

Relationship Building Activities

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Beginning a class by building strong teacher-student relationships is something that I agree with Marzano et. al. (2003) can help me create a strong, solid foundation for the semester. Students are more likely to trust me, respect me, and believe in my knowledge if we have a good relationship. Working in dental hygiene education, I encounter late teens, young adults, and adults in their 30's as my student population and this age range can make relating and relationship building challenging at times. There is a wide range of life stages and maturity levels for me to consider. Below are some relationship building activities I currently incorporate into my courses, or plan to in the future. There is a fine line between being friendly and supportive, and then being friends, and I think these activities do a wonderful job of keeping us professional.

Relationship Building Activity #1

Discussion Board #1 – Introductions

Welcome to Dental Hygiene Preclinical Theory II! You should have reviewed the syllabus and “Getting to Know Your Instructor” by now, and it’s my turn to get to know you! I have provided a few questions for you to answer about yourself, but if there is something interesting, you’d love to share, please do!

1. Tell us your name, where are you from, are you currently working when not at school, what do you do for fun, any hobbies, etc.?
2. Do you, or have you ever worked in the dental field before?
3. What do you hope to learn in this class?
4. What are you most excited for in this class?
5. Is there anything that makes you nervous about this class?
6. Also, share any fun information about yourself!

Interest inventories or “getting to know you” activities are important for me in getting to know my students. I will include this relationship building activity on the first day of an in-person class or as a discussion participation in the first week of a virtual class. I will offer the same, if not more, information about myself for them to gain a connection to me as well. This activity helps us find common interests and build a sense of community (Boryga, 2023). Student-

teacher relationships instill a feeling of belonging that is important for students, a feeling of belonging fosters a want to succeed (Solberg & Laundal, 2025).

Relationship Building Activity #2

Greetings at the Door and Daily Huddles.

Getting us started as a well-managed classroom, for me, begins with greeting my students every morning as they come into class and holding daily huddles in clinic (Marzano et. al., 2003). I strive to arrive early enough so that I am present in the clinic, or classroom, before my students each day. I think this is a small, helpful gesture to let them know I am there for them, that I am dedicated to them, and prepared for the day. This also helps me gauge feelings as they enter and provide an encouraging start to their day (Boryga, 2023). Another “nontangible” thing I do is hold huddles in the afternoon, prior to our lunch break, and at the end of the day, before dismissal. This time is used to let them know what was observed during the clinic session, things they are doing well, things that need addressed for improvement, and also anything that they want to bring up. I encourage them to bring up anything that may have confused them or frustrated them, let them know that they are being heard.

Relationship Building Activity #3

Reflection Journals

Self-reflection is important for recognizing your weaknesses and learning and growing as a dental hygienist. I am lead clinical instructor for the second and third quarter clinics. In these clinics they learn a lot, but clinically we mainly focus on ergonomics, instruments, instrumentation, dental assessments, and everything builds up to working on their first patients (which are student partners). When they get to week five clinic, they begin their first appointments and typically it is a major stress filled day. During this week, I ask them to start reflection journals in our online learning management system, Brightspace. I simply ask them to

tell me about their day. What went well? What didn't? Was anything harder than they thought it would be? I emphasize that this is just a journal between us, and they are free to write as little, or as much, as they feel like that week, however; they must give me something each week, until week eleven. This allows them to really think about their day, focus on improvements needed, and they can use it as a way to "vent", if that is needed as well. Based on the few times I have done this in the past, the students actually enjoy it, and I love reading about their experiences! This helps us connect even though we may not have as much one-on-one time as we would hope (Boryga, 2023).

References

Boryga, A. (2023, August 4). *23 ways to build and sustain classroom relationships*. Edutopia.

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Solberg, S., & Laundal, Ø. (2025). A place to belong: student–adult relationship-building activities in a transitional school year program. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 69(2), 422–435.

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