Making the First Day of Class Really First Class

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The first day of class might be the most important day of the semester for capturing students’ motivation and setting the stage for your entire course. Avoid making this a *throwaway day*, where you dismiss class 30-minutes early to head for the bookstore!

In addition to the *essential* first-day administrative tasks (many of which can be accomplished on 3 x 5” cards or even delayed until the next class session), be sure to intentionally apply the **Motivating Learning Gear** from CSUN’s *Five Gears Project* as you plan your first meeting with students by incorporating some of these ideas.

1. Motivate by learning about the **value** of your course:

* Share the value of this course in life, college, and the workplace.
* Teach something new that’s cool and that *shows* this value.
* Make it personal, as students are more apt to learn something that they care about.

1. Motivate by establishing **expectations for student success** in your course:

* Explain the course workload by showing how you begin with the familiar, and as the semester moves forward, the coursework becomes increasingly challenging – all intentionally designed for their success.
* Highlight your various methods for aiding in their success:
* Short daily quizzes or *One-Minute Papers* to monitor and subsequently clarify confusions
* *Exam Wrappers* to strengthen independent study skills

1. Motivate by offering **personal support** for learning in your course:

* Communicate your personal plans for supporting their learning, as well as planned peer support:
* Provide extra-help sessions, office hours, or web resources
* Reteach challenging concepts as needed
* Design monitored peer problem-solving activities

1. Motivate by fostering **inclusion** in your course:

* Assign in-class partner interviews as a get-acquainted activity, and then ask pairs to introduce their partner to another pair. Questions might include information about the course, the major, CSUN, career goals, or one’s high school, depending upon course level.
* Demonstrate inclusion by what you say and do in the classroom.

And if time permits, well, certainly, dismiss class ten minutes early!

**Resources** (to embed under where they are mentioned in the text above)

CSUN’s *Five Gears Project*:

<http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/cielo/five-gears>

First Day of Class videos from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UiaDVPxWuS4>

Exam Wrappers:

<http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/cgi-bin/tomprof/enewsletter.php?msgno=1340>

The One-Minute Paper:

<https://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/faculty/one-minute-paper.html>