

REWARDING STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK

- Talk directly to the person and respond explicitly to him or her. Make eye contact and use his or her name if possible.
- Learn to listen carefully and show it. Look attentive, and test your understanding when necessary by a follow-up question, by paraphrasing what the student has said, or checking on an implication of his or her meaning.
- Restate complex or inaudible contributions for the whole class, or ask the student to do this.
- Point out specifically what you thought was valuable in the contribution.
- If you see potential in the comment, draw the student out by asking him or her to elaborate, apply or relate the point in new ways.
- Build on or incorporate the student's point in a later point of yours, so that the intellectual work of the class becomes a mixture of many people's ideas.
- Relate the student's point to material being discussed in class.
- Invite other students to add their reactions or reflections to build on the original point.
- Comment on the thinking process a student has used, as well as his or her conclusions.
- If a student comment is unclear or confused, help the student find out and express what he or she really was trying to say — show that you care about the original intent.
- Use non-verbal messages — body posture, facial expressions — to reward students for the act of participating (regardless of what you have to say about the substance).
- Talk to the person. By showing interest, you can reward the act of participation while indicating that a particular contribution is incorrect. Make eye contact.
- Be sensitive to students' pride and fears. In putting forward an idea, a student (and probably you, too) puts his or her self-esteem on the line as well.
- Be especially alert to avoid any tone of condescension or put-down; a student who is working on an idea, however elementary or naive, deserves respect and you will find that this encourages others to take risks too.
- Recognize the reality of a high-pressure competitive campus; students have to worry about grades whether they want to or not.
- Leave your ego in your briefcase. Looking good at students' expense is the surest way to create a tense, anxious climate which inhibits participation.
- Be clear, in your own mind, and in your statements, as to the difference between what is incorrect and what you as an individual disagree with. Never use the former to enforce the latter.
- Admit it when you don't know something. Be a model for students by thinking out loud when you're puzzled.
- When you aren't completely clear about what a student means, ask a question to clarify.



- When you disagree with or correct a student, restate or paraphrase the point he or she made. This tests your understanding, and also conveys that you take the point seriously.

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