The Role of Rapport in Motivating Students to Learn

Defining rapport:
- “A friendly harmonious relationship...” *Webster Dictionary*
- Harmonious Connection with Students (Buskist & Saville, 2001).
- Rapport is foundational, but not a substitute for other effective teaching strategies.

Why rapport matters?
- “The very first stages of both learning and remembering what was learned are affective.” Fleming, 2003 IDEA #39
- Teaching occurs within social contexts. Misconceptions: seeing the mind as something to be filled by knowledge, put there by a professor (Tiberius, 1993)
- It is part of the good teaching practice (Chickering and Gamson, 1987).
- There are several qualities of effective teachers related to rapport (ex. approachability, accessibility, personality, empathy; Faranda and Clarke (2004); modesty, humor, showing care and respect of other’s point of view (Murray, 1985).

Role of Rapport in Classroom
- Rapport sets the stage for learning outcomes, and it can encourage participation.
- Feeling safe in the classroom can help students take more of the risks needed to engage in higher levels of learning and thinking (Brookfield, 1990).
- High levels of student-teacher rapport create positive learning environments.
- Students interact with each other more.
- Students express opinions without fear.
- Students ask questions with ease.
- More learning, fun learning, motivation to learn
- Increases retention and student success.
- Easier classroom management – prevents incivility

Strategies to establish rapport in classroom

Establish rapport before class starts
- Welcome statement in canvas (maybe a video, especially for online).
- Welcome email
- Ask students to do a virtual introduction (discussion board) before first day of class

Establish rapport on First day of class
- Build community (ex. use icebreakers).
- Bring food or candy, if possible.
- Use a seating chart, group activity during which you review names
- Learn to call your students by name.
- Learn something about your students’ interests.
- Explain your course policies.

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Maintain rapport throughout the semester

- Plan well for your class (good course design)- emphasize active learning- engaging activities (TPS, Group work- less lectures)
- Create interesting lectures and class presentations
- Create and use personally relevant class examples.
- Promote class discussion.
- Give prompt and frequent feedback (7 principles).
- Be Accessible/Approachable out of class
  - email
  - phone calls
  - Invite to and use office hours
  - message students who
  - library office hours on second floor
  - arrive to class early and stay late—chat with your students
- Make eye contact with each student.
- Use appropriate humor
- Reward student comments/questions with verbal praise (positive reinforcement)
- Use classroom assessment techniques to check students’ learning during class
- Collect mid-semester feedback; make a few changes (shows you care).
- Be enthusiastic about teaching your subject matter.
- Be humble.
- Be respectful
- Be Flexible
- Be Fair in Grading Policies
- Be Encouraging/ Express Interest in Students’ Progress
- Be pleasant in class/try to show your best personality

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- When all else fails, smile a lot, students will think you like them and your job.

Resources


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