

Faculty Playbook

NDSU NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Introduction to Playbook

This playbook is intended to be an interactive resource to improve student learning, outcomes, and persistence. While the ideas, suggestions, and tools in this playbook are applicable to all students, many can be especially beneficial for underrepresented students, such as first generation, students of color, LGBTQIA+, transfer and international students, veterans, students with disabilities.

1. Engagement in educational (academic) experience

[Engaged students](#) tend to be more motivated, perform better academically, and develop critical thinking skills. It creates a dynamic learning environment, fostering collaboration and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Engagement encompasses both academic and social aspects of learning. To learn more about social engagement and sense of belonging, please see #4. Sense of belonging.

- a. Tell students the “why”
- b. Use active learning techniques, such as:
 - i. group activities
 - ii. case studies
 - iii. hands-on activities
 - iv. Think-pair-share
 - v. Small group discussion
 - vi. Turn and talk
 - vii. Pausing in lecture
 - viii. Gallery walk
 - ix. Fishbowl
 - x. [Further reading](#)
 - xi. [Resource](#) includes online synchronous, online asynchronous on F2F ideas
- c. Personalized learning – Recognize and accommodate different learning needs and styles among students. Offer additional resources or alternative assignments for struggling students
- d. Create a First-Day Survey to college learning goals, personal information and prior knowledge: [Article](#)
- e. Department and Program level activities to create engagement opportunities between students and faculty/deans/etc such as:
 - i. Research opportunities with faculty
 - ii. Mentoring
 - iii. Connection to career or later coursework

- iv. Opportunities for students to mix with faculty, deans, upper administration
- v. Leadership roles / utilizing students as 'partners'
- f. Technology integration – Use technology effectively like online resources and digital tools to enhance learning experiences and provide flexibility
 - i. [Article](#) with lots of tech tools by category to pull from
- g. Classroom peer support – Promote peer/pair work and study groups. Students often benefit from working with their peers to better understand course materials
- h. AI/Chat
 - i. [Should You Add an AI Policy to Your Syllabus?](#)
 - ii. Invite your class to complete a Mad Libs using ChatGPT. It's a playful way to leverage ChatGPT's ability to predict the next word, giving students insight into how generative AI works on a fundamental level. You can also have your students use ChatGPT to rewrite their own writing in the tone and style of their favorite writers. This exercise demonstrates AI's ability to mimic style and teaches students about adopting different tones in writing.
 - iii. Vetting Sources: One session, led by the Johns Hopkins University's Olysha Magruder, Juliet Owuor, and Stephyn Butcher, provided an exercise that helps instructors teach ChatGPT's limitations. Challenge your students to ask ChatGPT for a list of academic sources on a topic, and then have them evaluate the credibility and usability of those sources. This exercise empowers students to verify the information AI generates, fostering responsible AI use.
 - iv. Grade ChatGPT: Rather than assigning students to write an essay, assign them the task of using ChatGPT to generate one instead. Then have them grade ChatGPT's work using a rubric you provide. This role reversal lets students gain a deeper understanding of essay components, source validation, argument evaluation, and supporting evidence. Follow this with peer reviews and reflection papers for further insights into their learning experience.
 - v. Lead by Example: To effectively teach about generative AI, experiment with it yourself. ChatGPT can generate templates for syllabi, assignments, rubrics, and course websites, while prompt engineering can refine your results.
 - vi. Caryn Sever, director of instructional design and development at Northern Virginia Community College, and Kate Grovergrys, faculty consultant in the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Madison College, in Wisconsin, hosted a session that provided a wealth of resources for leveraging AI in the classroom. Here's a document of AI prompts that can assist you in teaching and developing material for a language learning course. For example, you can transform Bing's AI into a Spanish language tutor or use ChatGPT as a writing tutor. These prompts enable AI to serve as a supplementary support tool for students and complement your personalized guidance.

- vii. AI Proofing: But what if you don't want your students to use AI? Sean Nufer, senior director of teaching and learning at The Community Solution Education System, shared this Canvas site with some suggestions. His take is that, regardless of AI being a concern, making your assignments more relevant to students' lives reduces the chances of cheating.
- viii. One assignment asks students to use principles from their course readings to analyze an advertisement that resonates with them. This familiarizes them with class concepts and encourages practical application in their daily lives, further cementing how relevant their learning material can be. Extend this approach by having students apply class principles to analyze local store product displays. Using a platform like Padlet enables students to interact with photos and videos, enhancing the learning experience with multimedia materials. Encouraging students to explore their communities, Nufer says, not only promotes the application of course knowledge in a meaningful way, but also enriches your understanding of their personal experiences, affording a stronger interpersonal connection between instructor and student.
 - i. Student utilization of Blackboard
 - j. Attending class (outreach for misses)
 - k. Attending office hours

2. Feedback and Assessment –

Utilizing feedback and assessment helps ensure student learning and the process of continuous improvement. Providing regular feedback to students on their learning allows them to understand if they are reaching the learning objectives or if they need to seek additional support. Using various formative and summative assessments allows students different ways to demonstrate their learning and receive feedback. The assessment data and student feedback should also be used for continuous course improvement.

- a. Student:
 - i. Use assessment and regular feedback to help students gauge their understanding and make necessary improvements. Encourage peer feedback and self-assessment
 - 1. [Assessment Trends in Higher Education](#)
 - 2. [What Students told us 'good' feedback means to them](#)
 - a. Has a the data in the table that might be good examples to pull out and include
 - ii. Innovative (varied) assessments techniques – Avoid solely relying on traditional exams. Use a variety of assessment methods, like projects, journals, presentations, and quizzes to cater to different learning styles
- b. Continuous Course Improvement

- i. Feedback and evaluation of faculty – Regularly assess the effectiveness of your teaching methods and the course itself by seeking feedback from students and making adjustments based on their input
 - 1. Weekly 1 minute reflections
 - 2. Midterm check-ins
 - 3. Syllabus walk through
- c. Radar/Early warning system – Implement some kind of system to identify struggling students and offer appropriate intervention or support services (language matters)

3. Establishing a positive rapport with students

Taking the lead to open doors for connection and classroom rapport is important. Connection, comfortability, and trust is paramount for student persistence and retention. Students don't intuitively know how to connect with you and need your assistance – and you can easily help with simple actions. Students also need help and permission to meaningfully connect with their classmates. These connections with you and each other, while seemingly simple or insignificant, help students persist and succeed.

Tips for building classroom rapport and connection:

- a. Actively invite students to connect with you.
 - i. Students don't intuitively know how to connect with you. They often report that connecting with faculty can be scary, or that they simply don't know the first step to take. This is especially true for new students. Tell, and remind, students the best ways to connect with you.
 - ii. Be creative. How do you want to connect with students? Office hours, before or after class, class discussions, email, coffee meetings.
 - iii. Connecting in large classes can be more challenging, but not impossible: [How to Engage Students and Support Learning in Large Classes](#)
 - iv. Clearly tell students how they can meet or connect with you, and show them where to find the information in your syllabus.
 - v. Be persistent. Keep reminding them throughout the semester. Quick reminders are helpful to students and increase engagement.
- b. Actively invite students to connect with each other
 - i. Learning is a social process. Students who feel engaged with each other feel more engaged with your class. Build community in the classroom. [Education Surges When Students Learn Together.](#)
 - ii. Take time during the first class to have students introduce and interact with each other. Simply taking 5 minutes to have students introduce themselves to the people immediately around them and share contact information builds connection - in large and small classes.

1. Let students know that connecting with classmates can help them throughout the semester (study groups, getting missed notes, etc)
- c. Be accessible and responsive
 - i. Be approachable and available to students. Kindness and a few minutes of time can dramatically help with engagement and student success.
 - ii. Promptly respond to emails. Sounds simple, but students report this is very important to their success.
 - iii. Hold regular office hours in a welcoming environment. [The Missed Opportunity of Office Hours](#)
 - iv. Be willing to provide extra help when needed, or share campus resources. Students often don't know how or where to go when they need help.
 - d. Be clear about class expectations. Students appreciate and respond to clear expectations shared, and repeated, by you.
 - i. Clearly communicate course objectives and grading criteria from the beginning of the semester.
 - ii. Don't assume students know how to navigate a syllabus, many do not. Taking the time to help new students understand your expectations and syllabus eliminates many issues later.
 - e. Be proactive about course progress updates and outreach to struggling students
 - i. Regularly update students on their progress throughout the semester - mid-term grades, progress reports.
 - ii. Keep grades up to date to help students with self-assessment and continued progress. Students report this information is very important to them.
 - iii. Attendance - if a student is not attending class, or attendance patterns suddenly change, reach out to the student. Catching attendance issues early can help with student persistence. There are many supports on campus to help students with a variety of concerns or barriers they might be facing.
 - iv. Monitor utilization of Blackboard and reach out to students who are not engaging. Lower engagement in Blackboard compared to classmates is a flag for persistence.
 - v. If a student seems to be struggling - poor grades or attendance, change in behavior, etc. - you can also reach out to a support area on campus to get help with outreach to your student. Great places to start are a Dean of Students [Care Team referral](#), connection with their academic advisor, or a referral to [Rising Scholars Peer Mentoring](#) to connect with a mentor to build academic skills and goals.

4. Creating a Sense of belonging

Students' sense of belonging on campus and within the classroom is vital for their retention at the university. An intentional focus to create a sense of belonging is needed for each stage of their NDSU experience first semester through graduation. Creating an environment where the students feel supported, encouraging use of resources on campus, and finding ways to build a sense of belonging is paramount for student success and persistence.

- a. Supportive classroom environments - Foster a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere where students feel comfortable asking questions, sharing their perspectives, and making mistakes without fear or judgment
- b. Health and well-being – Promote student well-being and mental health resources. Provide information on stress management and self-care. Remind students to take care of themselves (ie. get sleep, eat well-balanced diet, exercise, have social connections) Language matters - build off of the institutional message
- c. Understand how students are feeling - particularly marginalized or underrepresented groups (BIPOC, first gen, LGBTQ)
- d. Mentoring – Listen and provide guidance to your student's needs. Ask prompting questions to elicit information on classroom materials, career goals, interests, or life in general. [Article](#) on tips & tricks for how to mentor students.
- e. Create peer interaction- allow students to get to know other students in class and exchange contact information to build a community of support
 - i. In an online synchronous format- allow time at the beginning of class to check in with students to see what celebrations or struggles they have had that week
 - ii. [The Social Classroom](#)
- f. Building Community
 - i. Allow for student reflection through a survey on how students are feeling that day or allowing them to share victories/burdens they have experienced
 - ii. Create laughable moments in class with memes or jokes to break up a heavy topic
 - iii. Allow for mindful movement through incorporating meditation or stretching into class
 - iv. Foster goal setting for students with small and large goals both for your course as well as for the semester or year.

5. Learning to navigate demands of academic life

The transition to 'university student' is not automatic for many students. Sharing your expertise and knowledge to build student skills is exceptionally helpful to student confidence, persistence, and retention. Some areas of lowest confidence indicated by NDSU students, and tips you can use to build skills, include:

a. Academic and Study Skills:

i. Time management

1. Help students understand how to use your syllabus to find important information. Remember, many students - especially first year students - don't know how to use a syllabus and need your guidance.
2. Remind students to put important dates, deadlines, and assignments in their planner.
3. Remind students of upcoming exams and due dates. Yes, it is in your syllabus... but students are still honing their time management skills (and we all can use reminders from time to time). A quick reminder now can save a multitude of headaches later.
4. Give students hints about how to break down large assignments in your class to be manageable.
5. Refer students to resources and workshops which help students develop effective time management and study skills. For example, connection with their academic advisor, or a referral to [Rising Scholars Peer Mentoring](#) to connect with a mentor to build academic skills and goals.

ii. Studying and test taking.

1. Give students tips on best ways to study for your exams, how to best take and use notes, and how to learn challenging material in your class. Remember, many students are still learning the skills needed to be successful university students. Share your expertise.
2. Remind students about the importance of basic success tasks for your class. This could include reading the textbook, completing practice problems, or reviewing notes. What basic tasks are important to success in your class? Don't assume students know what these tasks are for your course. Letting them know, and reminding them, can help with class performance and persistence. These easy reminders don't take much time, but can have big impacts.

iii. Distraction management and stress management. Students report that distraction management and stress can get in the way of their success. As opportunities arise, share your tips. Healthy students are more engaged and do better in class. You can share quick reminders to:

1. Do course work in a quiet and productive space.
2. Turn off your phone or put it in a different room.
3. Utilize time between classes to review notes or prepare for your next class.

4. Take care of yourself by eating well, getting plenty of sleep, drinking plenty of water, exercising or moving your body, and taking time to connect with family or friends.
- b. Campus Support and Resources. For many students 'other' things get in the way of academic engagement and success including mental and physical health, financial concerns, family concerns, and accessibility. Sharing and encouraging academic and holistic resource use is important to help students overcome issues outside of the classroom in order to be successful in your class. Here are some handy resources to know and share with students.
 - i. Academic support: In addition to your office hours and assistance, NDSU has a wealth of academic support including the Learning Assistant program; [ACE Tutors](#), and [Center for Writers](#). Students who seek academic support report higher grades and greater confidence in their classes.
 - ii. Peer Mentoring: Encourage students to join [Rising Scholars Peer Mentoring](#) to connect with a mentor to build academic skills and goals. This program is open to any NDSU undergraduate student at any time.
 - iii. Mental health - including individual appointments and groups: [NDSU Counseling Center](#)
 - iv. Physical health: [Wellness Center](#); and [Student Health](#)
 - v. Financial questions or emergencies: Financial Aid; One Stop; [Student Emergency Fund](#)
 - vi. Accessibility and accommodations: [Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources](#).
 - vii. Case management and the Care Team: For students who are dealing with multiple concerns, or for general concerns you have noticed with a student (change in behavior, absent), make a referral to the Dean of Students [Care Team](#). The NDSU case manager will reach out to the student and offer support and resources.
 - c. Social and Peer Engagement. For many students making friends and getting involved on campus can be a big enough worry, or carry enough cognitive load, to negatively impact academic performance. This can be particularly true for first year students. While perhaps not directly related to your course, being aware of this potential barrier to success is important.
 - i. Healthy relationships. Help students create connections with other students in your class. For more information see section 3, Establishing a positive rapport with students; and section 4, Sense of belonging.
 - ii. Clubs, organizations, activities. Encourage students to become involved. Involved students persist and get higher grades.