



ACE IT! Quality Enhancement Plan: The ACES Project

ACE IT! NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Lamar's Quality Enhancement Plan:
Active & Collaborative Engagement for Students

February 2013

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First Day of Class Activities that Create a Climate of Learning

By: Maryellen Weimer, PhD

from the Teaching Professor Blog

There's no discounting the importance of the first day of class. What happens that day sets the tone for the rest of the course. Outlined below are a few novel activities for using that first day of class to emphasize the importance of learning and the responsibility students share for shaping the classroom environment.

Best and Worst Classes – I love this quick and easy activity. On one section of the blackboard I write: "The best class I've ever had" and underneath it "What the teacher did" and below that "What the students did." On another section I write "The worst class I've ever had" (well, actually I write, "The class from hell") and then the same two items beneath. I ask students to share their experiences, without naming the course, department or teacher, and I begin filling in the grid based on what they call out. If there's a lull or not many comments about what the students did in these classes, I add some descriptors based on my experience with some of my best and worst classes. In 10 minutes or less, two very different class portraits emerge. I move to the best class section of the board and tell students that this is the class I want to teach, but I can't do it alone. Together we have the power to make this one of those "best class" experiences.

First Day Graffiti – This is an adaptation of an activity proposed by Barbara Goza in the *Journal of Management Education* in 1993. Flip charts with markers beneath are placed around the classroom. Each chart has a different sentence stem. Here are a few examples:

"I learn best in classes where the teacher ____"
"Students in courses help me learn when they ____"
"I am most likely to participate in classes when ____"
"Here's something that makes it hard to learn in a course: ____"
"Here's something that makes it easy to learn in a course: ____"

Students are invited to walk around the room and write responses, chatting with each other and the teacher as they do. After there are comments on every flip chart, the teacher walks to each one and talks a bit about one or two of the responses. If you run out of time, you can conduct the debriefing during the next session.

Syllabus Speed Dating – Karen Eifler, an education professor at the University of Portland, designed this activity. Two rows of chairs face each other (multiple rows of two can be used in larger classes). Students sit across from each other, each with a copy of the syllabus that they've briefly reviewed. Eifler asks two questions: one about something in the syllabus and one of a more personal nature. The pair has a short period of time to answer both questions. Eifler checks to make sure the syllabus question has been answered correctly. Then students in one of the rows move down one seat and Eifler asks the new pair two different questions. Not only does this activity get students acquainted with each other, it's a great way to get them reading the syllabus and finding out for themselves what they need to know about the course.

Irritating Behaviors: Theirs and Ours – This activity grows out of research done by D. Appleton in 1990 (*The Journal of Staff, Program and Organizational Development*). His findings are a bit dated now, but the idea is not. Appleton asked students to list faculty behaviors that most irritate them. He had faculty do the same for student behaviors. I'd put students in groups and have them respond to a slightly different question: "What are the five things faculty do that make learning hard?" Or, asked positively, "What are the five things faculty do that make it easy to learn?" Collect the lists and make a master list to share in class or online. Below the five things faculty do, you can also list the five things students do that make it hard or easy to teach. The follow-up conversation is about how the teacher and students can each commit to not doing what appears on their respective "hard" list and have a better class experience as a result.

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Weimer, Maryellen. (2013, January). First day of class activities that create a climate of learning. *Faculty Focus*.

Dr. Amy Smith Joins the Pack

In January 2013, Dr. Amy Smith joined the Quality Enhancement Plan team as the Associate Director of QEP.

Dr. Smith earned her Ph.D. from Binghamton University in 2007. She has been an Assistant Professor in the English and Modern Languages department since 2009 where she teaches courses in Composition, Philosophy, and Literature.

Dr. Smith participated in the ACES Project as a member of Cohort 3 and has continued to contribute to the program by presenting at Faculty Blast Off. ACES has transformed her teaching in all of her courses, making her a

more adventurous instructor. Through her participation in ACES, Dr. Amy Smith hopes to spread her enthusiasm for student-centered, engaging teaching and to contribute to a supportive and collaborative community of positive teachers devoted to improving our students' growth.



We are excited to continue our work with Dr. Smith in her new role!

ACES Meetings Get Active



Using an Adaptation of the First Day Graffiti activity described in the *Faculty Focus* article "First Day of Class Activities that Create a Climate for Learning" (see pg. 1), Cohort 4 ACES Fellows participated in an activity that set an engaging tone for their spring semester of training.

"This is fun!" one of the Fellows remarked while moving around the room participating in the Graffiti activity. That is exactly the kind of attitude you could create in your class room this semester by introducing a few active and collaborative techniques.

Although the first day of class has passed, this activity could be implemented mid-semester to help you determine the adjustments you may need to make in the interest of enhanced student engagement and learning.



Tool Box for Building a Winning Hand



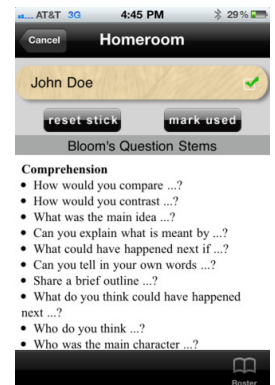
PickMe!

PickMe! Buzzer App for iPhone is a free app that allows you to use your iOS devices to operate as buzzers, operate as a remote for PickMe! Wireless buzzers, or interface with MAC or PC software using PickMe! Play. For more information about PickMe! visit the following website: <http://buzzers.com/products/pickme-buzzer-mobile>

Stick Pick App. Pick a student at random just by giving your device a shake or tapping the screen—but that's just the beginning. Stick Pick suggests question starters for learners at different levels and also records how well students respond during classroom discussions. If a student is consistently scoring near the top or bottom, simply change the level so students aren't bored or frustrated.

Students in small groups can use Stick Pick too. During small group work, students can take turns asking one another questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy, making group work more productive and on-task. Learn more about Stick Pick:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stick-pick/id436682059?mt=8>.



Stick Pick

In the article *Six Steps to Making Positive Changes in your Teaching*, Dr. Weimer shares helpful hints of how to incorporate effective change in your classroom. We will feature two of these steps in the next 3 ACE IT! Newsletters beginning with the January issue.

1) Think about what needs to change before deciding on a change— I regularly lead workshops on campuses across the country and often worry that there are carts being placed before unseen horses. When I'm asked to present, I'm usually counseled that faculty attending will want techniques, new ideas, strategies that work, and pragmatic things they can do in the classroom. But that's not where the change process should begin. It should start with a question, 'What am I doing that isn't promoting learning or very much learning?' Or, 'What am I doing that I've probably done the same way for too long?' Once you see the horse, you can better pick out a cart to put behind it.

2) Lay the ground work for the change— I regularly object to the "just do it" approach to instructional change, as if we all work in a Nike commercial. The motivation is admirable but every instructional situation is unique. Teachers are different, students are different and we don't all teach the same content in the same kind of courses. Whatever a teacher does must be adapted so that it fits the peculiarities of the given instructional situation. Don't just do it before having given careful thought to how the change will work with your content and students, and when you use it.

Weimer, Maryellen. (2013, January). [Six steps to making positive changes in your teaching](#). *Faculty Focus*.

The Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement

Faculty Development Points Program

We've lowered the point requirements!

Did you know with each Faculty Development event you attend, points are earned toward funding opportunities?

Travel	
Funding Level	Points Required
Up to \$500	10
Up to \$750	20
Up to \$1000	30
Up to \$2000	40

Equipment	
Funding Level	Points Required
\$200—\$399	10
\$400—\$599	20
\$600—\$799	30
\$800—\$999	40
\$1000	50

**Please contact our office for additional information regarding the points program.

MARK YOUR CALENDERS:

MARCH 29th

**“Building a Practical, Positive, Powerful, and Purposeful Classroom Experience”
with Rosemary Degner, Ph.D., DBA**



Rosemary Degner holds the following degrees: Doctorate of Business Administration (emphasis on organizational and leadership communication), Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Science, a Master of Science in Management Communication, and a Bachelor of Business Administration. Dr. Degner is a faculty member in the Fine Arts Division at Blinn College where she teaches Public Speaking.

For over two decades, Dr. Degner has worked as a communication expert. She provides communication training in the areas of organizational communication, teamwork, small group communication, effective organizational meetings, leadership, and public speaking. Dr. Degner is also the creator of International Graduate Students Connection.

**Additional information coming soon to an email box near you.
Stay tuned!**

The Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement and Quality Enhancement Plan offices sponsored two dynamic Faculty Development workshops on the topics of Active and Collaborative Learning and Deep Learning presented by **Dr. Barbara Millis** on January 30th.

If you are interested in materials from this workshop, please contact the CTLE office.

The Quality Enhancement Plan and The Center for Teaching and Learning Enhancement offices are located in the Gray Library on the 6th floor.

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