

Tapping into Students' Emotion to Inspire Deep Learning Toolkit
Writing in the Disciplines, Dawson College

- First and foremost, take care of your own emotions! Be sure to exercise, get enough rest, eat well, take time for yourself and your hobbies.
- Make joy in the classroom and in your job the main priority.
- Your students will automatically become better learners by following your example!

“Flow” chart

Conditions to maximize chance of participants entering a “flow” state	In-class activity or at-home assignment design principles to meet these conditions
When we confront difficult tasks that we feel have a chance of completing.	Achievement of goals within time constraints must be realistic (also good to give not enough time)
The task has clear goals.	Instructions must state goals of activity clearly
Students receive immediate feedback	A mechanism to provide immediate feedback (Google Docs, Miro, etc.). Or Active Learning Classroom
A removal of worries and frustrations of everyday life.	Cultivate a judgment-free zone. Encourage mistakes and risk-taking.
We are able to exercise a sense of control over our actions.	Break down activities into steps and processes
Concern for self disappears	Use leverage of social component in group work

Frequent check-ins regarding feelings

- Make the subject of emotions transparent in everything you do.
- Have weekly “check-ins” or surveys where students must briefly report on how they’re feeling about the work.
- Assign self-reflective writing where students discuss their process, etc.

- Practice essential skills in class, and ask students to report on how they felt while doing them.
 - Try to practice “good” and “bad” habits in class, noting differences in feelings attributed to both.
 - In short: talk about your own feelings regarding class work, and make students do that as well!
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Building confidence through feedback

It's easy to write complimentary comments on A+ work. But, how about work that is less than ideal? Here are some principles to guide you:

- Always keep in mind that an intelligent, potentially fragile, and possibly sensitive eighteen-ish year old person will be reading your comments.
- Never take a student's inability to assimilate the material from my class as an indication of my own competence as a teacher.
- The content and skills I am teaching are less important than giving each student a little bit of confidence.
- Give praise for positives. Frame “negatives” as challenges and opportunities for growth.
- If there are any serious issues, I simply write, “Come and speak to me.”
- It feels better to write and to read nice things.

Here are some sample comments that I wrote this semester on work that needed improvement:

Comment sample #1

Your paragraph is not technically perfect (you made a couple of mistakes with citation integration). Normally, this would earn you a 4/5. I gave you 5/5 because your ideas are outstanding. The level of your ideas elevates this to a 5/5. You can fix the technical stuff. Having a curious mind that can think of original ideas is something that can't be taught, and you have this skill. Bravo.

Comment sample #2 (76% grade)

I'll start with what you're doing well here: you've clearly worked hard on all aspects of this assignment. You're beginning to assimilate the lessons on how to integrate quotes. You provide an interesting reading of this poem with some good analysis. Your writing, in parts, is strong.

There is room for improvement. That's normal! You still aren't quite integrating citations properly in most cases. And, you haven't exactly followed the structure that I assigned for this assignment. Not that you always have to follow a rigid structure, but you were

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supposed to for this assignment. As a result, this text doesn't always do exactly what it's supposed to do.

But, it's not far! Let's focus on the positive. You're putting forward a good effort, and parts of your text demonstrate great potential. If you review the rules for citations, and follow my models a bit more closely, you'll be writing great essays, no doubt.

Control and Value

- Control: a feeling that if I put in the required effort, I will succeed in this task.
- Value: a feeling that this task has relevance to my life, that the knowledge and skills I will gain will be useful to me later on.

Here are a few examples of how I do that in my 101 English class.

- 1) Give students a sense of control and minimize anxiety: break big assignments into processes

Literary Analysis Essay Instructions



3. The process

3.1. At a glance

Schedule of activities (the due dates won't change, but some of the other stuff might. We'll adjust on the fly as necessary):

1. **Sep 23-Oct 1:** At-home and in-class idea-generating activities on "The Stranger," by Shirley Jackson (Option 1 for story you can write about)
2. **Oct 5-15:** At-home and in-class idea-generating activities on "Tandolfo the Great," by Richard Bausch (Option 2 for story you can write about)
3. **Oct 19-22:** Preparation & development work for Rough Draft
4. **Oct 26: Rough Draft due**
5. **Oct 28-Nov 12:** Revision work, peer review, teacher feedback on rough draft, specific skills work, various development activities, etc.
6. **Nov. 16: Final draft due**

At any point in the process, I encourage you to meet with me individually to help think of ideas, go over drafts, or help in any possible way. I am very good at helping you crystallize your ideas and write good prose. I am a professional!

As you can see, we're going to take it slowly, with a lot of steps in the process. **You have time and space to make mistakes, go off in the wrong direction, and correct course.** Breathe! You'll do great!

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2) Also make the value of assignments explicit to students, like I tried to do below:

Literary Analysis Essay Instructions



5. The purpose

The purpose of your essay is to **add to the conversation** that exists in the world about this story. Everyone who reads the story has their own unique and original perspective on it. Your essay presents **your own unique and original perspective** on it. In this way, you're contributing to the conversation.

Your purpose is not to give "the correct" interpretation of this story. It's to give your own personal interpretation, based on specific evidence from the text.

It's interesting to discuss **works of literature**. Because these works contain real emotions, they **can teach us a lot about the ambiguities of human nature**. Different readings of stories are valuable because **different perspectives on anything in life is valuable**. The more diverse and varied perspectives we can get on stories, the more we can learn about the world, and how to make it a better place. **We learn about ourselves by participating in conversations**. It is a great gift.

At the same time, **don't feel pressure** that you have to say the most original thing in the world about the story. Both of these stories have been widely read and written about. It's hard to come up with a truly original idea. But, what's going to be unique to you is your perspective. *The way you discuss* the ideas in your essay. *The way you combine different ideas* to make sense of the story. Even if you're discussing an idea that has been talked about by someone else, *they've never talked about it in the way you will because no one else is you*. **No one sees the world in quite the way that you do. And no one sees this story in quite the same way you do.**

I guess one important thing: **believe in yourself**, and the value of your opinions. You have a lot to offer!



3) Give students control by giving choices on how they might complete assignments (from a final assignment in my 101 class where I asked students to write a letter to next year's cohort, letting them know what to expect from the class):

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You have choices about what form you want your letter to take:

Here's where it gets interesting. You have many choices of what form and genre you want your letter to take. **The most important thing is that you create something interesting, fun, and energetic.** Here are some suggestions of forms you might choose:

Writing suggestions:

- **A written letter:** This would be the most straightforward option. You can write a text to the next cohort that responds to the criteria above. Inspire next year's cohort by going into detail about your own journey. Length: 3 pages, double spaced, 12 point font, 1" margins, etc. .
- **A short story:** Why not describe your learning journey to next year's cohort by turning it into a story? You've read two short stories in this class. You're an expert in stories. You're the protagonist in your own story. Think of everything you talked about that protagonist's need: A desire: what did you want at the beginning of the class? An

Visual art suggestions:

- **A comic:** Are you good at drawing? Consider telling the story of your learning journey in this class by creating a comic book. See the criteria above for a short story. The protagonist would be you, and you'd need everything the protagonist in a short story needs. Length: 10 comic book panes.
- **A visual art piece:** Can you represent your learning journey with a painting, or digital drawing? How might you describe your learning journey using representative or abstract art forms? If you're a visual artist, here's your chance to shine! Now, with a visual art piece, I do need a short accompanying written text in order to see what you were going for and what you were trying. Length: one visual art piece + 1 page written "artist's statement".

Audio/Video suggestions (must be uploaded to Youtube and submitted on Moodle):

- **A song:** Are you a songwriter? Singer? Instrumentalist? Why not tell the story of your learning journey in this class through a song? Could be great! You'd need to actually sing the song, with or without accompaniment (your choice). Or, you can sing the melody from a popular song and write your own lyrics, if you want to (as long as you credit the original artist). Length: 2-5 minutes + lyrics submitted as text file.
- **A video lecture:** Are you a good talker? Like to be on camera? How about a short video lecture where you detail your learning journey in this class? Feel free to play around with costumes, sets, props, and soundtrack. Watch some Ted Talks for inspiration. Length: 2-5 minutes.

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- **A video lecture:** Are you a good talker? Like to be on camera? How about a short video lecture where you detail your learning journey in this class? Feel free to play around with costumes, sets, props, and soundtrack. Watch some Ted Talks for inspiration. Length: 2-5 minutes.
- **An advertisement:** Do you like marketing? Why not create a video commercial for this class? Let's say you had to sell this class to someone, how might you use your own experience as an ad for the class? Ads can be very artistic! You get to choose the tone and feel of it. (Note: This can also work well as a visual art piece instead of a video!). Length: Video ad: 2-5 mins. Visual art piece: 1 visual art piece + 1 page "artist's statement"
- **Monologue:** Do you like drama? Why not write a monologue and deliver it to a student coming into next year's class. You're talking directly to them. Make it dramatic! Length: 2-5 mins

If you have an idea for a form or genre for your letter that is not on the list above, ask me. You may be able to choose another form, by permission.

Strategies for dealing with anxiety and stress in students

- Break bigger assignments into smaller parts. Have clear and achievable goals for each part.
 - Emphasize Reward, expert, and referent power. De-emphasize coercive and legitimate power.
 1. Coercive/reward power: meting out punishments and granting rewards
 2. Legitimate power: the classroom is set up with the expectation that the instructor holds the power
 3. Expert power: the students perceive the instructor as holding expertise that do not currently have
 4. Referent power: the students like and respect the instructor (Cavanagh 192)
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Works Cited

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