“Yes, I totally agree.”

Getting more out of discussion board posts

We use discussion boards as a way for students to share insight, bring unique perspectives, provide researched information, and simply connect with their classmates. What we often get instead of our lofty goals for enhanced instructional value, is a low-quality, bare minimum effort that sometimes seems like a waste of time to grade.

The root of the problem of low-quality posts is our focus on quantity, not quality. In order to encourage interaction, we often require a certain number of posts and replies: “Write a response to the chapter, and reply to three other students’ responses.”

But are more interactive students really learning more? Research shows otherwise.¹ Low levels of interaction aren’t as much an indicator of low learning and motivation as they are of an introspective personality. A chatty student isn’t necessarily learning more.

So how do we develop a grading system that rewards the Atticus Finches as much as the Rush Limbaughs, and still encourages more interaction in order to help students build a productive learning community?

One example of an effective grading system recognized by The Sloan Consortium (“...Committed to Quality Online Education”), is focused on the Cognitive, Teaching, and Social Presences conveyed by student posts. ²

Cognitive Presence is where students show their content understanding. An example rubric is as follows:

0 points — No academic value or new information added
1 point — Some new information posted, but simply taken from the textbook
2 points — Some new information from outside sources
3 points — “Substantial academic contribution” from an outside source, and an issue or concept is clarified
4 points — Documented information “that contributes greatly” to the class’s understanding and provides insight about the content

...continued on pg 2:

First Impressions

What body language can tell students

A study on the power of first impressions showed that the body language seen in a 30-second video clip of a professor teaching is all the impression that is needed to accurately predict the professor’s end-of-semester evaluation scores. Being aware of your physical persona from Day 1 is an aspect of teaching that should not be overlooked.

Researchers found that the mannerisms of the highest rated teachers conveyed a strong sense of competence, yet clearly showed friendliness and supportiveness toward their students.

Behaviors that worked: Nodding, smiling, laughing, clear hand gestures, and leaving the podium to approach the class

What didn’t work: Often looking down, frowning, sitting, and fidgeting with hands or objects (That last one was a biggie.)

What if you teach an online course??? Make a short introduction video to convey the same qualities of competence, friendliness, and supportiveness to your students. This often-overlooked opportunity to have students connect with you is a great way to start the semester.


Keep reading… pg 2:

Showcase your talent (and ESU)

Where to find information on discussion board grading
Bragging Rights
Why should someone take your course?

Is the description in the course catalog enough to convince prospective students that your course is for them? Out of all of the choices, why is yours the elective that someone would choose? But why stop there? Why would someone come to Emporia State University to enroll in your major? How do they know what we have to offer? Why are we better than any other university?

Getting the message out about the spectacular programs and student learning experiences that we offer is key to our success here at ESU. So let’s showcase the results of 150 years of educational innovation, and brag a little about what our students get out of our courses.

I am working to compile examples of how all ESU instructors enhance their classes and student outcomes with technology. These can range from quality presentation methods, to in-depth student projects. This will serve instructors and the university by letting future students see the types of experiences that they are able to be a part of when they choose your course or your major at ESU.

Not only will students be informed about the teaching strategies being used here, but every instructor will be able to see what kind of tools are being used in other departments. This can create a network of colleagues to turn to when each of you wants to try a new tool or technique, but don’t know what the next step is. Why should every department have to build every innovation from the ground up, when you can each borrow from the developments of other instructors who have been working on the same thing and who can save you lots of time and frustration along the way?

To see an example of what this will look like, visit, http://www.crlt.umich.edu/inst/techexamples.php, or click the link on my website @ http://www.emporia.edu/distance/id/.

Then please email descriptions of your best activities, including hyperlinks to any content or projects that are posted online, and help me show future students and other instructors what we can provide for them.

jkern@emporia.edu

Discussion boards (cont.)...

By using a rubric like this, students can easily see the type of response you will reward. For many students, the level of discussion will require deeper thinking than they generally apply to their posts. When it comes to motivation, the more insightful content and higher level of discussion may work well to encourage student interaction, replacing the requirement for a minimum number of posts, and making the discussion seem less like “busy” work.

To find info on the more subjectively graded aspects of Teaching and Social Presence, use the url in the 2nd citation below, or use the link from my ESU website: http://emporia.edu/distance/id.
