

# 10

## WAYS TO BOOST STUDENT CONFIDENCE

You've got a room full of students seeking knowledge and inspiration. How do you make the most of your time together, and better yet, ensure they leave with the skills needed to succeed? **Boost their confidence!**

The tips below share what you should be doing—and why:

- 1

**Show Your Care:**

Informal interactions can go a long way towards improving student self-confidence, motivation and performance. Be engaged, make direct eye contact when speaking with students and follow-up within 24 hours to any out-of-class inquiries.<sup>1</sup>


- 2

**Believe in Their Potential**

Approach students with the belief that each has the potential to produce good work and succeed. Students will appreciate this positive reinforcement, and feel both encouraged and empowered by it. If you offer praise, be sure it's truly earned. Hollow flattery erodes trust.<sup>2</sup>


- 3

**Stay Open to New Ideas**

Share your expertise, but also be open to new points of view students express. Make a special effort to encourage creativity and freethinking. Provide constructive feedback as necessary—rather than criticism that would deflate confidence and discourage future participation.<sup>3</sup>


- 4

**Foster Problem Solving**

Empower students with the tools to discover knowledge for themselves. Promote manageable academic tasks that gradually move students toward successful completion of solving methodological and applied problems. Give them the joy of discovery.<sup>4</sup>


- 5

**Subdivide Big Projects**

Frame big projects as the achievement of several smaller tasks. Deconstructing assignments this way—with the help of rubrics, models and examples—makes big projects less overwhelming for students.<sup>5</sup>


- 6

**Acknowledge Their Achievements**

Provide opportunities for students to look back to see how far they've come, acknowledge what they've already learned and see the big picture. This builds confidence in their skillset and motivates them to move forward with their remaining coursework.<sup>6</sup>


- 7

**Monitor Student Performance**

Catch problems early by carefully monitoring student performance. Formative assessments can help with this, as can digital platforms or regular reviews of your gradebook. Early intervention can sweep away small problems before they grow into insurmountable roadblocks.<sup>7</sup>


- 8

**Explain the Red Pen**

Train students to view your written comments as opportunities to improve, rather than a personal affront. Make your comments specific, so students can use them as fuel to improve—the biggest confidence booster of all!<sup>8</sup>


- 9

**Invite Participation**

Draw students out of their shells and into the class conversation. Call on them by name if you don't normally do so, and give them time to express themselves. This conveys that you value them as individuals and will help them grow by formulating answers on their own.<sup>9</sup>


- 10

**Be Patient**

Remember that students are likely new to your subject matter and may need time to absorb course material. Nurture them along and remind them to be patient with themselves. No one is perfect on day one; if they go in expecting perfection, they'll only be disappointed. Cut the destructive cycle before it starts.<sup>10</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Teven, J. J., and J. C. McCroskey. "The Relationship of Perceived Teacher Caring with Student Learning and Teacher Evaluation." *Communication Education*, (1997): 46, 1-9.

<sup>2</sup> Harmin, Merrill and Melanie Toth, "Inspiring Active Learning: A Complete Handbook for Today's Teachers." (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Devel), 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Olson, J.N., and J.A. Carter, "Caring and the College Professor." *Focus on Colleges, Universities and Schools*, (2014): 8(1), 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> Teven, J. J., and J. C. McCroskey. "The Relationship of Perceived Teacher Caring with Student Learning And Teacher Evaluation." *Communication Education*, (1997): 46, 1-9.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, Julia G., "28 Ways to Build Persistent Confident Students," Teaching Community/Monster.com.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Jacobs, Lynne F. and Jeremy S. Hyman, "15 Ways to Boost Your Confidence at College." *U.S. News & World Report*, April 21, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Gross Davis, Barbara, "Tools for Teaching." (Wiley Publishing), 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

