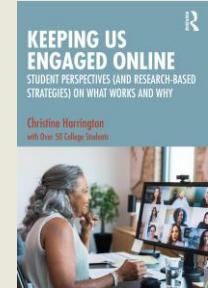
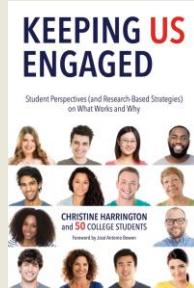
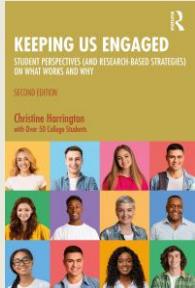


# Keeping Us Engaged: Student Perspectives (and Research-Based Strategies) on What Works and Why

Christine Harrington Ph.D.

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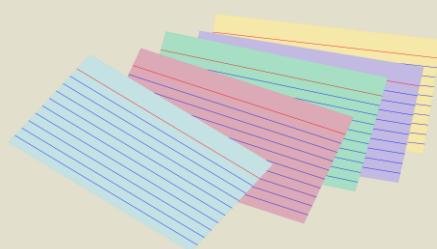
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1

## 5 Paper Fast Pass

Think of a time when you engaged your students. Briefly describe what you did and how it worked.



2

# Agenda

Developing professor-student relationships

Using powerful teaching strategies

Creating meaningful assignments

Feedback that engages

3

## Developing Professor-Student Relationships

Showing You Care

Sharing Encouraging Words

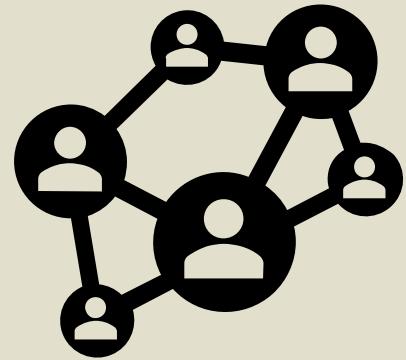
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## Relationships and Student Success

(CCSSE, 2009)

"Personal connections are the unanticipated success factor – a critical variable that improves the odds of persistence." (p. 1)



## Showing You Care

"One of the strategies that Dr. Grimes uses in her teaching is emotional well-being checks. She understands that students have different needs and challenges, and she tries to create a supportive and flexible learning environment for all of us. She checks our mood at the beginning of each class and addresses any concerns we share. For example, she may ask us how we are feeling, what we are looking forward to, or what we are struggling with. She often shares tips and resources to help us deal with our challenges. She is empathetic and accommodating to students who have genuine reasons for not meeting the deadlines or attending classes. She does not penalize them for late submissions or absences but rather encourages them to communicate with her and seek help when needed. "

## **Emotional Well-Being Checks**

### **Patricia B. Ateboh-Briggs**

### **Morgan State University**

7

## **Encouraging Words**

8

"During my first few online class meetings, I tried to be present, but I felt cringing embarrassment because what I thought was going to be easy to handle was now getting too difficult for me to manage. Eventually, I emailed my professor to see if there was any way he could spare some time to help me understand the content before I decided to give up. I fully expected a cold response and being encouraged to withdraw, but thankfully, this is not what happened. I informed my professor that I learned best in an in-person class with interaction and was missing that in this module-based learning environment. I also shared that visual and audio supports helped me learn. I was ready to hear something like, "Karen, this is not for you; you better withdraw and consider other courses." Instead, my professor gently said, "Karen, I think you are too hard on yourself. It is too soon for you to give up, and I believe you can do this." It was the first time that I experienced a professor believing I was able to rise above my worries and difficulties. My professor started itemizing the ways in which I could improve, such as focusing on the specific modules that apply to upcoming quizzes, utilizing the study guide to do the step-by-step process of learning, listening carefully for key points that he emphasizes during classes, and taking advantage of incentives offered. Moreover, he offered to tutor me on topics that I struggled to comprehend."

## **Encouraging Words and Suggested Actions, Karen Mae Ebel, Lorrain County Community College**

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"After missing a few assignment deadlines and two lectures, my professor emailed to check in on me. I was at the point where the work and lectures I had missed meant I was failing. I debated how forthcoming I wanted to be. I did not want my professor to think I was a quitter or irresponsible if I failed. Would I be pity-seeking if I told my story? I decided on a bare-bones explanation: I had just left a domestic violence situation. I am safe. I am trying to get re-oriented. I apologize for missing class and my assignments. I hope you will consider admitting me to future classes. Miraculously, my professor wrote back within the hour. She expressed concern and empathy for my situation and said she wanted to help. Together, we came up with a new set of deadlines for my work, and she offered me one-on-one tutoring for any classes I may need to miss. Truly, it was the most profound kindness I had experienced in my academic career (which had spanned nearly 4 years already as a part-time student). I sincerely encourage professors to notice when a student may be in need and to reach out. Most importantly, do not give up on your students."

## **Reaching Out and Investing in Me Persephonie Cole, Texas Tech University**

10

"In my first semester, I was taking a course that I wasn't particularly interested in, and to make matters worse, it was an early morning class. My level of engagement was effectively nonexistent, and that disengagement and lack of desire undoubtedly showed in the classroom. If he had never asked me to meet with him in person, I could have easily dismissed even the elevated level of care I noticed he had in the class as insignificant. Instead, a few minutes of actual conversation made all the difference, and seeing he genuinely cared engaged me to do exactly the same."

## An Individual Meeting with a Disengaged Student Joshua Allen Brown, Kennesaw State University

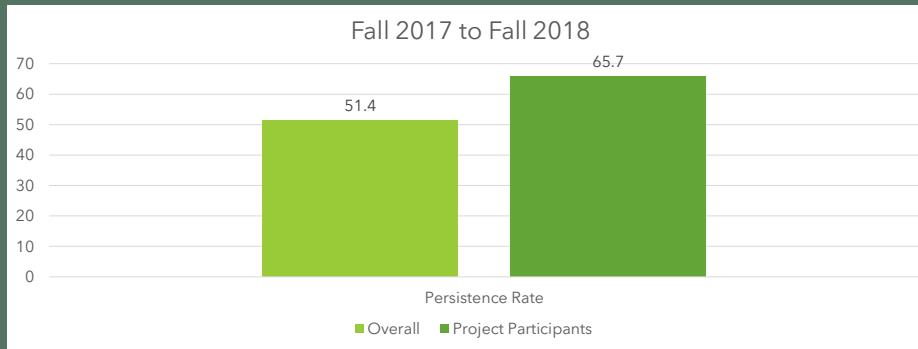
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### Persistence Project: The 15-minute Meeting

Oakton Community College, Chicago Supiano (2020)

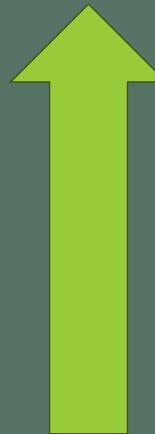
6-minute meetings for  
large classes  
(Griswold, 2024)

#### Overall Program



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## Feeling Cared For Leads To...



Engagement

Overcoming Challenges

Effort

Outcomes

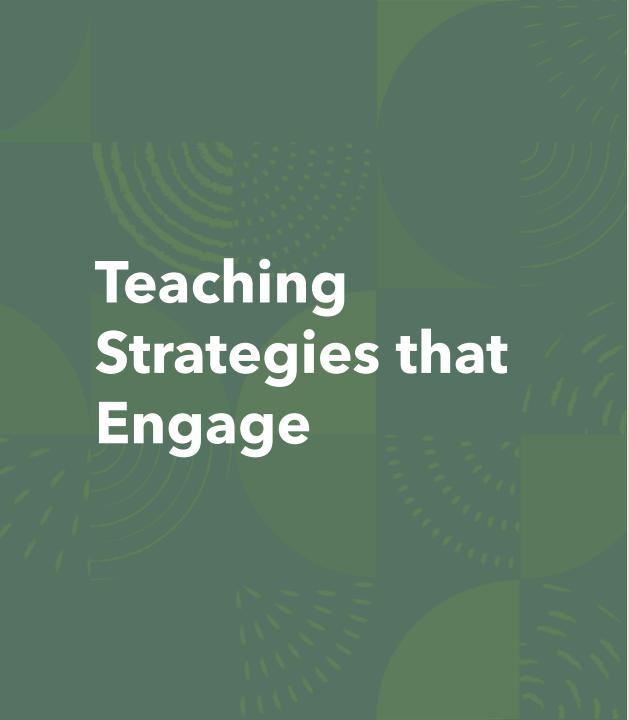
(Barnett & Cho, 2023; Demetriou et al., 2024; Dickinson & Kreitmair, 2021)

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# TURN AND TALK

What do you (or could you) do to show students you care?

14



## Teaching Strategies that Engage

Building Foundational  
Knowledge

Make it Personal

Collaborative  
Activities

15



## Building Foundational Knowledge

16

"I appreciated how she never made students feel like they "should know this" and found ways to help us learn the content. One way she did this was to remind us of the concepts we had learned before. For example, in a course on cognitive development in adolescents, she would ask the class what we knew as a baseline about cognitive development in general. When we did not know much, she would help us learn some basic concepts. When we knew about the topic, she would use our current knowledge to help us understand the new material. I have found that many professors in higher-level courses assume that students already mastered the concepts in introductory classes. However, that is not always the case. I loved how Professor Herman reinforced some of the prior knowledge before teaching newer concepts; this helped us learn more."

## **Making Sure We Understood**

**Chris Sclafani, Kean University**

17

## **Make it Personal**

18

## Making it Personal: Using Survey Data

Aditya Shah, Princeton University



19

## A Note-Card Activity

Benjamin Sackler, College of Charleston



20

# Collaborative Activities

21

"In this class, the instructor assigned a group project that required students to research an organization. Before starting the project, the instructor asked students to share what type of career they wanted to pursue. Each student was then placed into a team based on their career interests. Students also had to complete modules to learn interpersonal skills that would be helpful for teamwork. After each team member completed the modules, each team was asked to elect a leader, assign roles to the remainder of the team members, and agree on rules for the project."

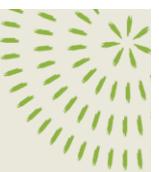
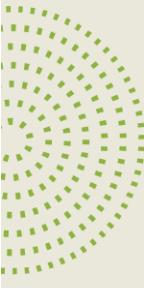
**Online Group Project**  
**Edwin S. Lee, San Jose State University**

22



**Team-Based  
Quizzes and  
Discussions**  
**Katelyn Benes,  
Taylor University**

23



## **Collaboration and Learning**

- Facilitates deeper levels of learning (Durham et al., 2018; Swanson et al., 2019)
- But....
  - 47% of community college students reported they NEVER worked with a classmate outside of class
  - 26% reported NEVER working with other students during class

(Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2023)

24

# Group Projects Increase Success



Sayegh & Rigopoulos (2023)

25

## Creating Meaningful Assignments that

- Are Innovative and Meaningful
- Give Choice
- Build Foundational Skills
- Are Authentic
- Foster Creativity

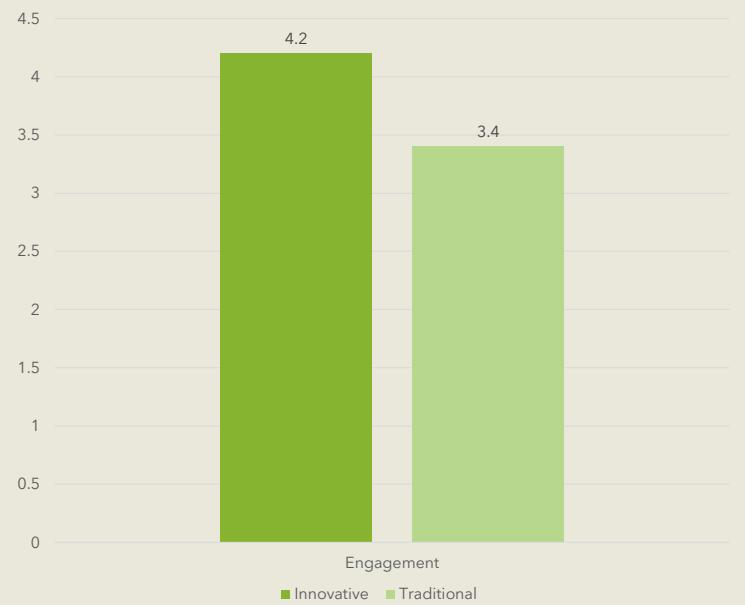
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# Innovative and Meaningful

27

## Innovative Assignments

Aliah et al. (2024)



28

"My Creating Social Change course has been one of the best classes I have taken in my undergraduate career. The key difference between this course and the numerous others that I have taken was the diverse and creative assignments. While there were some traditional assignments, such as discussion boards and essays, we also had to do social annotations of required readings, art projects, petitions, and more. When we have to do the same task week after week, it can become monotonous. Varied assignments, however, engage and challenge us in an assortment of ways while also helping us develop and strengthen a multidisciplinary set of skills so that we can become more well-rounded professionals. Although the diversified assignment approach made the course more challenging because it pushed us outside of our comfort zones, it also made it more refreshing and less tedious."

## **Diverse Assignments, Wesley Russell, University of Oklahoma**

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**Give Choice**

30

## Giving Choice Caleb Morris, University of South Carolina



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## How much choice do students have? (Harrington, 2024)

Any Choice	Topic	Assignment Type	Individual or Group	Due Date
90/129	72/129	32/129	4/129	2/129
70%	56%	25%	3%	1.5%

32

# TURN AND TALK

How do you  
(or could you)  
give students  
choice in your  
class?

33

Build Foundational Skills

34

"Each week, she posted several useful documents, including a guide to reading the text. I had never been provided with a reading guide before. The reading guide provided us with a skeletal frame or outline that helped us know what we should be looking for when reading the text. Our assignment was to complete the reading guide by filling in the key content. I found the reading guides to be very helpful and instead of feeling like I was wasting my time, I now had more purpose when reading. To further support us, she also provided videos of herself giving lectures on the chapter of the week, with another printable note page to follow along with her as she taught. The recording and note-taking sheet made it feel as though I was attending the classes in person, and I felt like I got to know Professor Cole more and more with every video. I felt engaged with the professor and the material, which is not easy to do when learning behind a computer screen."

## **Reading Guides and More**

### **Casey Bond, Johnson County Community College**

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"I was pleasantly surprised that one of my graduate professors used mind maps as a teaching tool. A mind map is a creative and fun visual diagram that we can use to break down terms and organize concepts in a way that makes sense to us. In the class, my professor encouraged us to use mind maps when participating in discussion boards. In addition to sharing a narrative, we were also asked to create mind maps on the chapters or topics. We had the freedom to create the mind maps however we wished. After posting them, we could give compliments and constructive feedback to our fellow classmates and learn from each other. Although we were expected to create the mind maps independently, it was great to be able to see how our classmates did them. Sharing our ideas about the connections between the course content was the best part. Making mind maps helped me better remember the concepts from class."

## **Mind Maps, Mia Pepe, New Jersey City University**

36

"Every week, we had QCEs on a number of readings. QCE stands for Questions, Comments, and Excerpts. For the questions section, we were to ask questions about the article we read. Questions could focus on what we were curious about, such as What did the article not tell us? Who was this article written for? For the comments part of the QCE, we shared our thoughts and reactions to the reading. For example, we might make a comment disagreeing with what the author has said or describe how the article relates to our life. Lastly, for the excerpts section, we identified quotes from the article that resonated with us. We would then write about why we chose those excerpts. I initially did not see the point in doing the QCEs. After writing three or four pages for each QCE, I often thought I did not gain anything from the experience. Slowly, however, I began realizing that I was starting to question everything I read, not just what was assigned to us in class. I began to have an internal dialogue with myself about the readings and thought of them in a deeper, more meaningful way. "

## **Building Content Experience via the QCE Approach**

### **Seth Lasher, Elon University**

37

## **Are Authentic**

38

"In an Organization and Finance class, Professor Yancey Gulley, challenged us to create a mock proposal to either change an existing program or process or create an entirely new program or process in our respective departments. I work full time in a career development office. I developed a proposal to move this function from the Career Development office to the Office of Human Resources, where it better aligns with their mission and existing resources. This is something our office has tried to do in the past, but these efforts were not previously successful. This assignment was engaging for me because it was practical rather than hypothetical. It empowered and motivated me to create a proposal that had the chance of making an actual change at the university. My full-time position at the university is entry level, and if I did not have this assignment, I would not have felt qualified to create the proposal."

## **Developing a Proposal**

**Carrie Hachadurian, Western Carolina University**

39

## **Foster Creativity**

40

# Benefits of Creative Coursework

Miller (2018)

Creative  
Coursework

Confidence in  
Creative  
Thinking,  
Critical  
Thinking,  
Entrepreneurial  
Skills  
Networking  
Abilities

41

**Helping Me Discover My Passion**  
**Genevieve Jaser, Southern Connecticut State University**



42



## Feedback and Engagement

Formative Assessment Opportunities

Giving Students Opportunities to Revise

Reinforce Strengths

43



## Formative Assessment Opportunities

44

"My professor designed the final project to be completed throughout the semester by making pieces of it due on certain weeks leading up to the final date. This gave us the opportunity to complete the assignment one part at a time and receive feedback at each point. After the first assignment, she gave thorough feedback on what we could improve on for the next phase of the assignment. This approach really helps us gain confidence and skills."

## **Breaking Down a Major Assignment**

### **Kayla Jasper, Temple University**

45

## **Giving Students Opportunities to Revise**

46

"In this course, one of the major assignments was a group project that included a presentation and a paper. About halfway through the semester, the paper portion of this project was due. The professor graded the papers by the following class, and when he returned the papers to each group, he explained how we would be spending the entire class reviewing our papers. The professor then spoke to the whole class describing the requirements of this revision assignment. He told us that we would be receiving a separate grade for this second, revised submission. Knowing that this assignment was going to be graded again, we immediately became more interested in the notes and feedback that the professor had written on the returned papers. The professor then went to each group and spent 5-10 minutes discussing that group's paper with the group members while the other groups were working on the presentation portion of the project."

## Required Revisions

**Ryan Harrington, Quinnipiac University**

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## Reinforce Strengths

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"After reading my assignment, he told me I had amazing writing skills and that I should be in the college honors program. I never thought this would be possible because I had not been in school for so long. Assignment after assignment, he praised my work and convinced me that I would flourish in the honors program. Having never had a teacher take any interest in my education or success in high school, this was the moment the fire re-ignited inside me. I have long suffered from self-esteem issues and self-doubt, but I finally felt confident. Taking the time to praise students for their efforts can mean so much and give them the confidence to pursue their goals."

## **Relighting the Fire Inside Me through Praise**

### **Melissa Garner, South Florida State College**

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## **Reinforcing Strengths**

### **Christina Christodoulo, Drew University**



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# KEY TAKE-AWAY

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## THANK YOU

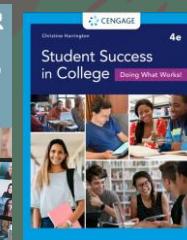
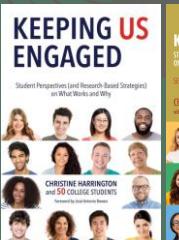
Christine Harrington Ph.D.

Professor, Advanced Studies, Leadership and Policy

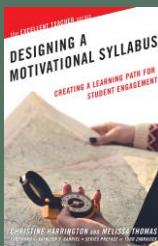
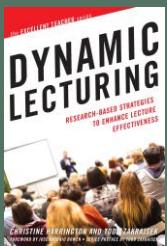
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