Connexions module: m15040

# Best Practices in Online Teaching -During Teaching - Sustain Students' Motivation\*

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#### Abstract

This module focuses on strategies for sustaining student motivation in an online learning environment. This module is part of the Best Practices in Online Teaching Course created by Penn State University World Campus as a guide for faculty who are new to teaching in an online environment.

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### 1 What to Do?



**Figure 1:** Photo Coaches talking strategy, Photo by and Used with Permission of Julie Elliott, Photo #195275, http://www.sxc.hu/photo/195275

Effective online instructors use appropriate teaching strategies to support, guide, and motivate students to learn actively in the online environment.

### 2 How to Do It?

- Provide opportunities for student collaboration and facilitate their collaborative learning processes.
- Provide opportunities for students to collaborate through online collaboration tools such as Breeze<sup>1</sup> .
- Choose the right tone of conversation in online communication to make students feel comfortable with the learning environment, to establish trust in communication, and to reduce feelings of isolation and enhance a sense of community
- Provide meaningful feedback on graded assignments with recognition of good work as well as specific suggestions for improvement (See Example (Example 1: Feedback to Students) and Provide Feedback and Support Module<sup>2</sup>)
- Provide a weekly "wrap up" before the next lesson begins
- Take an active role in helping your students think and learn actively through careful task structuring, questioning, and scaffolding.
- In online discussions, consider:
  - · Designing thought-provoking questions to elicit student discussions on the topics of your focus:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> http://www.adobe.com/products/breeze/

<sup>2&</sup>quot;Best Practices in Online Teaching - During Teaching - Provide Feedback and Support" <a href="http://cnx.org/content/m15038/latest/">http://cnx.org/content/m15038/latest/</a>

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see Crafting Questions for Online Discussions<sup>3</sup> from Instructional Technology Services at Penn State

- · Providing a weekly summary of discussion topics to demonstrate your participation
- · Redirecting off-topic discussion through gentle reminders or a recast of the question
- · Assessing messages by both quantity and quality (For more information about assessing online messages, please see Assessing Messages in Online Discussion module<sup>4</sup>)

#### Example 1: Feedback to Students

ANGEL email sent to class, ESL 015, Fall 06

Hi class,

Here's my feedback in your work on the summary of Lean's article.

What I was looking at:

- 1. if you have explicitly and clearly summarized the points as to why numerical grading system is not appropriate. Don't just say it's bad because it's unfair: Lean explained why it is unfair and how it can be detrimental to the students.
- 2. if you sum up the points as to why descriptive reports on the students might be a better way to replace the numerical grading. You need to include claims and assumptions about why this system would work better. His claim might be "descriptive way works better", but his assumption can be the reasons why that would work better. Let me see, as your reader, why Lean was supporting the descriptive way.
- 3. how you citied his examples in your own words to support points 1) and 2).

Please review your summary and see if you have stated all of these three points. Again, I would welcome your further revision on your summary.

Thank you, K. Park

## 3 Why Do It?

Instructors use external strategies to support and promote learners' internal motivation to learn effectively (Conrad, Donaldson, 2004, p.8).

The technological tools in a course management system do not necessarily ensure students' learning; therefore, Lao & Gonzales (2005) suggest that faculty of online courses know how to motivate their students in an online environment.

Beaudin's (1999) study about online asynchronous discussions finds the following strategies can help keep asynchronous discussions on topic: carefully-designed questions, guidelines for helping learners prepare responses, rewording questions when necessary, and discussion summaries.

#### 4 References:

Beaudin, B.P. (1999). Keeping online asynchronous discussions on topic. **Journal of Asynchronous** Learning Networks, **3(2)**, 41-53

Conrad, R.M. & Donaldson, J.A. (2004). Engaging the online learning: Activities and resources for creative instruction. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lao, T. & Gonzales, C. (2005). Understanding online learning through a qualitative description of professors and students' experiences. Journal of Technology and Teacher Education, 13(3), 459-474

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/online questions/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>"Best Practices in Online Teaching - During Teaching - Assess Messages in Online Discussions" <a href="http://cnx.org/content/m15035/latest/">http://cnx.org/content/m15035/latest/</a>