**The 4 Connections**

# **Interact with Students by Name**

Learn your students’ names and begin using them on the first day of class and throughout the quarter.

Whatever approach you decide to use for learning and using students’ names, be sure to help students learn other students’ names, too.

## **All Modalities**

* Canvas Profiles: Ask each student to add a photo and a short personal description to their Canvas profile (be sure to do the same if you have not already). While a portrait photo is preferable to help with name memorization, some students may not feel comfortable or safe using a photo of themselves. Instead, ask them to post a photo of their favorite animated character, animal, super hero, car, etc. For the short personal description, provide prompts:
  + What are your educational goals (e.g., earn a degree or certificate, transfer, study a particular major/program, etc.)?
  + What are your career goals?
  + What are your favorite activities outside of class? Remember, this is a professional profile. 😊
  + What are your strengths as a student and/or employee and/or parent, etc.?
* Introductions: Whether in an online forum or during a class session online or in person, ask each student to share their preferred name and something simple (i.e., not too vulnerable) about themselves. From Martin Cockroft at Olympic College: Encourage students to share an activity they feel confident teaching someone else how to do. Any of the items listed above for the Canvas profile are great for introductions as well.
* Feedback, Messages, Emails, Etc.: When you interact with students, state their names as part of the interaction. For example, when leaving comments in Canvas, write the student’s name into the comment where natural/conversational.

## **Face-to-Face**

* Name Tents: Cut up old file folders to be used as name tents in class. On the first day, ask each student to write their preferred name on the name tent (front and back). At the end of class, collect all the name tents. Quiz yourself by passing them back as best as you are able at the beginning of the next class session. Repeat use of the name tents until you (AND the students) know the students’ names. Note: Hold onto the name tents for days when guest facilitators come to class.

## **Peer Practices**

What do you do to learn your students’ names? How can you use your students’ names more intentionally? What did your colleagues share during the discussion that you might try?

# **Check In Regularly**

Pay attention to student behavior and track student progress. Empathize with students (“I am exhausted today, too. Let’s make the best of this class together.”). When a student is struggling, intervene.

## **Formative Assessment**

Peg Balachowski, from Everett Community College, summarizes formative assessment this way:

* A check-in used to potentially modify teaching and learning activities - Improve instruction and incorporate student feedback
* Typically involves qualitative feedback
* Administered throughout a unit or course
* Assessment FOR learning - Students use the results to self-monitor their understanding and learning process. Instructors use the results to check for understanding and adjust teaching to better support student learning.

*Example* Minute Paper: After a class session or a reading assignment, students submit the main ideas that stood out to them and the questions they still have.

## **Class Meeting Greeting**

This idea is borrowed from our K-12 colleagues. Each day, especially for the first few class meetings, stand at the door and greet each student as they come into the classroom. Use their name and share a greeting like, “Glad you are here today,” or “Thanks for your post to the discussion in Canvas.”

## **Campus Resources**

Your college has many resources available for students on campus. One of the best ways to support students, those who are excelling and those who are struggling, is to refer them to these wonderful resources. Even better, walk them to the services, introduce them by name, and help them connect with someone there.

Not sure what those resources are? Find the Student Handbook on your college website or connect with an adviser in Student Services. Look for programs like TRiO, disability support, counseling, tutoring, BFET, and more. Worried about remembering all that is available? No worries! Demonstrating use of the Student Handbook to find information is a great way to model help-seeking behavior to students.

Extra Credit: Schedule brief one-on-one meetings with colleagues from other departments to learn about the support they provide to students.

## **Peer Practices**

How do you currently check-in regularly with students? How can you do so more intentionally? What did your colleagues share during the discussion that you might try?

# **Schedule One-On-One Meetings**

At the beginning of the quarter and throughout, schedule brief one-on-one meetings with students.

Many students will never use your office hours or the extra time you provide before and after class or online for questions. In all their schooling up until this point, the only time they went to an office, came early, stayed late, or arranged a meeting was most likely when they were in trouble. Others are intimidated or think you will judge them for struggling. While none of these concerns may be true, they are real for many students. Building in one-on-one meetings as a *requirement* breaks down stigma and fear. It also makes it easier for you to find out how each student is doing individually.

Regardless of how you schedule one-on-one meetings, here are three things we have learned that can help you plan and implement them:

1. The heart of a one-on-one meeting is that the student has your undivided attention as an individual. In other words, they feel like the only person in the room.
2. The meeting is in no way punitive.
3. The meeting lasts 10 minutes or less and has a clear focus. See examples below.

### **Meeting Topic Ideas**

* Q&A Form: For each meeting (e.g., beginning, mid, and/or end of quarter), provide students in advance with the short list of questions you will ask during the meeting. Provide space for them to jot down notes. Also, ask them to write down at least one question they want to ask you. Have them bring the form to their meeting and follow it as needed.
* Project Process: Build in a meeting as part of a project. This could be a planning meeting to help students get started if they have never done a project like this before. It could be a status report midway or a final review of a draft.
* Post-Exam Review: Meet with each student and review the exam questions that they answered incorrectly. Ask them to read through the prompt/question and describe how they understood it. You may discover that their answer was correct for how they understood the question. Practice Paradox and add a point to their score (and revise the question to be more clear in the future). When they reveal their thinking process and it is incorrect, use the time to help them understand the topic.

## **Scheduling Meetings**

Faculty members use a variety of approaches for scheduling one-on-one meetings.

* Office Hours: Full-time faculty frequently use their office hours as the time designated for one-on-one meetings. Use of office hours can pose challenges for students who are only on campus during class time. Office hours are also a challenge for adjunct faculty who typically do not get paid for office hours.
* Class Conferences: One option is to use regular class time for individual meetings with students. This might look like holding class for all students for the first hour or so of a scheduled period and then following with conferences.
* Lab Hours: Some faculty members have tightened up their lab documents, creating stronger guides that students can go through mostly on their own/with peers. During lab time, faculty members meet with individual students, taking breaks between meetings to check back in with the larger group.
* Use of Technology: Whether your class meets face-to-face, hybrid, or online, use online tools for your meetings. If you are a Microsoft campus, all students and employees typically have access to Skype for Business with their college email accounts. If you are a google campus (or if you prefer google), google hangouts are simple to navigate and easy to join with a mobile device or a computer. Your college may have other web conferencing tools you can use. Check with your eLearning office to learn more.
* Use of Email: Some students don’t feel comfortable using a web cam (or cannot because of life happening in the background) or online tools in general. A faculty member at Saddleback Community College adapted to this by scheduling varying online office hours where he is available via email for immediate response. He posts the hours clearly and is able to “meet” with a number of students by replying to emails they send during those time frames.

Sign-up forms for one-on-one meetings can be printed and posted in your classroom. You can also create a Canvas page that is editable by students and you. List the time slots available and have students add their name next to the time that works best for them.

## **Peer Practices**

Do you currently schedule one-on-one meetings with students? What about them is challenging, and how have you or might you address those challenges? What did your colleagues share during the discussion that you might try?

# **Practice Paradox**

Structure your course clearly. Communicate your expectations regularly. And, then, be reasonably flexible when students come to you with concerns.

Practicing paradox provides students with empowering expectations/empowering support. Ultimately, student success is about student learning. Ask yourself:

* Do my expectations in this course, on this assignment, etc. empower students to learn the course outcomes?
* When issues arise in students’ lives and learning experiences, am I flexible so that students are empowered to learn the course outcomes?

Here are a few examples, shared by students:

* I was struggling to learn AfterEffects this past quarter, and the professor was willing to go step-by-step through the process to complete my project. He will allow students to turn in assignments past the due date, because he would rather us turn in something we are proud of and worked hard on than finishing something quickly because it’s due the next day.
* The professor acknowledges our effort and experiences as individuals and give us the same respect we give her. She works hard to make sure that all students regardless of ability status are able to access their learning in the classroom.
* The professor is well organized and helps you succeed in a very difficult class, Biology 241. She made very helpful lab protocols. She stays after class to help us study the bones and muscles, which are the toughest subjects. She works to make sure that all students have the foundation of a particular topic before she dives deeper into the subject.

One way of practicing paradox in your classes is to use the Transparency Framework, a format for communicating assignment outcomes and expectations. You can learn more about it on the [Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) site](https://tilthighered.com/) (https://tilthighered.com/).

At LWTech, we also love use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a way to maintain rigor and offer additional support for student learning. UDL (admittedly overly simplified) provides students with multiple options for expressing their learning of the objectives/outcomes. Instead of just being asked to write a paper, they may choose to address the prompt and demonstrate their learning by creating a video, designing a PowerPoint, taking photographs, etc. TO learn more about UDL, check out the [SBCTC’s micro-course](https://sbctc.instructure.com/courses/1578604/modules#module_4035415) (this is a publicly viewable Canvas course; you do not need to be logged into Canvas to view it; https://sbctc.instructure.com/courses/1578604/modules#module\_4035415).

## **Peer Practices**

How do you currently practice paradox? How can you practice paradox more intentionally? What did your colleagues share during the discussion that you might try?

**Learn more about The 4 Connections at bit.ly/4connections.**

The 4 Connections (headings and initial descriptions) are based on [Odessa College’s Drop Rate Improvement Program](http://achievingthedream.org/resource/13784/the-drop-rate-improvement-program-at-odessa-college) (http://achievingthedream.org/resource/13784/the-drop-rate-improvement-program-at-odessa-college). All other content is shared under a [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.