Creating Glue to Cement Belonging and Emotional Safety in Your Course

A Keynote Address for the Tennessee Board of Regents’ Gateway Academy
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Keynote Outline
1. Welcome & Overview
2. Evidence of Effectiveness
3. Guidelines: Building a Secure Container
4. What We Mean: Affective/Non-Cognitive
5. Recap Activities
6. Q & A
7. Debrief

Keynote Learning Outcomes
• Understand that a secure container is important to student learning
• Recognize the faculty’s role in building an emotionally and psychologically safe course
• Provide a number of activities faculty can use in their courses to create these conditions
Counteracting Students Sense of Threat

1. A secure container

2. Embodied teaching

Embodied Teaching Activity: Body Scan

ACADEMY FOR COLLEGE EXCELLENCE (ACE)
Write in the Chat the answer to:

1. What did you notice?
2. From this awareness how will your day be different?

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Columbia University's CCRC/RTI International
Longitudinal Quantitative Study
2009 / 2014
Academic Evidence – Four Colleges

Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACE</th>
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<tr>
<td>AI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Underrepresented Groups</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
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<td>Prior College Credits</td>
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<td>Placed 2+ levels below College English</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
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<td>Placed 1 level below College English</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessed 2 or more levels below College Math</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Matriculation rate only</td>
<td>GED or HS Dropout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Age</td>
<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Transfer-Level English Completion

Source: RTI Associates
January 2014

- 2.3x more likely to pass Transfer-level English
- 1.7x more likely to pass Transfer-level English

** Δx % = [(ACE - Control) x 100] / Control

*statistical significance < .001 two-tailed test

Transfer-Level Math & English Completion

Source: RTI Associates
January 2014

- 7.8x more likely to pass Transfer-level Math & English
- 4x more likely to pass Transfer-level Math & English

** Δx % = [(ACE - Control) x 100] / Control

*statistical significance < .001 two-tailed test
6 Year Salary Outcomes

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Faculty’s Role in Building a Secure Container
Create psychological & emotional safety in your course:
> Hypervigilance – students observe how you treat others
> Judgement vs curiosity

Know what you do so you can do what you want
> Implicit bias
> Micro-aggression

Guidelines for Building a Container
• Open
• Aware
• Listen
• Risk Being Vulnerable
• Patient & Persistent
• Build community on honesty, respect, and caring

THE LADDER OF LEARNING
Expert / Mentor / Authority
Reliable Action
Action / Behavior Change
Insight
Arrogance / Fast Past Matching
Community of Learners

**Activity Instructions**
- Have your students write down answers to:
  - What Behaviors Support Learning? What did you have to help you learn?
  - What Behaviors Don't Support Learning? What did you not have to help you learn?
- Brainstorm on the whiteboard their answers
- Display your rules for the class and refer to the brainstormed list
- State the behaviors they can expect from you

**Adaptations**
- Adapt your rules to accommodate the brainstorm
- Discuss the top four mastery skills / behaviors that will lead to their success
- Review the learning outcomes and objectives of your course

Community of Learners

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- State the behaviors they can expect from you

Seeing Themselves

**Activity Instructions**
- In disciplines, classes or careers where students may not see themselves represented:
  - Make sure to have a set of diverse profiles of professionals in the field so students can see themselves
- Make connections between your course and your students' lives and future careers.
- Survey your students at the beginning of the term in order to understand more about their lives and goals.

**Adaptations**
- Adapt your rules to accommodate the brainstorm
- Discuss the top four mastery skills / behaviors that will lead to their success
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Seeing Themselves

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Adaptations
- Have students share with each other how the profiles affected them and their perspectives
- Smaller groups allows more time for deeper discussions

Barriers vs Advantages

Activity Instructions
- For 3 minutes have students create a list of their experiences of oppression and privilege
- Brainstorm on the whiteboard a list of their experiences of oppression and privilege
- Create a Barriers vs. Advantage Table worksheet [see example on next slide]

Adaptations
- Have each student:
  - Add any new characteristics to your worksheet tables
  - For each table answer the following:
    - I have been denied opportunity because of my [fill in the table]
    - I have been granted unearned advantage because of my [fill in the table]
  - Answer these questions:
    - Have these barriers / advantages been part of your life?
    - Have students share with one another
  - Write about their reactions to this exercise
Barriers vs Advantages Worksheet Table

Guidelines for Deepening the Container

- Open
- Aware
- Listen
- Risk Being Vulnerable
- Patient & Persistent
- Build community on honesty, respect, and caring
Reflecting on Experience of Being Spoken Through

Recall a time when you did not know where the words you were speaking came from. A time when something you knew as a deep truth but you never said it before. A time you sensed something in a class or group that prompted a response.

Write for 2 minutes about that experience, where it happened, and how you felt. Details are great to have.

Place in the Chat the importance of this experience

The Amygdala

Bio-Reaction
The Amygdala & Cortex

Amygdala
Fight / Flight / Freeze / Appease

Cortex
Think / Reason / Discern

Importance of Reflection
To create awareness
To become more conscious
To consolidate learning

Beginning of Class Reflection

Activity Instructions:
• Will need about 5-10 minutes
• You share one or two things about:
  > Your last class that stood out (positive)
  > What students shared or how they reacted
• Have students write for about 3 minutes:
  > What they learned in your last class
  > What surprised them, or
  > What stood out to them about what was shared or the reaction of the class
• Ask for volunteers to share with the class
**Beginning of Class Reflection**

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- Ask for volunteers to share with the class

**Adaptations**
- Sharing:
  - Have the class brainstorm from their writing as you write what they say on the white board
  - Form small groups and have them share their answers
  - Go around the room and allow all students to share except for those that pass; to save time have a rule like "answers have to fit into 1-2 breaths"

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**Student’s Life / Purpose**

**Activity Instructions**
Focus on student’s lives and purpose
Sentence stems that allow students to find others like themselves
- Why I’m attending college…
- What I like to do when I’m not in school…
- A social justice issue I care about…
- I am good at…
- A person that inspires me…
- My favorite book…
- My favorite movie…
- A career I’m considering…
- How what I’m learning is meaningful to my life…

**Activity Instructions (Cont’d)**
- Reflection:
  - Give students 3-5 minutes to write about the question
- Sharing:
  - Form small student groups and share their answers
  - Ask for volunteers to share with the class
  - Go around the room and allow all students to share except for those that pass; to save time have a rule like "answers have to fit into 1-2 breaths"
Student Learning Behaviors Reflection

Activity Instructions
Focus on student learning
Questions that allow students to think about behaviors
- What did you find interesting in school last week?
- Did you submit all your assignments on time? If not, why?
- What challenges did you face last week?
- Did you attend all your classes? If not, why?
- What responsibilities do you have outside of college?

Activity Instructions (Cont’d)
- Reflection:
  > Give students 3-5 minutes to write about the question
- Sharing:
  > The sharing of these reflections helps students develop empathy for others especially if:
    + you can ask students who are struggling if they would be open to support
    + then pair them with student volunteers who would be willing to support
  > Give both students extra credit when you have determined the level of support

Guidelines for Building a Container

- Open
- Aware
- Listening
- Noticing, Becoming Responsive
- Curious & Perceptive
- Build community on honesty, respect, and trust
All Humans have purposes, needs, concerns and circumstances.

When people perceive you are aware of and sensitive to their purposes, needs, concerns and circumstances they communicate and collaborate, producing emotional safety and instilling dignity.

When people perceive you are unaware of or opposed to their purposes, needs, and concerns they resist, producing waste.
Guidelines for Building a Container

• Open
• Aware
• Listening
• Dignity

Reflecting on Experience with Dignity

Recall a time when someone treated you with dignity when you were struggling with something?

Write for 2 minutes about what happened, where it happened, and how you felt. Details are great to have.

Place in the Chat how you felt about this experience

The Difference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dignity Culture</th>
<th>Threat Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Risk being vulnerable</td>
<td>❖ Looking good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Patient, persistent &amp; kind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Dr. Veronica Neal, 2019
Macro Aggression
- Obvious or blatant racism, discrimination, hate, rejection

Micro Aggression
- Subtle or ambiguous cues of racism, discrimination, prejudice, hate, rejection

Macro Affirmation
- Obvious or blatant acts of social inclusion in community and respect for dignity

Micro Affirmation
- Subtle or ambiguous cues of social inclusion and respect for dignity


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ACADEMY FOR COLLEGE EXCELLENCE (ACE)
Affective Domain

- Feelings, Emotions, Hope
- Mindsets, Beliefs, Self-Efficacy
- Self-Image, College-Identity
- Perseverance, Self-Discipline, Delayed Gratification
- Behaviors, Habits, Mindfulness
- Social Skills
- Learning Strategies

CSSAS Results

Survey responses were based on a five-point scale, from "strongly disagree to strongly agree" for the non-mindfulness items and from "never or very rarely true" to "always or almost always true" for the mindfulness items.

* p<.001: statistical significance is based on comparison with Time 1 scores.

Findings from Non-cognitive Study

- After the 2-week Foundation of Leadership Course (FC) students improved in 7 of the 8 factors at a p<.001 level of significance.
- With the exception of two factor, the change remains consistent or improved four months later (at the end of the semester).
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Basic Building the Container Activities

Basic Deepening the Container Activities
Resources on Embodied Teaching

- Parker Palmer’s book – the Courage to Teach
  - Video: Students Know – The Courage to Teach Guide
    - https://vimeo.com/155181266
- Mindfulness in Education Network ListServe
  - http://www.mindfuled.org/contact/
- Somatic Education – listening to your body
  - Feldenkrais Method
  - Alexander Technique
  - Rosen Method

Guide on Affective Teaching Methods

Guide with practices and strategies divided into seven categories:

1. Learn about Your Students and Help Them Learn about You and Each Other
2. Build a Sense of Community and Belonging and Demonstrate to Your Students That You Care about Their Success
3. Create an Environment That Encourages Student Learning
4. Encourage the Development of Adaptive Mindset Skills
5. Demonstrate the Relevance of Your Course to Students’ Lives and Goals
6. Provide Information at the Beginning and Throughout the Semester That Is Essential to Your Students’ Success
7. Make Expectations for Your Course Explicit to Help Ensure Students Know What Is Required of Them to Succeed

From the Research and Planning Group for the California Community College

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1. From the ideas or insights you learned today what will you use in your classroom or in interactions with your students?

2. What surprised or intrigued you?

3. **Poll**: What would you like to learn more about?