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**Learning Activities and Active Learning Strategies**

Including active learning strategies in your classes means that you intentionally and meaningfully ask the students to complete varied activities that help them to **engage, apply, and interact with what they are learning**. Active learning approaches are not an add-on to a lecture but an integrated part of the learning experience that is connected to the learning goals you have for your students and helps them to think critically and deeply about course material.

Consider the list of strategies below, which are likely to establish value and increase student expectation of success. Indicate how often you already do each one when you teach.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | I frequently try to do this | I do this sometimes | I rarely or never do this |
| Connect the material to students’ interests |  |  |  |
| Provide authentic, real-world tasks |  |  |  |
| Show relevance to students’ current academic lives |  |  |  |
| Demonstrate the relevance of higher-level skills to students’ future professional lives |  |  |  |
| Identify and reward what you value |  |  |  |
| Show your own passion and enthusiasm for the discipline |  |  |  |
| Ensure alignment of objectives, assessments, and instructional strategies |  |  |  |
| Create assignments that provide the appropriate level of challenge |  |  |  |
| Provide early opportunities for success |  |  |  |
| Articulate your expectations |  |  |  |
| Provide rubrics |  |  |  |
| Provide targeted feedback |  |  |  |
| Be equitable (rather than equal) |  |  |  |
| Educate students about the ways we explain success and failure |  |  |  |
| Describe effective study strategies |  |  |  |
| Allow students to make choices about the work they do) |  |  |  |
| Give students an opportunity to reflect |  |  |  |

**Active Learning Strategies**

**Examples of constructive learning exercises:**

* **Predicting**: When solving a problem, pause and ask students to predict the next step based on what they know so far. Correct any wrong guesses immediately as you continue solving the problem.
* **Case Study:** Ask students to apply a concept to addressing a challenging problem relevant to your course.
* **Minute Paper**: Close class by having students write down the most important concept of the day and one question or confusion that still remains.
* **Application Card:** Close class by having students write short reflection about how class topics relate to an aspect of the real world that is important to them.

**Examples of Interactive learning exercises:**

* Use **Think Pair Share** to ask students to provide their own examples of how their everyday experiences relate to class. First, give students an opportunity to think of their example before sharing it with a partner. Close by selecting a few students to share their examples with the class.
* When a student solves a problem at the board or in a group, have them **Think Aloud** as they work in order to explain their reasoning to you, their peers, and most importantly, themselves.
* **Pairs Check:** Paris of students listen to each other’s work and provide their partner with coaching and feedback. A variation is to compare notes and note any disparities.
* **Gallery Walk:** A small group posts their responses to a prompt on a board or poster. You then ask students to visit other posters and either add to the ideas, sort the ideas into categories relevant to your course or make note of ideas that apply to their own projects.

**See Additional PDF Handout for More Strategies**

**Mapping Active Learning Strategies**

Using the Active Learning Strategies handout, identify strategies you might use to engage students in learning new information and practicing new skills. Then connect that activity to your learning objectives.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategy** | **Before Lesson** | **During Lesson** | **After Lesson** |
| Ex. One-minute write | Students respond to an online discussion post |  |  |
| Ex. Think-pair-share |  | Students reflect on a question during the lesson, discuss with a partner, collaboratively share a response to the main prompt/problem. |  |
|  |  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |  |

**Learning Activity Map**  
Use this grid to map out learning activities and active learning strategies you can use in your course to engage students with the material, their peers, and/or you as the instructor.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Week of** | **Week of** | **Week of** | **Week of** |
| **Content to Cover** |  |  |  |  |
| **Independent Practice** |  |  |  |  |
| **Collaborative Practice** |  |  |  |  |
| **Formative Assessment(s)** |  |  |  | **[Summative Assessment]** |

**Planning for Active Learning Activities**

Planning for active learning is different than preparing for a lecture. However, it still requires careful advanced work to set up the right structure, identify and prepare supporting materials, and think through the procedures to make sure it is successful. The following questions should be helpful when putting together a lesson plan that engages students actively in learning.

1. Which active learning strategy from the list above or in the PDF handout will help your students learn/practice the new information in this lesson. How will it help students meet the learning goals for this lesson?
2. What student preparation is necessary prior to the exercise? What information do they need to be successful, and how will you deliver this information to them (for example, readings or a video lecture)? How will students be held accountable for reviewing this information (for example, taking a reading quiz or answering a discussion board prompt)?

1. How will you introduce the activity to your students? What instructions will you give your students? How much time will they have to complete the activity asynchronously?

1. Will the students work individually? In groups? A combination? What do you expect will be the benefits and disadvantages of this approach to student work?

1. How will you check in with students while they were working? Describe how you expect to interact with students during the check-in (such as responding to their discussion board posts or requesting a progress report).

1. How will you learn about the results of the students’ work? What mechanisms will you use to allow the students to report out? Will they share with you only or the entire class?

1. How will you respond to the students’ work? How will you ensure that students come away with the information and skills they need to be successful on the exam/project/course?