

Design Your Class with Your Students in Mind

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The way today's students think and learn is different than in the past, therefore we as educators need to adjust the way we approach the classroom. Small changes to our teaching styles can have a significant impact on our students. This paper discusses strategies for working with today's students while modernizing your classroom for the future.

It's the first day of class, you walk into your assigned room and you are shocked to discover there are 30 millennials staring at you ready to be taught. At this point you begin to panic. Are you prepared? Will your strategies be successful with today's students? When you are sitting down and preparing your class, you have two options: teach the way you have always taught or think about the needs of today's students and try to implement some strategies that will enhance their learning in your classroom.

First and foremost today's students are looking for classes that are more than just 50 minutes of a professor lecturing them. This might seem obvious, however, on campuses across the country including yours and mine I'm sure you'll find professors who still use this strategy. While there may be a class or two that necessitate longer lectures, be sure to mix in other types of class room days around such long lectures. This may include group activities such as group quizzes or class discussions or challenges. You can also bring in recent real-life examples and provide activities to allow students to analyze and digest events that are currently occurring.

Another tool that every professor should be taking full advantage of in their class is technology. Essentially every publisher has technology of some sort that accompanies their book. This could be as simple as creating quizzes for each chapter or allowing students to dive deeper into each chapter with interactive chapter readings. You can also integrate professional software into your classroom. One of the most fascinating things about today's students is that while a majority of them have been using computers from a very young age, most don't know how to use technology in a practical, professional manner. For instance in my courses, I make sure that students are introduced to the basics of Microsoft Excel, as they will definitely be expected to be familiar with it in their life after college. Other courses may allow for the opportunity to learn how to use databases, conduct research or use simulations.

We have all taught classes with students who are not in our major of specialty, accounting students in marketing classes, finance students in management classes, etc. To avoid students of other majors showing up but tuning out, be sure to connect your subject matter to their career. Business students are going to be expected to be well rounded once they hit the job market How all majors can relate to the material should be highlighted in the class room.

Lastly, if you want a classroom full of engaged students, you will need to work on developing a relationship with your students. While you will not need to bring your party clothes to campus, you

should be willing to get to know your students beyond what their homework grade is. By developing a personal relationship with your students you will have students coming to you with not only questions about your class but also questions about other classes or career opportunities. Our students have needs other than just learning course theory. By developing relationships with them you create an opportunity to be an advisor and have an impact on their college career beyond giving them their grade for your class. More knowledge of *who* your students are will allow you to better cater the course content to your specific student body. It will also help you to encourage them to incorporate their own perspectives into the course and class activities.

The student population is changing, and we as professors have to change with them. While the basic teaching strategies and classroom concepts aren't changing, some of the strategies we use to engage our students have to change. The more we can engage students in the classroom, the more they will get out of our classes, which is the ultimate goal for all of us. While the entirety of our courses do not need to change, small changes can make a big impact on our students. The more we can increase their interest in our courses, and encourage their love of learning, the better off they will be.