

“Can You Hear Me Now?”

Overcoming Connection Barriers in Large Classes”

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When your class looks like this:



Creating Community

What's in a name?

- Using photos/nametags to learn names
- Gather information (e.g., hometown, outside interests, and career aspirations) – helps you relate the course to students more personally¹

How can you make it feel like this?:



Icebreakers & Energizers

- Rather than “not possible,” even more important than in smaller classes
- Shows commitment to the value of interpersonal connection
- Helps to warm the environment

- Class Surveys
- Scavenger Hunt
- Human Bingo
- Subject-matter related (e.g., Problem-posting)

Partners – Triads – Groups

When students can't connect with the teacher, they can connect with and be accountable to each other. Decrease anonymity to increase motivation and learning.²



Respect – Research – Responsiveness³

The value of ground rules

Students enter the class with histories that can impede their participation, engagement, and learning. Demonstrating respect and creating guidelines that demand dignity for all fosters connection.

Critical Incident Forms & Classroom Assessments

Seek to understand how students are experiencing your course.

Ask:

- Most Engaged Moment
- Most Distanced Moment
- Most Affirming Action
- Most Puzzling Action
- Biggest Surprise

- * Become alerted to problems before they are disasters
- * Encourage students to be reflective learners
- * Build a case for diversity in teaching
- * Build trust
- * Learn possibilities for development

Demonstrate specifically how you are responding to students' comments, concerns, and suggestions.



References

- ¹Nilson, L. B. (2010). *Teaching at its best* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- ²Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for Teaching* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- ³Brookfield, S. (2006). *The skillful teacher: On technique, trust, and responsiveness in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

