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Innovative Practices for Engaged Learning

- ◎ **Shift gears every 10-20 minutes**
 - ◆ Move to a new activity (see list below)
 - ◆ Pause to erase the board
 - ◆ Do a quick review
 - ◆ Allow students a 30 second “text check”
 - ◆ Ask everyone to stand up and stretch

- ◎ **Establish a pattern**

This is especially helpful for the first activity. When students know what to expect, they settle down and focus more quickly. A familiar activity helps them transition from previous classes or activities. Here is just the beginning of a list of classroom activities that can be adapted to classes of all sizes and subjects, any of which could work to start off a class or shift gears:

 - ◆ 1 minute writing (ideas below)
 - ◆ Review the previous class—students can participate in this:
 - Meet students at the door as they come in and hand out index cards; ask them to write down the most important thing they learned last class. Flip through the cards and read the ones you want to highlight (include a few of your own if you want)—this is also a good way to assess learning
 - Collect index cards with the most important thing learned/most confusing thing at the END of class and use them to start off the next class
 - Cards can be anonymous or signed
 - Cards don't have to be returned
 - Use the cards to take attendance
 - Use the cards you again when reviewing for exams
 - Entertain questions about the next assignment/test
 - ◆ Rearrange the furniture (make a circle, get into small groups)
 - ◆ Start with a quick quiz on the reading—grade it together in class
 - ◆ Have a student present a concept or definition (in my English Composition classes, for example, I have had students take turns presenting a “Grammar Minute” at the start of each class)
 - ◆ Watch a video or listen to an appropriate news story and discuss as a warm up
 - ◆ NPR's series “This I Believe” (<http://thisibelieve.org>) can illustrate various rhetorical devices in first-year composition classes. The current weekly series, “storycorps” (<http://www.npr.org/series/4516989/storycorps>) could be used for discussions about interpersonal communication
 - ◆ *Wall Street Journal* headlines can be used in economics classes to give real world context to abstract ideas

- ◆ TED Talks (www.TED.com) are searchable by subject and because they are carefully refereed, they are a dependable resource (unlike YouTube)

◎ **1 minute papers** (from *In-Class Assessment Techniques*, Angelo & Cross)

Use these regularly or whenever you need a change. Ask the class to write for one minute on any of following prompts (you will be able to think of hundreds more); collect them if you like, or you can ask them to exchange with their neighbours, discuss, and write a follow up response. You can respond to them with written comments, comment on them in class immediately or during the next class; you can return them or not.

- ◆ What's the muddiest point in the assigned reading/last class/today's class)?
- ◆ Summarize X (a concept, lecture, reading) in one sentence for a specific audience (classmate, community partner, high school student)
- ◆ Draw a picture of X (concept, lecture, reading)
- ◆ One thing you learned today/One thing you feel you need to know more about
- ◆ Make a connection: e.g., between X (concept, lecture, reading) and another topic or activity (e.g., after reading Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" I asked them to write about the connection between civil rights and the University Core Curriculum requirements—they said some amazing (and encouraging) things)
- ◆ If you could change one thing about this class what would it be?

◎ **Active Learning**

- ◆ **Small Groups**—this works particularly well if each group has a different part of a problem to solve so that they will need to listen to all the other groups report back in order to proceed. Group members can be assigned roles (e.g., time keeper, discussion leader, spokesperson, sceptic) or perspectives (analytical, emotional, process focused, etc.).
- ◆ **Peer review/hire an editor**—I allow students to work with a partner to correct errors on papers they are about to hand in; I am available as a consultant. This also serves to show them what others' work is like so they can tell who has really made the grade.
- ◆ **Read aloud in class**—ask students to take turns reading difficult material aloud, stopping frequently to clarify and discuss. (This is a low-tech version of flipping the classroom).
- ◆ **Survey the class**—use clickers if you have them, or just ask a question related to the material but connected to their lives: how many people know someone who has had cancer, etc. A follow up can be to discuss with a neighbour.
- ◆ **Write, pair, share**—this is just what it is. Pose a question. Give them X amount of time for each of the 3 tasks (you can add time for thinking at the beginning, too). After sharing with a neighbour they can share in a small group. The sharing can be reported to the entire class or not.
- ◆ **"What if...?" exercise**—identify something central to your field and ask students "what if" this was different. In a physics class the question could be "What if there were no gravity?"