



BRINGING THE BLING

Add Some Unexpected Excitement to the Classroom

This issue of *The Toolbox* presents a series of teaching strategies that you can use to add some extra *bling* to the classroom!

TURN UP THE MUSIC!

Consider using music as a way of welcoming students to the classroom. Music can foster a sense that the class session has been prepared and the instructor is ready to go. With the availability of iPods and other mp3 players, it is very easy to create playlists of music for individual classes, topics, or settings. Playlists can be generic in nature or crafted with songs that relate to the topic of the day. As another twist, you may also decide to ask students to contribute music selections on assigned days. Greet your students with the invigorating and energy-producing sound of music!

Eight Strategies to Keep Your Students Tuned In

The following very simple and effective strategies can be used to pique the interest and attention of your students (adapted from Garmston, 1997):

- 1 Here Is My Most Important Point.** This verbal signal can take students from their inner thoughts (or outer Facebook chats) and reconnect them with the speaker.
- 2 Periods of Silence.** Experts in the field of public speaking tell us that the most effective public speakers are those who speak slowly and with more and longer pauses (Lucas, 2004). Consider using pauses of two to four seconds as a way of inviting attention.
- 3 Visual Paragraph.** Move in silence from one part of the room to another as you begin the process of introducing a new point or topic of discussion.
- 4 Megaphone.** Introduce and emphasize an important point by cupping your hands as if speaking into a megaphone.
- 5 Echo.** Say it again—same phrase, same pacing, same intonation.
- 6 Numbers.** Try enumerating your points (e.g., Here are three reasons why that happened...). This provides an advance organizer for the listener as a means of capturing the points you wish to make.
- 7 Other Physical Signals.** Combine Numbers with the Visual Paragraph by moving to a different location in the room to present each point of emphasis.
- 8 Choral Repeats.** Playfully engage the class by asking them, as a chorus, to repeat back a statement or bullet point of information.









It could well be that faculty members of the twenty-first century college or university will find it necessary to set aside their roles as teachers and instead become designers of learning experiences, processes, and environments.

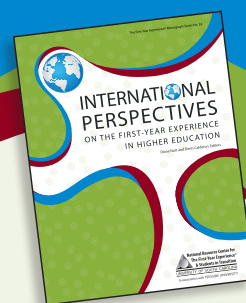
Duderstadt, 1999, p. 7

SILENT CHEERS AND ENERGIZERS

Admittedly silly and ridiculous, these little tedium-breakers often energize the group and add some laughter to the learning experience (that's a good thing!). Interestingly, college students seem to enjoy these moments of being somewhat unsophisticated. The ideas presented below come from a variety of sources (e.g., <http://www.csun.edu/~sb4310/ENERGIZERS.htm>), and the list grows every year as creative teachers invent new ways to help students celebrate their classroom successes:

-  **A Round of Applause.** Students are asked to applaud someone by clapping their hands and simultaneously moving them in a circular motion in front of their bodies.
-  **The Sitting "O."** The standing ovation is often considered to be the highest form of praise, but the Sitting "O" is even more significant. Students remain in their seats and raise their arms over their heads to form the shape of the letter "O."
-  **Let's Give This a Stamp of Approval.** As a way of affirming an insight or moment of clarity, ask students to give the Stamp of Approval by pounding a fist onto an open palm.
-  **The Wave.** Popular at large stadium venues, The Wave involves a coordinated movement across the class where students stand, wave their arms above their heads, and then sit down. This could be great fun in a large classroom setting.
-  **The Microwave.** For those moments when just a small tribute is required, students wave using only their little fingers.
-  **The Lobster.** Students applaud lobster style by moving their thumbs against the rest of their fingers. Sounds effects are optional.

Engage your students this week by interjecting one or more energizers or silent cheers. The element of surprise often creates the most memorable learning moments. Once these have been learned, they become part of the classroom culture.



*new
monograph*

MONOGRAPH NO. 52

International Perspectives on the First-Year Experience in Higher Education

Diane Nutt & Denis Calderon, Editors
*Produced in collaboration with Teesside
University, United Kingdom*

Based on the National Resource Center's successful *Exploring the Evidence* series, we are pleased to offer this inaugural collection of international first-year initiatives, demonstrating the portability and adaptability of these strategies in a variety of institutional contexts. Cases from a dozen different countries touch on a wide range of topics, including: academic advising and support, comprehensive program design, early-warning systems for at-risk students, electronic portfolios, first-year seminars, learning communities, orientation or induction, peer mentoring, retention initiatives, self-regulated learning, and Supplemental Instruction or peer-assisted study sessions. Students of higher education will value this volume for the rare glimpse it offers of international first-year transition programs and for the opportunity to compare programs from a wide range of educational contexts. Educators involved in the first-year experience will find both familiar strategies and insightful innovations to inform program design and assessment.

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Gone in 60 Seconds

Think for a moment about the changes that can occur in the lives of your students as they move through a semester: new insights and learning, new relationships, and the clarification of life goals. Given these potential transformations, it is always helpful to provide opportunities for structured reflection. The Gone in 60 Seconds strategy provides an opportunity for students to quickly reflect and share on their learning experience and can be adapted for a variety of purposes.

Students are randomly paired with one another (e.g., consider the My New BFF strategy presented in the next section) and stand facing their partners. A series of questions or prompts are flashed on the classroom screen at 60 second intervals. Students have one minute to consider the statement and share their responses with one another. Interval times can be adjusted accordingly if a question generates a higher level of conversation. Examples of prompts used during a final session of a first-year seminar include:

- My biggest surprise during my first semester in college was...
- My biggest success and my greatest disappointment were...
- Three things that I have learned about myself are...
- One thing that I will do differently next semester is...

My experiences in using this technique have yielded many positive responses from participating students.

My New BFF

Most students, like most people, upon entering a new room (e.g., classroom, meeting room, conference), select a seat and automatically return to the same seat every time they visit that location. As a result of this auto-pilot behavior, students spend class discussion time talking with the same collection of individuals who are seated around them.

To break up this monotony and encourage a more diverse mix of dialogue and opinion, ask students to stand, look around the room, and identify a person with whom they have not worked or spoken extensively with over the course of the semester. After finding their new BFF (i.e., *Best Friend Forever* in current parlance), one student from the pair moves to the other's seating location; the students, then, introduce themselves and shake hands. From that point of introduction and connection, you can provide these newly made teams of BFFs with a variety of topics to discuss and discover.



Enjoy the experience of bringing the bling!

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 Lucas, S. (2004). *The art of public speaking*. Columbus, OH: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

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- ➔ Role of faculty in sophomore student success
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The Toolbox

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