

Strategy: Using a Reciprocal Interview Activity to Create an Active and Comfortable Classroom

Using an instructor-student interview can establish a positive classroom environment that produces not only short-term impacts, including student comfort in the classroom, but also a long-term correlation with positive changes in comfort and student satisfaction.

Origin

Foster, D. & Hermann, A. (2011). Linking the first week of class to end-of-term satisfaction: Using a reciprocal interview activity to create an active and comfortable classroom. *College Teaching*, 59: 3, 111-116.

Application

Overview:

On the first day or in the first week of class, after a brief overview of the syllabus, the instructor begins the interview process.

- Students form groups of 5-6 and are given 10-15 minutes to discuss several course-related issues based on a handout provided (see questions).
- Students are told that the purpose of their discussion is to prepare for an interview by the instructor.
- Students discuss the questions.
- Groups select a representative to field the instructor's questions and represent the group's thoughts.
- Instructor interviews the representatives from each group as a group for 15 minutes.
- Instructor listens carefully, indicating his/her interest by taking notes, etc.
- After completing the instructor interview, groups elect a new representative to interview the instructor on the groups' behalf.
- Groups meet for 5-10 minutes to agree on several questions to ask the instructor using the handout provided (see questions).
- Students are told that they are also free to ask other questions as long as they are related to the course.
- Group representatives take turn asking the instructor questions for 15 minutes.

Questions:

From instructor to students:

1. What are your goals for this course? To learn new skills? To become better educated? To learn the subject matter? To fulfill a requirement? To get a good grade? To apply your learning to other aspects of your life? Something else?
2. How can the instructor best help you achieve your goals? Lectures, exams, discussions, practice, office hours, (think back to excellent professors/courses you have experienced)?
3. What, if anything, have you heard about this course from others?

