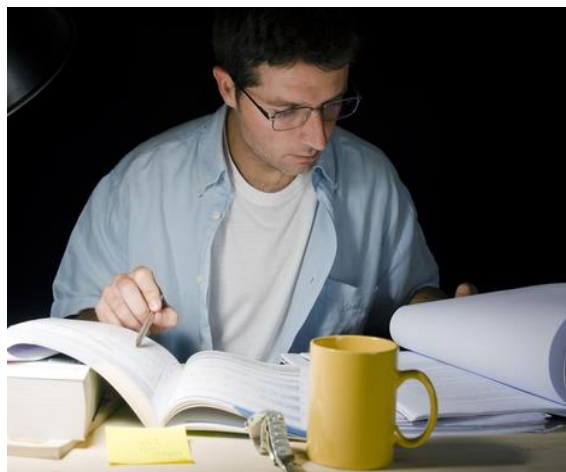


Building Community Within your Classes

[Tophat](#) staff interviewed Chris Merlo and Monika Semma, who described their favorite ways of developing “community” and interaction in their college classes.

1. Open-Ended Questions, such as “What was the most difficult thing about this assignment?”
2. Error-Analysis. Ask, “What is wrong with this example?”
3. Let students critique each other (with ground rules for civility)
4. Pass the mic review session. Create a list of review items and throw the “mic” (a small ball or stuffed animal) to individuals. The one with the “mic” can ask for a review topic.
5. Use YouTube in class for instructional variety. Khan Academy works too. Hundreds of searchable math and STEM topics are available.
6. Cloze reading activities. Cloze activities take passages from text and skips words. Students develop a deeper meaning when reading the text because they must use context to figure out the missing words. You would not provide the answers given in the parentheses in the example below on the next page.



The Principles of Homework: Productive Homework Behaviors

In the August 2021 edition of *Learning Insights*, I outlined eight maladaptive homework behaviors that interfered with student learning. Commonly, novice students do not recognize the damage they do to their own learning by engaging in these practices. However, as the instructional leader in your classroom, you can guide students to use more productive ways of managing assignments that will maximize learning. Regardless of how you run your classroom, (traditional, flipped, or problem-based), students still need to put in the time, effort, and mindful study to learn individually. Encourage your students to use these ideas as they study.

Goal-setting: Be sure your students are aware of the learning outcomes they should attain by the end of each study session. Build objectives into your syllabus and state them when you dismiss your students at the end of class.

Persistence: Struggle can be a good thing. Students are often forced to delve deep into prior knowledge, look back at class notes, read text explanations more thoroughly, and have discussions with others about how to solve certain problems. These are all quality learning activities.

Focus: Students can maintain focus on their

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Part 3 of a three-part series on the benefits of independent assignments for students

assignments by managing their surroundings. Phones can be silenced and distracting noises can be blocked by headphones. Students can remove themselves from noisy dorm rooms or home environments. Setting a timer for short intervals will help focus attention for short bursts and offer mental breaks, improving long-term memory.

Balance: Creating communities within your class (see sidebar) is beneficial, but students need to balance group work with independent study. Students are often unaware of their own individual deficiencies until they work independently.

Help is available when your students are stuck. Identify online and on-campus resources, including your office hours, friends or family members of the students who might be able to help.

Fill in holes: Help your students find ways to fill gaps in learning. Suggestions might include online tutorials such as Khan Academy videos, campus help centers, or peer tutoring. Remind them these may require some extra time.

Quell Anxiety: Address anxieties that interfere with learning. Look for causes and find solutions directly related to the causes of these anxieties. The *Way to Succeed* eBook, *Finding Your Way to Succeed* contains an entire chapter devoted to discovering the causes of math anxiety and their solutions. While these solutions may not entirely eliminate anxieties, reducing them will help students perform at a higher level.

Cloze Example

A systematic approach to studying equations and their _____ (graphs) would begin with the _____ (simple) cases, gradually working toward the more complicated. Thinking visually, the simplest curves in the plane would be straight _____ (lines). As we discussed in Chapter 3, a point on the _____ (vertical) line will always have the same x -coordinate; we refer to this line as the graph of the equation $x = h$. Likewise, a point on the _____ (horizontal) line will always have the same y -coordinate; we refer to this line as the graph of the equation $y = k$. A diagonal line is different, in the sense that neither the x nor the y coordinate is _____ (constant); i.e., as you move a point along the line, both _____ (coordinates) of the point are changing. It is reasonable to guess that this line is the graph of some equation involving both x and y .

(Adapted from Collingsworth, D. H., Prince, K. D., and Conroy, M. M., (2011). Precalculus, Free Software Foundation Incorporated, p. 35.)



Everyone has 24 hours a day to spend. One major challenge students encounter when entering college is effective time management. First-time college students often cannot adapt to the two big changes from high school: lots of free time and a significant increase of independent studying that is required of them. Students must quickly learn to become their own time managers, and don't often know that they need to transform themselves into responsible, self-sufficient directors of their own schedule.

First-time college students often cannot adapt to the two big changes from high school: lots of free time and a significant increase of independent studying that is required of them.

Becoming adept at managing time is not only critical for student success,

Time Management Critical for Your Students' Success

Here are a few words of advice to share with your students about effective time management.

1. You are in charge of your time. Get a good calendar and use it every day! Find a calendar system you could use on a consistent basis.

• **Think old-school:** This kind of calendar has been used by successful students for decades *because it works*. Find a calendar with a large daily space, like a weekly/monthly calendar. OR

• **Use an ECalendar** (the next best thing). Keeping a calendar on your phone, tablet, or computer has some advantages, such as scheduling reminders.

2. Write it down. Take the time to record every reading, assignment, test, or project, page numbers and homework problem numbers at the beginning of the semester.

3. Your "to do" list. Each day in your calendar automatically becomes a "to do" list for the day. Work on your "to do" list during the time of day when you are at your best.

4. Plan ahead. Schedule several days in advance of due dates time to work on papers or study for tests, and schedule those times in your calendar.

5. Watch for conflicts. Work schedules and family commitments can wreak havoc on the best intended study plan. If you know about these in advance, you can work around the time conflicts and still get done what you need to do.

6. Stick with your time-management plan. Even when you grow weary of the constant list of things to do when you're in college, you can reduce your stress level by having a plan for your time.

7. Fight procrastination. Know there really is time for everything if your time is planned and you stick with your plan.

8. Appreciate your sense of accomplishment. It's a great feeling to complete what you have set out to do, and can stay caught up and prepared for all your classes.

but career and personal success as well. Time management is one of the "soft skills" much desired in the workforce. Building this skill in college, especially in early classes, sets the stage for success not only in college, but later in life. By encouraging your students to improve their time management skills, you can call attention to them the following noteworthy advantages:

1. Coordination of responsibilities from different classes. Juggling four or five classes can be a nightmare without a system for managing course tasks. Procrastination, forgetfulness, last-minute cramming, and overscheduling can all be corrected with a good time management system.

2. Integration of personal responsibilities with school responsibilities. Students can better plan around others' demands on their time if they know what they need to do as a student.

3. Identification of scheduling conflicts. A quality time-management system helps students identify scheduling conflicts and multiple assignment due dates, and work around them to maximize attention to each responsibility.

4. Reduction of stress levels. Having a realistic plan for schoolwork helps students relax, because they have accounted for academic responsibilities on paper, and can easily see what they need to do each day. That panicky feeling of having too much to do in such a short amount of time is reduced if they have scheduled enough time for everything, and they stick to their daily schedules.

Way to Succeed Can Help!

We designed Way to Succeed to accompany first-year math and other STEM classes. Our goal is to help your students become aware of and develop academic skills and strategies in a personal way while freeing you to focus on your math or other STEM content. The online program works outside of class, providing personal learning profiles and targeted actions for improvement, short, thought-provoking readings, videos, and short quizzes that highlight the skills, attitudes, cognitions, and learning strategies in which successful students engage so they can quickly make changes to become better learners.

Encouraging Metacognition in

your Students

"I thought I knew the material but I failed the test!" is a common lament heard upon returning first tests to students. Novice learners, such as first-year college students, do not always recognize they do not know material to the level expected to pass college-level tests. These students are often surprised to discover they are responsible for independent learning outside the classroom. They do not monitor their own understanding of the material, and make incorrect assumptions about how well they have learned concepts. The ideas of independence and self-regulation of learning are foreign to them, especially after coming out of high school. In many high schools, the teachers and administrators take ownership of monitoring and managing student learning, letting students off the hook for that responsibility. Introducing your students to metacognition and encouraging them to develop metacognitive skills can address many of these issues your students may have with what appears to be a lack of

effort. Developing metacognitive strategies helps students to transition to the more independent mode of learning that college-level classes require. Developing metacognitive skills also inspires students to take responsibility for their own learning, helping students become avoid the surprise of being under-prepared for tests.

What is Metacognition?

Metacognition is, in short, an awareness of one's own learning. As instructors, we evaluate our students' learning, but novice learners typically do not engage in the thoughts, self-evaluations, and strategies associated with metacognition. However, students can develop these skills and benefit in their use in the college classroom

The practice of metacognition can include

- assessing strategies used to learn or solve problems,
- organizing information,
- becoming aware of the connection of prior knowledge to new situations, and
- mindfully evaluating one's own understanding (or lack thereof)

How to encourage students to use metacognition more in your class.

Talk about it! Many students, especially first-year college students, come to college without any experience in metacognition, and some are not even aware that the practice of metacognition exists. Discussing metacognition helps students begin to use it on their own.

Problem-solving opportunities.

When students have to solve real world problems, must evaluate strategies, think through a variety of strategies for solving the problem, and decide if the strategy they select is a realistic one for arriving at an answer.

Pay attention to the struggling student. Often, these students lack problem-solving skills and avoid or aren't aware of metacognition. These students don't realize how metacognitive thought processes can help their learning. Whether caused by anxiety and fear, lack of background, or lack of confidence, they are missing out on the very thing that would improve understanding and success. Your encouragement and patient training in metacognitive skills can go a long way in changing the patterns of approach to learning.

WATCH

Current Industry Trends: College Enrollment Down

The older non-traditional undergraduate or two-year college student population has dropped since 2015, according to a NCES study. In 2015, 35.8% of undergraduate degree college enrollees, full and part time were in the age groups of 25 and older. In 2019, these same age groups represented only 25.4% of the undergraduate and two-year enrollees from 2015.

Total enrollment was also down, from 6,520,997 students in 2015 to 4,204,400 in 2019. This was before the pandemic hit.

Schools must be more competitive to attract and retain both traditional and non-traditional students. By providing pathways for student success, like Way to Succeed®, schools can ensure resilience for the long term.

<https://nces.ed.gov/>



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The most important outcome of education is to help students become independent of formal education."

Paul E. Gray

Q&A About Way to Succeed

Q: We have some students at our school who don't seem to need help with learning how to learn. Should I still require they participate in the Way to Succeed program?

A: Absolutely. All your students can benefit from Way to Succeed®, even your best self-regulators. Your top first-year students can make the transition from high school to college without our help, but Way to Succeed® can speed up the process of acclimating to the college-level learning environment.



However, as you might surmise, the students who are having difficulty making the transition from secondary to post-secondary learning will benefit most from our program.

We help all students recognize the differences between college and high school, and help them navigate through their early math classes, typically the most difficult first-year class each of your students will encounter.

Visit our website and find out how we can help your students succeed!





Visit our Website

We offer a unique research-supported approach to helping students become more independent and successful in your classes.

Visit [Way to Succeed](#) for more information about our product, pricing calculator, and how to order.

Be ready for Fall Semester 2021 classes! There's still time!

First-year, at-risk, and probationary students typically need more support than most other returning students, especially when these students enroll in online classes. [Way to Succeed](#) can help you to assist these students with a personalized, stand-alone success program that works well with mathematics and other STEM courses. [Way to Succeed](#) helps them develop their own self-regulating and metacognitive skills so they can become more independent and effective learners.

- No grading required
- Personalized for each student
- Accompanying eBook for better student accountability
- Focused on improving self-regulation, time-management skills, metacognition, and accessing on-campus resources
- Research-based process
- Low, department/per-student costs
- Compatible with any STEM text or curriculum, online or face-to-face
- Easy-to-access instructor report
- Quick student set-up for your school or by class

Upcoming Articles in the next issue of *Learning Insights*

1. Praxis as a Practice for You and Your Students
2. Helping Your Students Know When to Seek Help
3. The Flipped Classroom: Does it Improve Student Success?

....and more!

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