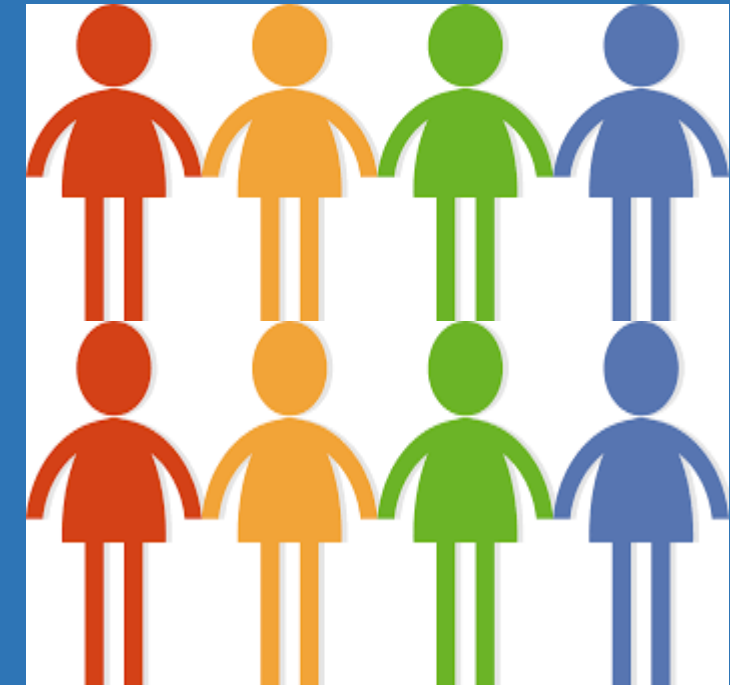


*Creating Connections
&
Cultivating Community
in the
College Classroom*

Kim Miller-Davis

Department Chair: English, Modern Languages, & Speech
San Jacinto College
Houston, Texas

Welcome

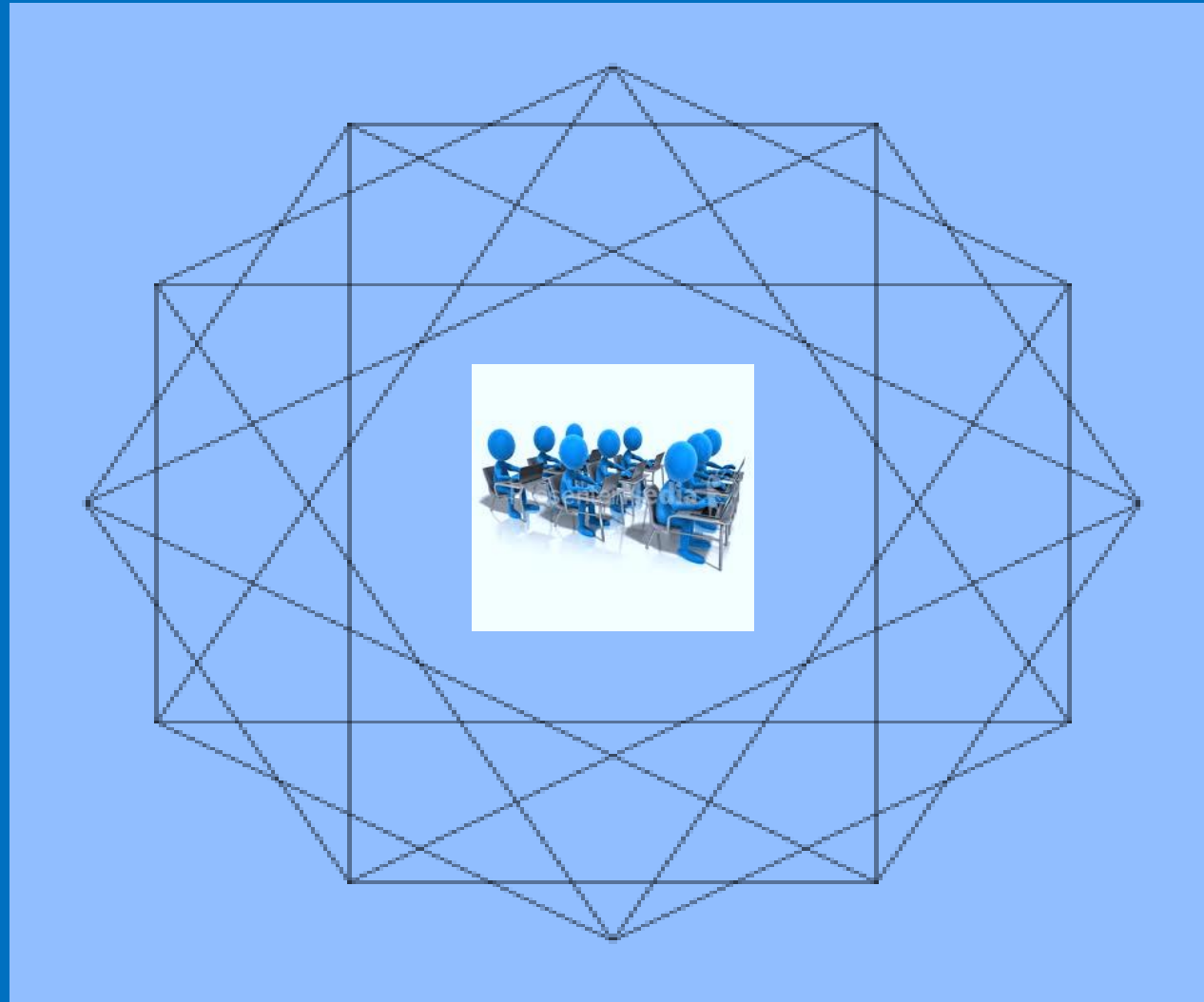


Community

A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.



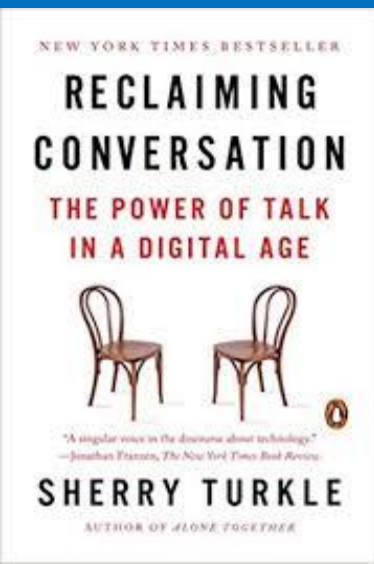
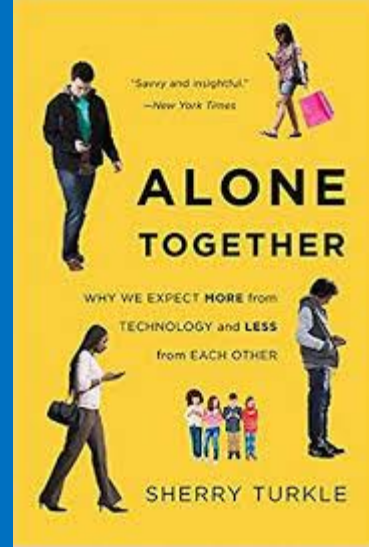
Communities depend upon authentic connections



Instructors must facilitate these connections

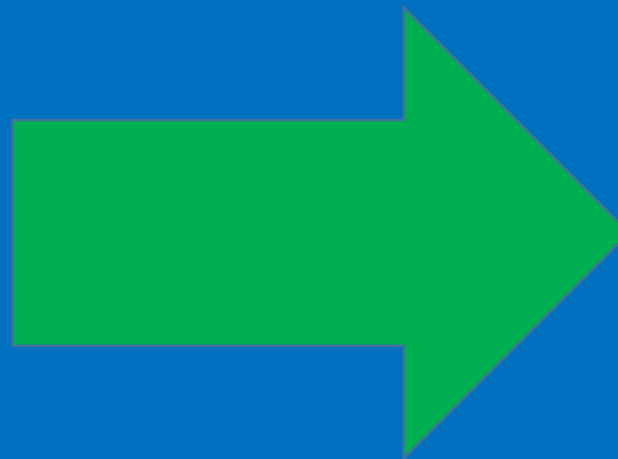
The Work of Sherry Turkle

- “We are increasingly drawn to technologies that provide the illusion of companionship.”
- “Connecting in sips doesn’t work as well when it comes to understanding and knowing each other.”
- “We’ve become accustomed to a new way of being alone together.”
- “Face to Face conversation unfolds slowly. It teaches patience.”
- “Self-reflection in conversation requires trust.”



Individuals who are connected through shared attitudes, interests, and goals feel like they belong. A sense of belonging contributes to overall well-being.

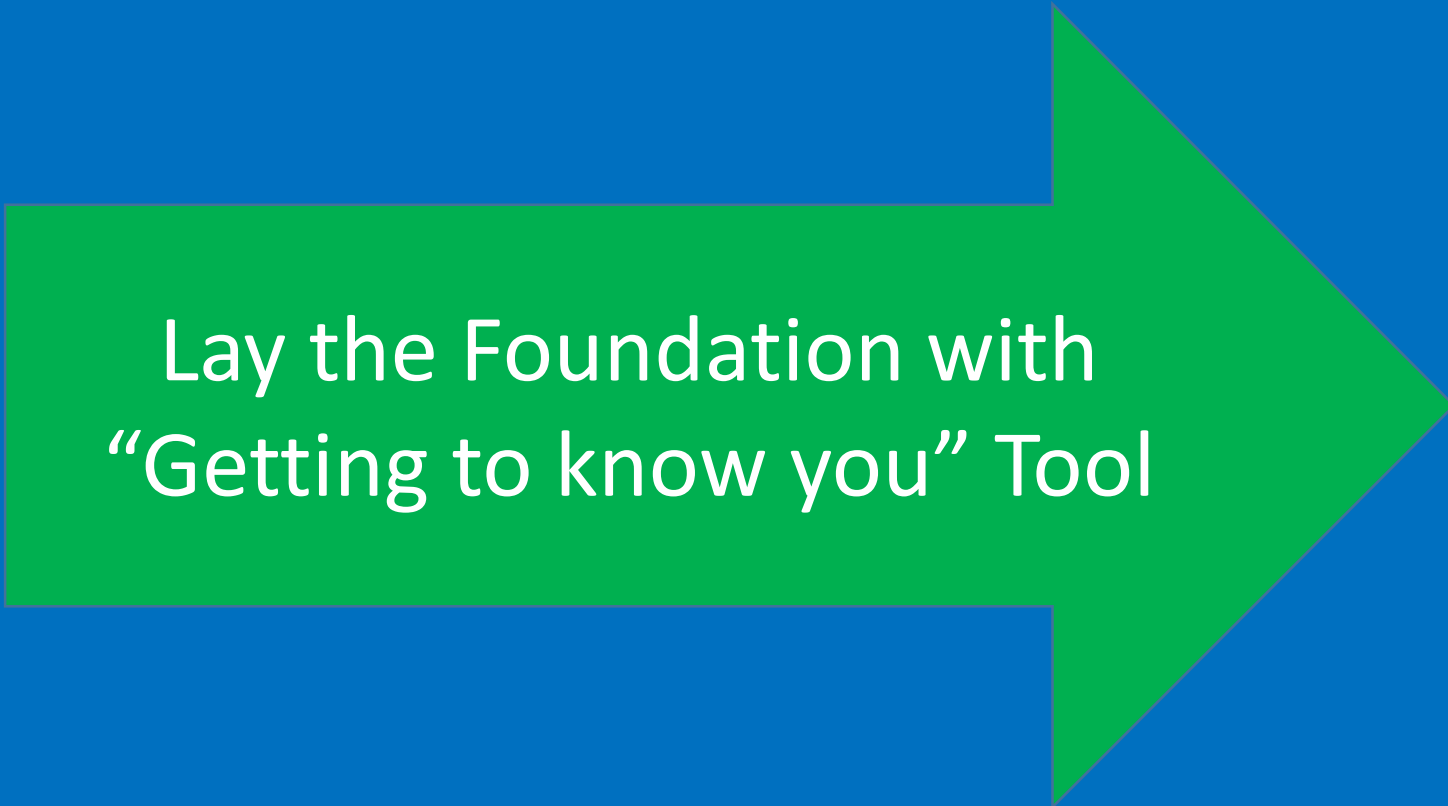
(Junger, 2013)



How you feel before you start learning significantly affects how much you learn.

Positive emotions like excitement and enjoyment increase performance.

(Perkun, Frenzel, Goetz, & Perry 2007)

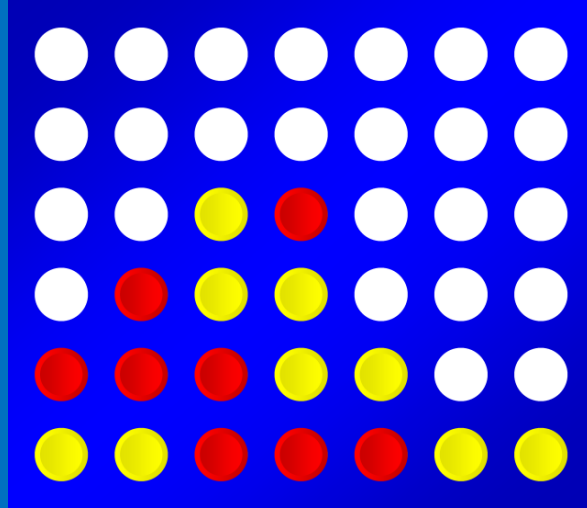


Lay the Foundation with
“Getting to know you” Tool

Share some passion with your neighbor

Turn to someone next to you and tell them what you love about teaching, your discipline, or your institution.

The Connect Four Project



<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Connect4.PNG>

Four Targeted Interactions
designed to foster four key relationships
fundamental to learning

Four Targeted Interactions



1

Before first major assignment

Small Group Activity

Instructor meets with small groups of 3-5 students during class while other students are working individually or in small groups.

2

After first major assignment

Student Reflection

Instructor emails students & asks high-performing students to anonymously share study strategies. Recommends individual meetings with low-performing students.

3

Before next major assignment

Small Group Mixer

Instructor meets with small groups of 3-5 students during class while other students are working individually or in small groups.

4

Last two weeks of class

Class Gathering

Instructor changes the mood of the class by connecting with students in a manner that recognizes the way in which the semester-end represents a large amount of hard work and effort.

Midterm

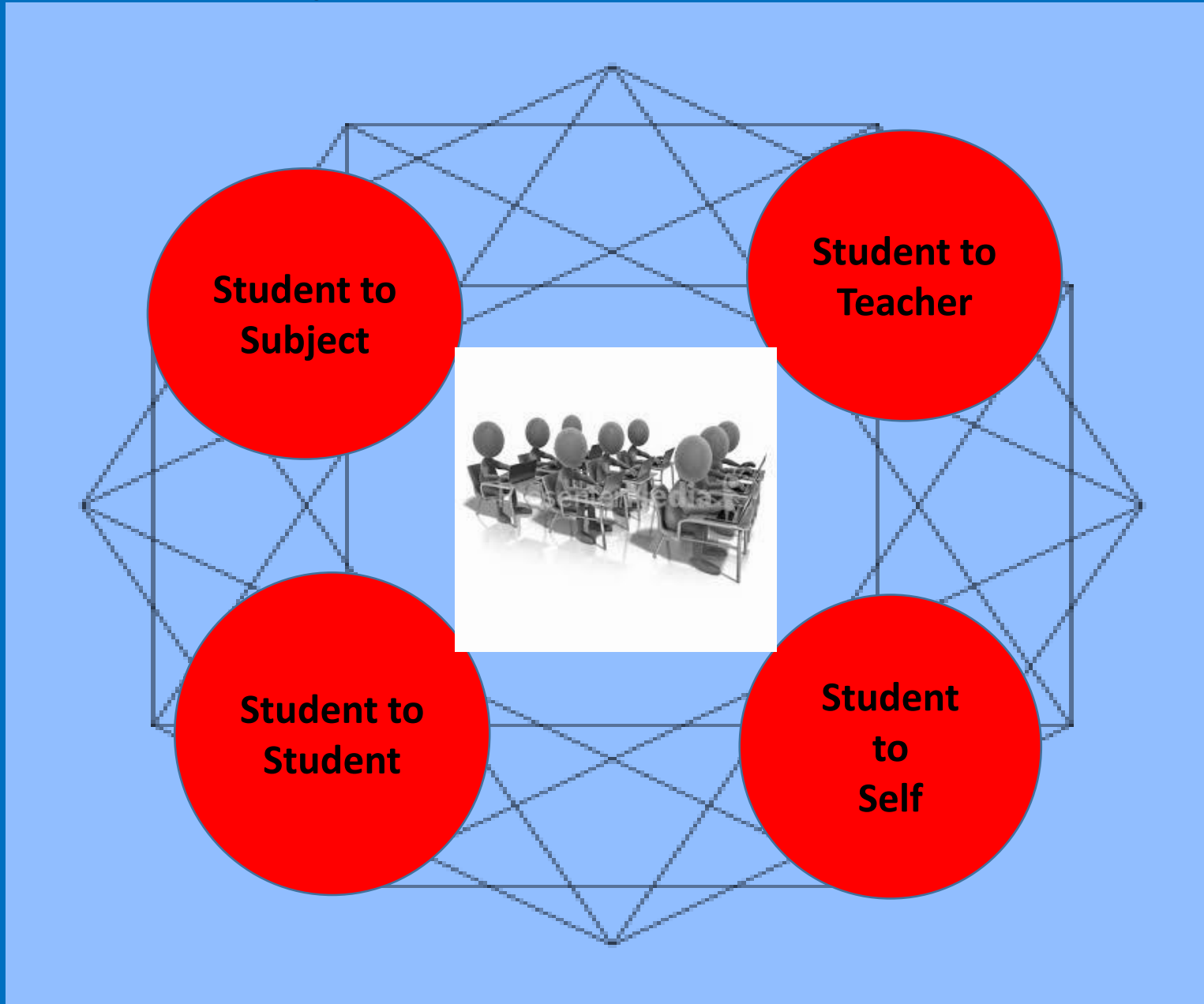
End of Semester

Our Methodology

Faculty members from various disciplines across three separate campuses volunteered to be a part of the study. Each faculty member used two sections of the same course—one was a treatment group and one a control. In the treatment group, faculty members administered the getting to know you tool and the four connections. In the control sections, faculty members administered the getting to know you tool only. A combination of quantitative & qualitative data was collected at various intervals throughout the semester:

- Individual student grade averages
- Student and faculty surveys with both objective and open-ended questions
- Faculty reflections
- Retention rates

Four Relationships Essential to Classroom Community



(Quinlan, 2016)

Small Group Activity

Group members will work together to identify the types of teaching strategies that are most likely to cultivate each of the four key relationships in learning

**CONNECTION
#1**

Small Group
Activity

Instructor meets with small groups of 3-5 students during class while other students are working individually or in small groups.

What's the point of spending
so much time on activities?

Common Instructor Observations of 21st Century Students

- “Students won’t participate”
- “Students need constant affirmation”
- “Students can’t focus”
- “Students are so impatient and rude”
- “Students appear bored and restless”
- “Students only care about what’s on the test”
- “Students don’t/can’t follow instructions”
- “Students believe in conspiracy theories, but not the news”
- “Students don’t like to talk about controversial subjects”

Generation Z

- Insulated, but not Intrinsic
- In No Hurry
- Internet
- In Person No More
- Insecure
- Income Insecurity
- Irreligious
- Independent
- Inclusive

Jean M. Twenge, PhD
author of *Generation Me*

iGen



Why Today's
Super-Connected
Kids Are Growing Up
Less Rebellious, More
Tolerant, Less Happy—
and Completely
Unprepared for
Adulthood*

*and What That Means for the Rest of Us

Characteristics

Learning Needs

Insulated, but not Intrinsic



Aversion to Risk-taking

In No Hurry



Underdeveloped Frontal Cortex

Internet



Need to Multi-Task

In Person No More



Inferior Social Skills

Insecure



High Rates of Anxiety & Depression

Income Insecurity



Worried about Economy

Irreligious & Individualistic



Prefer Figuring it Out

Independent



High Levels of Distrust

Inclusive



Limited Conflict-Management Skills

Quiz Time!

Using information we've covered thus far, make an objective quiz question for your peers.

Write the question on the front and the answer on the back. Once you have finished, start exchanging cards with others to self assess your learning.

Self-Reflection

Answer these questions by jotting down some notes

- How do you feel about how you performed?
- Which strategies worked? Which did not?
- Were there any factors that might have hindered your performance?
- How might you overcome those in the future?

CONNECTION
#2

Reflection
&
Interaction
w/Instructor

Instructor emails
students & asks high-
performing students
to anonymously share
study strategies.

Recommends
individual
meetings with low-
performing students.

Small Group Mixer

CONNECTION #3

Small Group Activity

Group members will work together to identify strategies most conducive to each of Generation-Z's learning needs.

Two students from each group will move to another group. Group members will share previous strategies and/or insights.

Instructor meets with small groups of 3-5 students during class while other students are working individually or in small groups.

Treatment Group Student Comments

I liked the fact that we were able to use the information we learned in the lecture in the lab. It played a huge role in my understanding of the subject.

I like how my professor uses experiential learning in class discussions. It made us more involved and encouraged participation in the class. I also like how passionate she is about teaching. It goes to show how much she loves the job and she actually cares about student learning in the class.

I loved everything about this class. It helped me steer closer to making a decision about my major.

I loved everything about this course. It was a very difficult subject and I am glad to say I am one of the few to make it to the very end.

I liked that I felt confident enough to talk to the professor during and after class. Nothing I really did not like.

The professor had amazing notes, and knew how to explain everything so that the whole class could understand.

I loved the class. It has opened up a whole new world into my life. There is so much passion from my professor for teaching that I can say nothing needs to be changed.

Loved this class regardless of how time consuming and hard it may be. My professor really took the time to make sure I had all the resources and information I needed.

Preliminary Conclusions

**Academic
Achievement**

Retention

**Enthusiasm
for
Instructor**

Cognition

**Social
Integration**

**Satisfaction
&
Well-Being**

Questions?

**CONNECTION
#4**

Student
Gathering

Celebration

Share something you've learned or something you've enjoyed with your peers.

Instructor changes the mood of the class by connecting with students in a manner that recognizes the way in which the semester-end represents a large amount of hard work and effort.



“Only Connect...”

E.M. Forester, *Howards End*