



Idaho State University

Strategies to Create Connection in the Classroom in the First Four Weeks

This document provides strategies to build classroom connections in the first four weeks of class. The categories in the table below are adapted from Joshua Eyster's (2018) theory of social pedagogy which suggests that a crucial aspect of effective teaching is creating a social classroom environment which is largely comprised of three aspects: (1) cultivating a sense of *connection*, (2) establishing *classroom organization* strategies that encourage learning and positive interaction, and (3) serving as intellectual *models* for our students to encourage a vibrant learning environment.

Below is a self-rating to help you to reflect on how well you engage in social pedagogy in the classroom. Evaluate yourself in the following manner:

1 = I do this well and consistently

2 = I do this, but not as well or consistently as I would like

3 = I do not do this, and I would like to try

Self-Rating	Connecting
	Learn your students' names.
	Express to your students that you want them to succeed in your class.
	Share information about yourself and your excitement for your subject.
	Provide opportunities for students to share their chosen names and pronouns with you.
	Connect students with one another by using ice breakers and small groups (not just on the first day, but throughout class).
	Provide a "big picture" context of your class. How does this class connect with students' academic and professional goals? What are the specific student learning outcomes that your course will address?
	Provide links and contact points for student support services in your syllabus.
	Encourage the use of office hours and give them a reason to stop by or Zoom in (i.e., getting feedback on an assignment, checking grades, etc.).
	Classroom Organization

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	Set and discuss class norms and ground rules.
	Provide students with information and expectations on how to be successful in your class.
	Create assignments and activities that get students actively engaged (i.e., talking, problem solving, and writing) in class.
	Create strategies to help students get to know the syllabus (i.e., syllabus quiz, Zoom polls, small group discussions).
	Create and use rubrics for assignments so students clearly know and understand assignment expectations.
	Use formative assessment techniques at least once a week (e.g., muddiest point, one-minute paper, exit ticket, etc.).
	Help students set goals for each class period.
	Actively engage students in the first 5-10 minutes of class.
	Provide students with tips and strategies on how to study for tests and exams (you might even consider giving them a low-stakes practice exam and proctor exams before the final if you are using this approach).
	Clearly communicate and outline grade policies on the syllabus.
	In your syllabus, communicate response-time etiquette. Let students know that you will respond to their questions in a timely manner.
	After the first few weeks of class, check in with students. Are they clear on assignments? Are they managing workload well, etc.?
	Discuss student progress within the first few weeks. What do they need to do to maintain success? What might they do differently to be more successful? Provide suggestions for on-campus support that might help them.
	Modeling
	Share and model strategies to help students respond appropriately to "hot topics" or conflicting ideas in the classroom.
	Model the behavior you expect from students in class - be organized, prepared, on-time, and professional.
	Manage conflict and tension in the classroom in a timely, proactive, and caring manner. This will encourage students to speak up even on difficult topics.

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References and Resources

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- Eyler, J. R. (2018). *How humans learn: The science and stories behind effective college teaching*. West Virginia University Press.
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