and learn applicable skills in their field.
- Students make connections between art practice and the critical analysis of art.
- Increased motivation as students were excited about sharing their work outside of class and art history students were excited about seeing the work of their peers.



Advantages for studio students:

- Students learn to curate a body of work for exhibition and make visual and conceptual connections in order to write effectively about their work in an artist statement.
- Students learn to articulate ideas about their work in order to share their thoughts with someone unfamiliar with their work.
- Students learn to understand their own studio practice and reflect on the response of the viewer to their work.
- Students learn to install their work for an exhibition, making decisions regarding placement and other curatorial resolutions.

Advantages for art history students:

- Students learn to use their skills of analysis on contemporary works of art of varying degrees of quality instead of writing only about canonical works of art.
- Students see what actual artists are creating and have the opportunity to reflect on the work in the context of contemporary art practice.

At the conclusion of the exhibition, studio students were required to write a reflection on the experience of the project and the collaboration with their peers. Overall, the response was highly positive and all of the students recommended that we continue this collaboration each year. Students felt that the critical essays by their partners were well written and understood what the work was trying to convey to the viewer.

Suggestions for future collaborations were to start the process earlier in the semester. While this may work in theory, students may not be ready to meet and discuss their work earlier in the semester. Students had about 5 weeks to connect, meet, and write their essays. As always, some students started immediately, while others were still reaching out a few days before the essay was due. Part of the late start was on my part, as I came up with the idea of collaboration after returning from a February conference, and it took some time to coordinate with other faculty members.

As faculty, we need to be more proactive with a clear schedule of deadlines and followup from both myself and my art history colleagues. Despite the positive response on the part of students, there were varying levels of quality in both the exhibitions and the critical essays which needs to be addressed with the addition of a clear rubric and expectations. Some students had trouble connecting with their partners but did not let us know. Another issue that came up was the personal nature of some of the works and the reluctance of some students to share their meaning with their partner. However, this was a learning experience for my studio students as they need to learn to speak about their work and be prepared for possible misinterpretations. Once it leaves the studio, all work is open to numerous interpretations beyond the artist's control. While this collaboration was specific to the arts, the potential for collaborations across the disciplines and pairing with related or unrelated courses offers students the opportunity to enrich their learning and think in new and innovative ways. Sharing

unfamiliar ideas, listening closely, asking questions, thinking deeply about another person's work, reflecting, and writing critically are relevant skills that are important to learn in every course.

Resources:

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Twenty-Two Tried-and-True Teaching Tips: A Free, Online Resource for College Instructors

Are you responsible for providing onboarding, mentoring, and support to new college instructors or faculty new to your institution? If so, you may be interested in [Twenty-Two Tried-and-True Teaching Tips for College Instructors](#). This 70-page, research-based booklet offers a collection of 22 practical teaching tips for novice and developing college instructors. Written by a state-licensed teacher and experienced college professor (me) in a friendly, conversational tone, each teaching tip includes a description or examples, step-by-step instructions, and supporting references and resources. Key take aways, bonus tips, warnings, reflection boxes, and an indexed glossary offer supplemental information, support, and encouragement. This open-source booklet can be downloaded, printed, and bound for individual study or collaborative professional development.

You can use this free, online teaching resource in a variety of ways:

- Share the link directly with faculty, department chairs, or others to read and use as they wish.
- Download, print, and bind copies of the booklet as a welcome gift for new faculty.
- Use the booklet to structure a half- or full-day workshop for new or adjunct faculty.
- Use the booklet to structure a semester-long, once-a-week workshop for new or adjunct faculty.
- Use the booklet as a basis for one-on-one or small group mentoring.
- Organize a “book group” for new and/or experienced faculty and ask a different participant to lead discussion around a designated teaching tip each week.
- Select a handful of specific teaching tips and challenge new faculty to try them over a month’s time before convening to report out to the group.
- Ask new college instructors to read one teaching tip per week, try it, and reflect in writing about how it worked, how they can customize it, and how they can use it (or not) in the future.
- Share one teaching tip per week campuswide, via email.
- Post one teaching tip per week on your teaching center website and encourage interactive online discussion, alternative approaches, and additional tips.
- Encourage new faculty to observe experienced faculty as they teach, using one or more specific teaching tips as a basis for observation and subsequent discussion.
- Encourage new and experienced faculty to use the teaching tips as a model for writing and submitting their own teaching tips to tlwritingconsortium@lists.wku.edu!

These are only some of the options available. I’m sure you will think of others. However you choose to use this free, online resource, I hope you and the faculty you support find [Twenty-Two Tried-and-True Teaching Tips for College Instructors](#) enlightening and useful!

Reference/Resource



Hunzicker, J. L. (2023). Twenty-two tried-and-true teaching tips for college instructors (ED629485). ERIC. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED629485.pdf>

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