

# Ensure Students Are Learning: Faculty Descriptions of Innovative Teaching Practices

## Instructor Offers Multiple Outlets for Classroom Participation

### Innovative Teaching Practice Description:

To encourage students to participate in class, the instructor developed several opportunities. In an activity called “space race,” students form into groups and answer five questions posed by the instructor based on the course material. Each group answers all five questions and the group that answers the most questions correctly wins the participation points.

In another exercise, students present their opinions, thoughts, or reactions to a passage. The instructor tells students that there are no right or wrong answers and responses do not have to be lengthy. When students share a response, the instructor writes their names on the board to show that they have participated, and they are getting points. The instructor also tells students that this is a way to help everyone learn classmates’ names quickly. Students get excited when they see their names on the board and the instructor remembers something about them. Since initiating this, the instructor has noticed that more than half of students participate.

For students who are not participating, the instructor meets with them one-on-one to figure out how to engage them, asking how they would prefer to participate and what they are comfortable doing. Some students prefer to read aloud; the instructor calls upon these students in class to read so they can earn participation points. Other students do not want to raise their hands, so the instructor asks these students

if it is okay to call on them during class. The instructor offers to watch their body language to see if they want to engage. Other students prefer to answer questions from the reading by writing their answers and giving them to the instructor, who then reads them in class without giving the author’s name.

Another approach to engage students who have not earned participation points is to inform the class that students who still need participation points will speak first. The instructor also encourages students in the class to help engage others who may be hesitant to participate. Students engage their peers by verbally encouraging them and by writing notes to them. Students are also allowed to jump in and help others who might not want to talk.

Students must participate at least once a week to earn all the designated points needed by the end of the semester, which most students do. Even after students have earned all their points, the instructor continues to write their names on the board because they like the acknowledgement.