

ACTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

These strategies help make your expert thinking visible and create a classroom where all students can thrive. Use these practical moves to support student learning during instruction.

1 Think Aloud & Model Expert Thinking

What it is:

Make your expert thinking process visible by verbalizing your reasoning as you demonstrate.

Why it matters:

Students can't see how experts approach problems unless we show them our thinking.

Try This in Class:

- Verbalize your thought process while solving problems or analyzing texts
- Project and narrate your notes during lecture
- Demonstrate reading strategies (annotating, identifying main claims)
- Show the complete process with worked examples, not just final answers

Example Language:

"I'm going to show you how I approach this. First, I identify what the question is really asking, then I..." "Let me show you how I annotate. I underline the main claim, put question marks where I'm confused..."

2 Decode Academic Expectations

What it is:

Explicitly teach the unspoken academic norms and language that students may not have learned elsewhere.

Why it matters:

What seems obvious to us may be invisible to students without family college experience

Try This in Class:

- Define discipline-specific terms in real-time ("When I say 'theoretical framework,' I mean...")
- Show examples of quality work and explain what makes them effective
- Walk through rubrics before assignments
- Explain your pedagogical choices ("We're doing this activity to build your ability to...")
- Name the skills being practiced explicitly

Example Language:

"I'm going to show you how I approach this. First, I identify what the question is really asking, then I..." "Let me show you how I annotate. I underline the main claim, put question marks where I'm confused..."

What it is:

Frame difficulty as a normal, valuable part of learning rather than evidence of inadequacy.

Why it matters:

Students who see struggle as failure may disengage rather than persist.

Try This in Class:

- Acknowledge when content is challenging ("This is a difficult concept")
- Share your own learning process and struggles
- Reframe mistakes as learning opportunities in class discussions
- Praise effort and strategy use, not just correct answers
- Emphasize that struggle indicates learning and brain growth

Example Language:

"This is hard. When I was learning this, I had to revisit it multiple times. Here's what helped me..." "If this feels difficult, your brain is working and growing." After a wrong answer: "That's a logical place to go. Let's examine why it doesn't quite work here, this will help us understand better."



Small shifts in how we teach can transform the experience for first-generation students while strengthening learning for all.