Tips & Best Practice Ideas for Teaching Small Classes

CELT – The Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching
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“The smaller the class, the more individual students determine its success or failure.”

– Anonymous faculty member on chronical.com chatroom

~ Do you agree or disagree? Why?
So... if that is true, how can we as instructors guide students toward success in a small class?

– Build relationships – teacher-student and student-student
  – Ice-breaker
  – Use of names (85% of students surveyed feel this is important)
  – Co-creating classroom ground rules
– Foster a sense of student responsibility
  – “Cold-calling” (tell students in advance)
  – Assign various aspects of the content for students to present (chapter of a reading, bring in a related article, etc.)

Other ideas? What has worked for you? What hasn’t worked?
More Ideas…

- A whole-class project
  - Part of class participation? Other strategies or ideas?
- Be conversational – deliver your content as a conversation with the small group, not lecture
  - Include problem solving, brainstorming, drawing/sketching, short writing/journaling
- Build in feedback opportunities
  - Instructor – Student
  - Student - Student
The Physical Classroom Environment

- Sit in a circle or around a table – same level
- Consider printing out anything usually projected and look at together – takes you as the instructor “off stage”
- Make space & spread out – plan time for students to get away from each other; the extra room space is an advantage!
  - Individual “check-in” time with instructor when working on projects
  - “Jigsaw” a reading: assign each student a section to read alone, come back together and report on
  - Set up “stations”: different activities around the room
References and Resources

- http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/LearningEnvironments/smallclass.php
- https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/lets/toolkit/teaching/smallgroup
- https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/learning-hub/view/small-group-teaching-methods-and-techniques
- https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/importance-learning-students-names/
Thank you!

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