

40 Things You Can Do to Retain and Engage Students

Promote Help-Seeking Behaviors

1. Direct students to financial aid, tutoring labs, library, computer labs, writing and reading centers, career transfer center, counseling, and other student support services. (Organize a scavenger hunt and offer extra credit for bringing back info and flyers.)
2. Announce student drop-in hours (aka office hours) frequently.
3. Hand out business cards with your office number and email address.

Start Off Strong

4. Hit the ground running on the first day of class with substantial content, and look at #s 5-13 below.
5. Introduce yourself, why you are a teacher, and how you feel about your subject.
6. Give students an icebreaker so they can meet and learn about each other.
7. Hand out an informative, artistic, and user-friendly syllabus.
8. Give an assignment on the first day to be collected at the next meeting.
9. Give a learning style inventory to help students find out about themselves.
10. Greet students at the door when they enter the classroom.
11. Start the class on time.
12. Have students share what they want to know, their expectations for the course, or what they're afraid of about the subject.
13. Express clear expectations (ground rules on absences, late work, testing, grading, and classroom behavior) and stick to them. Establish clear rubrics for grading.

Build Connections

14. Set up a buddy system so students can contact each other or form study groups.
15. Take pictures of students in small groups or individually and post in the classroom.
16. Form small groups for projects; mix and form new groups several times.

Motivate Students and Make Class Relevant

17. Start with a puzzle, question, picture, or cartoon on overhead or PowerPoint.
18. Have students set goals – for the class, for their future, for their careers.
19. Make sure students know why they need to learn the lesson you're teaching.
20. Ask students to write about important aspects of their lives (e.g., journals).
21. Have students apply subject matter to solve real problems. Use current events that relate to topics being studied.

Engage Students with Active Learner-Centered Strategies

22. Use a variety of presentation methods and multi-media. Be aware of students' attention spans and don't lecture for more than 10-15 minutes at a time.
23. Give students opportunities to interact. See www.oncourse.com for group work strategies (jigsaw, solo/pair/share/square, etc.)
24. Stage a change-your-mind debate, with students moving to different parts of the classroom to signal change in opinion during the discussion (value line).
25. Conduct a role play or debate on alternative views.
26. Stress that readiness to learn is a key component of your course

27. Have students write often. Elicit comments and questions about course topics.

Offer Support for Learning

28. Use Early Alert to catch problems early.
29. Create an online faculty website to post assignments and information.
30. Hand out study questions or study guides.
31. Use repetition -- students should hear, read, or see key material at least three times.
32. Create an environment that encourages students to feel safe asking questions and saying “I don’t understand that.”
33. Offer mini-lessons in time management, study skills, note-taking, summarizing, critical reading, finding the main idea, outlining, and plagiarism.

Provide Feedback

34. Diagnose pre-requisite deficits early and provide feedback as soon as possible.
35. Reward desirable behavior with praise, written comments, candy.
36. Use non-graded feedback to let students know how they are doing: post answers to ungraded quizzes and problems, exercises in class, oral feedback. (Use iClickers.)
37. Maintain a grade book with grades kept current so students can check their progress at any time. (Use Excel or programs at www.gradekeeper.com or www.rcampus.com)

Create Structure

38. Be prepared with lesson plans for course units.
39. Identify your learning outcomes and be sure students know what they are expected to be able to do at the end of each lesson and at the end of the course.
40. After giving direct instruction, provide opportunities for practice and allow students to demonstrate what they’ve learned. (See Quick Thinks.) Provide closure (a recap) at the end of the class session.

YOUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO MAKE YOUR STUDENTS LOVE LEARNING!