

FACULTY POCKET GUIDE TO

student achievement · retention · and wellness



McDOWELL INSTITUTE

TEACHER EXCELLENCE
in Positive Behavior Support

Clarity of
Expectations and
Encouragement
of Effort and
Performance

College of Education
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Simple Instructional Strategies to Enhance *Student Achievement · Retention · and Wellness*

While it can sometimes feel overwhelming to address the needs of our increasingly diverse student body in our classrooms on campus, there are a couple of well-documented instructional strategies that have proven to be time efficient while highly effective.

Encouragingly, these strategies are not new concepts, which in many ways can help faculty to both understand and implement the approaches. The challenge, however, is consistent use of these inter-related strategies to the point where they become habitual.

Three of the most fundamental proactive strategies include:

- 1) providing clear, positively stated performance expectations
- 2) building a connection (rapport) with each student in your classroom
- 3) providing a sufficient degree of acknowledgment (positive reinforcement) for effort and performance as reflected in your established expectations.

While each of these three inter-related practices is both effective and efficient, this particular resource will exclusively highlight the importance of providing clear expectations in concert with encouragement for effort and acknowledgment for performance to support student achievement-retention-wellness. Further, a few examples of high impact strategies for use in any university classroom will be highlighted.

Please feel free to contact Tim Knoster (Executive Director) or Danielle Empson (Director of School-based Behavioral Health) at the McDowell Institute should you have interest in additional information on the practices highlighted in this brief resource (tknoster@bloomu.edu or dempson@bloomu.edu).

Establishing Clear, Positively Stated Expectations in the Classroom

There are a variety of reasons why given students struggle to achieve, and in turn, we fail to retain those students. These reasons...or factors... tend to be multi-faceted and inter-related, meaning there is typically no one causal root to why given students fail to thrive in college. Sometimes many of these factors are outside our immediate ability to influence (e.g., past learning experiences). However, regardless of the experiential base of our students, the establishment of performance expectations and our instructional practices in the classroom are things we can influence.



Simple Strategies to Establishing Reasonable Expectations

Select 3-5 Broad, Affirmatively Stated Expectations:

As simplistic as it may appear, identifying between 3-5 broad, affirmatively stated performance expectations is an important first step to facilitate student achievement (e.g., Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be Successful). This should be followed by identifying high priority contexts (routines) that regularly occur within the classroom within which to more specifically define these 3-5 broad expectations.

Identify High Priority Contexts/Routines that occur in your Classroom:

In reflecting on prior semesters of instruction, identify the contexts... also known as routines...in which students struggled to meet your expectations.

Examples might include:

- 1) The Start of Class
- 2) During Lecture
- 3) During Collaborative Activities
- 4) The End of Class
- 5) Between Classes (outside of class session).

If you struggle with identifying the situations/ routines, ask yourself “under what circumstances or conditions have I been historically most frustrated with student performance...or lack of performance?” Once you have identified these priority contexts, next turn your attention to more precisely defining your broad expectations across and within each of your identified contexts. This is best completed using a table/matrix.



onably High-Performance Expectations

Operationally Define your 3-5 Expectations within each High Priority Contexts:

It is important to more precisely define your broad expectations across each of your prioritized contexts. To do this, ask yourself “what would my students look/sound like if they were meeting this broad expectation in each particular context”? Try to use action words, verbs, to the greatest extent possible in your definitions. Also, keep in mind that a given broad expectation (e.g., be responsible) may look/sound different depending on the context (e.g., responsible behavior when test taking would include work quietly and independently but would include talking quietly on assigned work with classmates during a collaborative team task). Try to come up with 2-3 operational bulleted statements for each broad expectations across each priority context.



Simple Strategies to Establishing Reas

Prominently Post Your Expectations Matrix to Ensure Student Awareness

Expectation	Context: Start of Class	Context: During Team Readiness Assurance Tests (RATs)
Be Here/Be Ready: On Time · Prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Arrive on time to class · Bring required materials and assignments to class · When instructor/co-lecturer starts class, actively listen/focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be focused on the current Unit RAT (on-task) · Organize and get to work promptly
Be Responsible: Quality Work · Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cell phones on vibrate · Come prepared by completing all assignments and readings · Follow all procedures in course outline for attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Remember to follow procedures for Team RAT · Be on-task and process each question as a team on Team RAT. . .everyone contributes · Successfully complete Team RAT in allotted time
Be Respectful: Encourage Others · Recognize Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Provide handouts from last class for classmates on your learning team who were absent last class · Use person-first language and person-first approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be considerate of others, communicate professionally and work collaboratively · Use indoor, small, whisper, 6-inch voices when collaborating with one another in the classroom

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ness: AN EXAMPLE OF COURSE PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Context: During Class Lecture	Context: During Other Team Activities	Context: Outside of Class Time Course Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be focused on the current unit of instruction · Participate meaningfully in each class session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be focused on the task to be completed · Have your materials opened to the content being covered · Organize as a team quickly and start work promptly (within 1 minute) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Arrive on time to field experience location with required materials including current clearances · Complete individual RATs on BOLT by due date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Listen and think about points raised in lecture · Ask relevant questions and respond to questions · Share your perspective on relevant issues to the topic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be on-task · One person speaks at a time · Ask for help as needed · Successfully complete task within allotted time · Share roles on the team (e.g. recorder/timekeeper) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Follow all procedures in course outline for assignments/projects · Demonstrate integrity, academic honesty and complete high-quality work (including field experience work) · Review prior class notes/materials/readings and complete assignments before next class (including make-up work)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When a professor or another classmate is speaking, listen · Think about the concepts and practices being described...get the most you can out of the class (and your tuition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Encourage others to be on-task and to provide his/her perspective · Use the time of your teammates efficiently · Strive for consensus where ever possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Act in a manner that displays your assumption in the competence of others · Professionally communicate in a timely manner with the instructor/co-lecturer via e-mail regarding any course related matters

Simple Strategies to Acknowledge

Provide Virtual Communications to Students that Acknowledge Attendance and Participation:

Typically, a pre-requisite for achievement is a combination of attendance and effort (engagement/participation). As such, it can be very helpful to initially focus on acknowledgment for student attendance and class participation at the onset of the semester. This can serve as relatively low hanging fruit to pick (so to speak) and can help to gain traction and positive instructional momentum with your students. Over time, you should increasingly acknowledge performance as students increase their knowledge and skills in your course. Try to combine both 1) use of virtual correspondences with your students in groups/or as a whole in tandem with 2) individual-private virtual recognition. It may be particularly helpful to maintain some degree of emphasis on attendance and effort with students who appear at-risk (those struggling in your course).

Provide Direct, Explicit Praise to Students during Instruction for Effort & Performance:

The most effective way to increase desired student behavior (e.g., attendance, participation and performance) is by acknowledging (reinforcing) targeted desired behavior. Therefore, providing behavior specific praise to students as they meet your established expectations can have a positive, profound impact on student achievement in your courses. The key is sincerity in delivery in tandem with fairly (or equitably) distributing acknowledgment across your students. Equity, in this sense, does NOT mean that every student receives the same number of praise statements. Instead, it means that each student receives the frequency of acknowledgment that they need understanding that some students will likely need higher rates of acknowledgment. Further, consider being precise when praising student performance (e.g., “great job getting right to work on the assignment... very responsible” rather than simply saying “well done”).

Knowledge Effort and Performance

Consciously Increase Frequency of Reinforcement for Effort & Performance for Students At-risk:

There is no more powerful or effective instructional approach when working with students that are struggling to achieve than increasing your frequency of acknowledgment for those very same students. This may require you to focus on readiness skills (attendance, punctuality, effort) in concert with performance skills (e.g., grades, assignments, and work samples). Increased frequency of positive acknowledgment can greatly enhance student engagement, thus increasing student success and motivation... even with those students that appear at-risk.



Student Success: *We are in this Together*

This resource highlights the importance of, and skills to support achievement, retention and wellness. Interestingly, helping our students to understand clearly and meet performance expectations is not unique to instructional practice by faculty. In fact, clarity of expectations aligned with acknowledgment of student effort and performance serves as the bedrock of endeavors to support student retention across units within student affairs. The alignment of our efforts along these same lines further enhances the likelihood of improving our campus climate and student outcomes. The reality is that students, like faculty and staff, have multiple facets of their life experiences here on campus. A healthy degree of synergy can be realized as we consciously align our efforts to support student success. To this end, the McDowell Institute has been increasingly collaborating with BU Health and Wellness and related campus entities to support student achievement and retention. This alignment is not by mere coincidence, but rather strategic in nature and further supports both academic and student affairs outreach and initiatives that support student success. Feel free to contact the McDowell Institute if you have an interest in further exploring such connections and/or resources to support your instructional endeavors.



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