The Social Dimension of the Community College Classroom

By facilitating metacognitive conversations in the community college classroom, we can introduce our students to the process of active, engaged reading.

At the beginning of each semester, as students reveal themselves, the unique chemistry of each class unfolds. There are the students who respond enthusiastically, quick to return a smile. There are those who are sullen and withdrawn, signaling a well-defended indifference. Usually, after a few classes, there are one or two students who show by their inconsistencies that they are struggling with a personal challenge. If I let them know that I notice and care, then quite often I find out about their lack of day care, a severely ill parent or child, homelessness, or something else equally as difficult that is taking a toll on their lives. There are usually one or two students who miss the first few classes, trying to hide from assessments and introductions and get in under the wire. I know from past experience that many of these late arrivers are not yet ready to commit to their education and are not likely to make it through the semester or make it successfully. Over the years, I've learned the limits of my own influence as a teacher but also the expansive potential of the classroom to support and encourage students. As my teaching practice evolved, I became increasingly committed to working on the more elusive and intuitive aspects of teaching, particularly how to foster effective social interaction and build students' metacognitive abilities, intellectual curiosity, and confidence as critical readers and thinkers.

The social dimension of classroom life is a primary factor that can impact student success (Blau, *Literature Workshop*; Lave and Wenger; Schoenbach). When it is skillfully facilitated, classroom interaction can help build a supportive learning environment in which fundamental foundational skills, such as reading, can be strengthened. In this Instructional Note, I first discuss the psychosocial challenges that many community college students face and then describe three activities that I use at Roxbury Community College (RCC) in the first few weeks of a Developmental Reading and Writing course, a six-hour-a-week course in which reading and writing instruction are integrated. The activities are designed to raise metacognitive awareness of the reading process, begin to teach the component skills of active reading, and build a supportive learning community.

Improving teaching practice, particularly by utilizing the social dimension of the classroom, requires a recognition of who our students are and where they fall in the hierarchy of society. Once we see them clearly, we can hone our curriculum and teaching practice to help them negotiate their challenges. Most community college students have been raised in working-class families and have attended public schools in working-class neighborhoods. In the case of Roxbury Community College, most of the students also come from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. (In spring 2017, 25 percent of students identified themselves as "English not best language".) This comes with certain baggage, as all of our backgrounds do. Indeed, learning, for all students, occurs within a cultural context (Garcia and Dominguez). Making every effort to avoid the risk of oversimplification, I first describe the baggage that many students carry with them and how it can impact their learning.

Acknowledging this baggage, however, does not mean that I'm succumbing to "deficit thinking" (focusing on students' inadequacies) and blaming students for their academic underachievement (Garcia and Guerra). College students who come from inner-city schools bring with them real issues that stem from negative educational experiences (Cox 24–26, 52) and affect their prospects for academic success. They also bring with them significant strengths that can both inspire them and help them cope with adversity (Yasso 77–81).

Furthermore, community college students cannot be reduced to just a few types—for example, the students who come right out of inner-city high schools and the nontraditional older students. There are immigrant students who come from more privileged backgrounds in their home countries, older students who have matured beyond "thin-skinnedness" and defensiveness, American-born students who were privy to a strong K–12 education and raised by educationally privileged parents. This diversity is part of the "demographic shift in the college-going population" in general and presents one of the profound challenges and difficulties for community college faculty in particular (Cox 6–9). Despite this heterogeneity, however, the majority of community college students do come from the noncollege-bound subcultures of underfunded inner-city high schools. Therefore, there are some generalizations to be made about the psychological and emotional challenges that so many of them face.

Giving Up Easily

Perseverance is a great predictor of the success of any endeavor, and many of our students give up easily when it comes to their studies (Cox 31–32; Kuh 2). This is a crucial factor contributing to the low graduation and transfer rates of community college students across the United States. In fact, about "half of community college students do not return to college for their second year of studies" (CCSSE 2005). Indeed, school for a large number of community college students has been a bumpy road, down which they have had to navigate one negative experience after another. In a process widely referred to as the "school to prison pipeline," innercity high school students have been partially criminalized in overcrowded, segregated schools with metal detectors and "zero tolerance policies" enforced by police (Amurao; Flannery; Heitzeg; Kim). They have experienced harsh underresourced physical school environments (Heitzeg 1–2). They have often been humiliated, patronized, and subjected to subtle or overt racism. A case in point is the recent federal investigation into charges of racism at Boston Latin School that found "a pattern of race-based harassment and discrimination" that school administrators largely trivialized or ignored (WBUR). For these and other reasons, many innercity students acquire a wide range of insecurities and defeatist attitudes (Smith and Jiménez 48). Even for those who complete high school, many conclude that they are not "smart enough" to excel academically. As learners fighting an uphill battle with little support, they have been conditioned to adopt various psychological strategies for protecting their self-worth that cut against the fulfillment derived from engaged learning (De Castella et al. 862).

All of this taken together can make school unduly burdensome and anxiety provoking, causing some students to resort to fear-management strategies, such as refusing to seek help to avoid exposing their ignorance. These strategies can lead to various kinds of

academic underperformance, such as failing to complete the most challenging assignments or allowing surmountable problems to cause them to withdraw (Cox 31–41).

Mixed Feelings about "Getting Ahead"

Perseverance is part of a broader complex of traits we identify as attitude. As all educators know, this elusive component of personality is the most important determinant of success. Many community college students have conflicted feelings about being successful in college, which influences their approach to their studies (De Castella et al. 861; Cox 25–41). They may come from families that are stretched thin, lacking resources and adequate support. A student's ability to put his or her studies first often means ignoring or neglecting the needs of other family members. As products of working-class communities, such students have been conditioned, out of necessity, to rely on family members and close friends and to place a high premium on each other's willingness and ability to lend support (Yasso 79). Oftentimes, when a student focuses on schoolwork, this can be internalized by other family members and the student as selfishness and individualism. This can become an intractable problem among many, especially younger, community college students. On the other hand, the high level of interdependence in working-class families can provide an empowering support system (Yasso 76, 79). It is vital that we recognize the strength our students can draw from their support networks as they work through the emotional dilemmas that arise when attending college.

A related attitudinal dilemma with which many of our younger students struggle is making the choice of "getting ahead" while others whom they love "stay behind." Contrary to the myth that the United States is a meritocracy, not everyone can go to college, even community college. (In fact, as of 2009, just over half of the students in big cities graduated from high school [Dillon].) And sometimes, this limitation is not caused primarily by people's aptitude or skills, but rather by their aspirations, which, like their schooling, are shaped by social forces. This process of tracking children, based largely on their socioeconomic status, shapes their educational and career prospects (Bowles and Gintes 131–32), impacting the psyches of those who strive for academic success as much as it does those who "stay behind."

One important way we can help our students is by structuring the classroom as a supportive learning community through which they can build their confidence and gain perspective by seeing their own struggles reflected in others. Once we, as educators, recognize the profound challenges that working-class students face trying to negotiate higher education in an unequal society, we also should shape the curriculum to help them understand these challenges and be able to make the best choices for their lives. I have found that many students feel validated and respond positively when I include texts that shed light on the stratified nature of class society as inherently unjust and on public schooling as an institution that replicates class inequalities from one generation to the next. These kinds of texts, literary as well as nonfiction, can provide an explanation for their difficulties and struggles other than blaming themselves or their communities. Such texts help them sort out what part of the equation they have control over and helps them grapple with the "self-handicapping" strategies that "often bring about the failure students are trying to avoid" (De Castella et al. 862).

Rather than make "harangues and doctrinaire appeals" to students about this critical subject (Shor 168), English faculty could use texts that address these fundamental questions: Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative*, Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, Richard Rodriquez's essay "The Achievement of Desire," to name a few. For example, in Black Boy, as Wright considers his options for adulthood, he acknowledges that he "had no hope whatever of being a professional man" (253). And he reflects on the effect that reading novels had on his expanding consciousness: "In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer felt that the world about me was hostile, killing; I knew it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls" (251). Wright is describing his inner experience as he situates himself as a black working-class young man coming into adulthood in a racist, stratified class society. Literary texts, in particular autobiographical texts, have the power to reach emotional depth in readers in a way that nonfiction usually cannot. I realize that this challenges the current trend of using nonfiction texts in college English classes; however, I believe that it is vital to address the affective domain, which literature has the unique capacity to do.

Ira Shor refers to this as gaining insights that "empower students to know themselves in their times" (168). This formative process, laden with emotionality, can allow our students to envision the possibility and desirability of personal growth through academic success. I have seen students become more engaged in reading when they can relate to texts that contain characters struggling with some of the same issues and conflicts they face. In addition, supplementary texts—expository, poetry, and so forth—can help bring to the fore these themes and students' conflicting feelings and thoughts about education, work, sexism, class, and racial inequality.

Utilizing the Social Dimension of Classroom Life—Texts and Activities

In community colleges, fellow classmates can be an invaluable resource for deriving the much needed support for transcending the challenges of academia. Much of what I now understand about how to utilize the social side of the learning process I first learned in a week-long workshop in Reading Apprenticeship (RA) sponsored by WestEd ("About Us"; "Professional"), as well as reading their literature (Schoenbach). RA is a program that systematizes ways of teaching older students how to be intelligent readers. It has grown rapidly in middle schools, high schools, and community colleges around the country since the mid-1990s. Its core principle is that we, as expert readers in our fields, should treat our students as apprentices. Just as carpenters "show" rather than "tell" their apprentices the secrets of the trade, we need to make the practices and behaviors of proficient reading explicit to our students. RA highlights the social side of classroom life, drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory (Vygotsky). Vygotsky believed that higher-order thinking develops through language use, based on social interaction. Sheridan Blau, in *The Literature Workshop*, applies this same concept to the interpretation of literature, asserting that the appropriate role of English teachers is to "not teach" but to facilitate the collaborative process by which students themselves interpret literature (34–59).

For three years after participating in the RA workshop, I conducted in-service workshops at RCC training content-area faculty to support their students' reading. During this process, I learned, firsthand, that many faculty are troubled by their uncertainty about their students' ability to succeed. They wonder, "Can struggling adult readers ever become fluent competent readers? Or have these students, trying for a second chance, actually "missed the boat"?

RA addresses the question directly. Adult learners have attributes, namely motivation and intelligence, that allow them to compensate for their lack of fluency and proficiency with academic English. It emphasizes the role of these attributes of adults engaged in the learning process (as opposed to children, who learn more unconsciously through reading volume). It is in sync with so many dynamic practitioners and scholars (Blau, *Literature*; Brookfield; Freire; Lave and Wenger; Rose; Shaughnessy; Shor) committed to the idea that teachers must learn how to teach differently if we are to achieve equity in our educational system.

During the first semester or two at a community college, many students are intensely grappling with the contradictions discussed at the beginning of this article. The following activities that depend upon the skillful use of social interaction can bring some of these contradictions to the fore during the first weeks of a developmental English or college experience class. The goals of these activities are to begin to build metacognitive awareness, address problems related to reading, and build a supportive learning environment.

Activity 1

One article that is helpful in drawing out students' feelings about learning is Alix Spiegel's "Struggle for Smarts? How Eastern and Western Cultures Tackle Learning." This article compares the different approaches to intellectual struggle in the East and West. According to Spiegel, in the East, hard work and perseverance are viewed as evidence of emotional stamina and the most important attributes that determine academic success. In the West, intelligence is viewed as inborn—you either have it or you don't, and it is seen as the most important determinant of academic success. In the West, "Intellectual struggle in schoolchildren is seen as an indicator of weakness, while in Eastern cultures it is not only tolerated but is often used to measure emotional strength" (Spiegel).

I assign this essay very early on in the semester with the goal of bringing into view the way competition, as a value endemic to capitalism, affects classroom life and helps generate a few winners (at least as far as academic achievement is concerned) and lots of losers. The attitude that intelligence and aptitude are unchanging, "a fixed mindset" in America's classrooms (Dweck 10), in practice tears down most students' confidence and sets them up for failure. In a more profound sense, the "fixed mindset" makes everyone losers, because they "focus more on achievement than learning itself " (Kohn). When my students respond to this article, in writing and discussion, they invariably decide that the Eastern way—the attitude that people can develop intelligence through hard work (a "growth mindset")—produces a much more comfortable and productive learning environment (Dweck 11). This text also helps students develop a "sociological imagination" (Elwell), where students begin to see that their values and ideas, which seem to be individually begotten, are actually products of the values and practices of a larger society. Their own experiences with schooling give them plenty on which to draw to arrive at thoughtful and confident conclusions about attitudes toward intellectual struggle. As students digest this article, I have seen them experience themselves engaging in the marvelous human act of thinking! Too often we ask students to do original thinking about a subject they know little about, but as they consider the points in "Struggle for Smarts?," they already have a well-developed schema to which they can relate.

I project the essay on the board and do a "Think Aloud," which involves reading aloud and interjecting my thoughts to lay bare my reading process (Reading Apprenticeship at RTC; Duke 214–15). Kylene Beers discusses this strategy as a way to model the "inner dialog" that ensues in active reading (103). This strategy may help foster "more thoughtful, strategic reading," rather than "jumping to conclusions about text meaning or moving ahead in the text without having sufficiently understood what had already been read" (Duke 215). Struggling readers are mystified by the process of reading comprehension as they lack awareness of the component skills that good readers employ to comprehend. The reading instruction that most children receive occurs in primary school and focuses almost entirely on the decoding of words. Even though there has been considerable improvement in reading instruction over the last several decades, language comprehension instruction—the building of vocabulary knowledge, the knowledge of complex syntactic structures, the ability to draw inferences, make predictions, and interpret abstract language—is still sorely inadequate in both primary and secondary schools (Duke 233). Therefore, struggling readers who enter community college are in the dark about the kinds of skills and the degree of mental energy that is involved in reading comprehension.

I stop the Think Aloud after about one page and then ask students to continue reading the article in pairs, taking turns reading and thinking aloud and discussing the reading as they go. After they complete the article, they answer questions individually that promote reflection about the content of the article as well as the process they went through to comprehend it. Then we discuss these questions as a class.

Activity 2

Another "text" that I use early on is a clip (introduced to me at the WestEd workshop) from a documentary film produced by Tom Dewit at Chabot Community College, *Reading Between the Lives*. The film features "students discussing their thought on reading and how it fits into their complex existences" (Redden). The clip I use (approximately fourteen minutes) shows community college students informally responding to their peers' questions about how they feel about completing college reading assignments. It shows students who flounder because they receive little or no guidance from their professors about how to approach reading assignments. It shows male students who don't ask questions because they don't want to reveal their ignorance. It shows students who feel "stupid" and anxious when they don't understand a reading assignment, and students who don't even expect a teacher to prepare them for reading assignments because "by the time you get to college, it's our responsibility." It is an emotional, painfully realistic video that addresses the "how" and "why" of college reading, rather than just the content (the "what" of reading).

When I show my students this video clip, I give them a handout on which to take notes. I ask them to write down exactly what they heard or saw in the left column and their response to it in the right column, coined by Ann Berthoff as "a double-entry notebook." After watching the video, they have a few minutes to doctor up their notes to make them legible and complete. Then they share one or two of their responses with a peer. Working in pairs or small groups gives students a chance to express themselves in a less

threatening setting, making it easier for them to participate in a class-wide discussion. After a few minutes of paired discussion, I ask students to share their responses with the whole class. I facilitate this discussion by asking students to first read what they wrote in the left column before they share their responses. This keeps the class discussion focused on the text (the video clip) and introduces students to the idea of providing evidence for their ideas, a fundamental academic skill. The main pitfall to this assignment is when students just notate evaluative, subjective comments and leave out the empirical evidence for them (i.e., what they actually heard or observed in the video). The instructor needs to impress upon students the necessity for filling out the handout and following the protocol as directed. Otherwise, the discussion can descend into emoting and speculating, rather than an analytical exploration of a text.

The class discussion allows students to see that others share many of their fears, hopes, sensitivities, lack of confidence, and anxieties about tackling college reading assignments. This sharing of vulnerabilities goes a long way in building a supportive learning environment. It also shows students that there is not one right way to respond to a text. It should be considered a good analysis if there is evidence for it. All of this helps break down the anxiety of speaking in class and encourages students to be reflective about their attitudes (metacognitive), to take charge of their own learning, and to become communicative, active participants in the class. Discussing their reactions to the film, prepares them to focus on their own identities as readers, "inviting them to discover and refine their own goals and motivations, likes and dislikes, and hopes and potential growth in relationship to reading" (Shoenbach 30). After the discussion I ask them to write about their own relationship to reading, first discussing what it means to have a relationship to something that is not a person (for example, a relationship to food, to music, to their phone) . I draw stick figures on the board representing "You" and "Reading" ("Reading" being personified as a stick figure). Then, I elicit words from students, both positive and negative, that describe the characteristics of a relationship (for example: distant, conflictual, comfortable, estranged, trusting, passionate).

When they have finished writing, I collect them all and read them out loud, anonymously. When they hear how many students have a negative or conflictual relationship to reading, it fosters a feeling of shared community. When they see that I don't judge them for this, but rather take their negative feelings about reading as a hurdle to overcome, it fosters their confidence in me, as their teacher and evaluator. This assignment works much better if the instructor notes commonalities among the student texts as she reads them aloud, and also comments on her own reactions. A running commentary, like this, helps students make meaning from disparate (and sometimes disjointed or repetitive) student texts.

Activity 3

Here is an excerpt taken from Harvey Wiener and Charles Bazerman's *All of Us: A Multicultural Reading Skills Handbook* (237–38) that I use early in the semester to build a shared sense of purpose in the class as well as to foster students' metacognitive awareness of themselves as readers:

Directions:
Read this selection by an Asian American who returns to the small town in Taiwan where he grew up. Then answer the questions that follow. These questions involve drawing conclusions and making predictions.

There is a famous Chinese proverb that mocks a careless man who, while crossing a river, accidentally drops his sword overboard. Unfazed, he slices a notch in the wood along the vessel's side making the exact spot, so he can come back later and find it. Trying to find the Taiwan of my youth today would be as futile as his marking the side of that boat, because things there have been changing so rapidly during the last decade.

I grew up in a little town in central Taiwan called Hsinchu, on a street lined with bicycle repair shops and noodle parlors. Over the years, Hsinchu has become another Silicon Valley of sprawling research parks. The bicycle shops now sell imported luxury cars; the noodle parlors have given way to boutiques bent on quenching a nearly insatiable thirst for the best things money can buy.

--Cho-Liang Lin

1. The careless man will
a. find his sword when he comes back.
b. never come back to the river.
c. never find the same boat when he comes back.
d. never find his sword when he comes back.
2. The careless man
a. knows how to correct his mistakes.
b. is foolish.
c. has learned his lesson.
d. is from Taiwan.
3. The town of Hsinchu
a. has changed.
b. is the same as before, only more modern.
c. is familiar.
d. has remained poor.
4. The author probably
a. will return to Hsinchu frequently to remember his childhood.

b. plans to meet with the old owners of the bicycle shops and noodle parlors.
c. will set up business in Hsinchu.
d. feel that the place of his childhood has vanished forever.

I instruct students to read the text silently, answer the comprehension questions, and, when they are finished, call me over to their desks. I quietly check their answers and ask them to redo any questions they got wrong. When they are all done, I ask them: "What kind of thinking/reading strategies did you use to comprehend? How did you come up with the right answers?" (Although learning should not be conceived as "right versus wrong" answers, reading comprehension does involve right and wrong, as there must be evidence for a correct interpretation.) On the board, I compile a list of their answers. Many students don't understand why the "careless man is "foolish," and they get this question wrong. Please know that absolutely none of my students, if they were actually in a boat crossing a river, would ever make a notch in the side of the boat to mark the spot where some object fell overboard. Yet, when reading this short essay, many get suckered in by the careless man's seemingly clever and proactive method of finding his sword. If this is the case, they are not using the strategy of visualizing the setting or the action ("putting themselves in the story"), and therefore they don't think about how the boat moves independently across the river. (The fact that boating is not a common activity for most of our students doesn't help matters either.)

Perhaps they are allowing unfamiliar vocabulary (unfazed, notch, mocks, vessel) or even, for some, an unfamiliar ethnicity (Chinese man) to produce a level of anxiety that makes them mentally throw up their hands before they even try to solve the problem. The reading comprehension process requires holding several ideas in one's head at the same time in order to perceive their relationship and thereby grasp the meaning. It is important for students to understand that too many unfamiliar words impede this process. Otherwise, they could easily conclude that they are "not smart enough" to comprehend.

Some students get question #2 wrong because they are not thinking ana-lytically. For example, if students fail to identify the number of characters in this short essay (the Asian American author, Cho Liang Lin, and the careless man from the proverb), they will conflate them, and the point of the comparison will elude them. For students who have had the most difficulty with this essay, it is this insight that helps them the most to understand it, as well as understand how their current reading strategies fail them.

Students' lack of familiarity with the genre of proverbs adds a further ob-stacle to comprehension. Naming the character "careless man," for example, is a kind of shorthand that proverbs use to convey their message. nderstanding this helps a reader conclude that the careless man is also foolish. When students read many proverbs, they become savvy to this particular aspect of proverbs that helps unlock their meaning.

Students value the various kinds of knowledge and multiple mental moves that are involved in relating the proverb of the careless man to the author's point about going back to his childhood home. Therefore, they are keen on figuring out where they went wrong in answering the questions. This kind of slow motion analysis of the reading comprehension process demystifies it and breaks down student fears and inhibitions about addressing their reading difficulties within the classroom setting.

When students lack knowledge of text structure, lack insight into the com-prehension process, or lack confidence in their mental capacity to engage in it, they tend to leave out pieces of the cognitive puzzle and draw conclusions prematurely. If they realize they are missing meaning, they may revisit the text to construct the meaning again. However, if they aren't monitoring their comprehension, they won't even be aware of their failure to comprehend (Duke 205–8; Shoenbach 34; Blau, "Performative" 21). Over time, this kind of reading (impressionistic rather than precise) becomes a habitual cognitive pattern that doesn't serve them well. Also, when students lack confidence in their ability, they tend not to persist in the process. Finally, without having experienced this process successfully, they won't be aware of the hard work involved in comprehending college-level texts. They won't know what is entailed in reading college-level texts fluently and, therefore, won't have confidence in their mental capacity to do it.

During the discussion about the process of reading the "careless man" short essay, I turn my notes of student comments into a Reading Strategies List, a living document to revisit over and over again during the course of the semester (Shoenbach 95–96). It's difficult for students, no matter their skill level, to identify reading and thinking behaviors that have become automatic, or to recognize them as comprehension strategies (as difficult as it is to describe how to walk or chew!). With a little prodding, however, students come up with many ideas that are, in fact, reading strategies: reread, read out loud, read fast to identify the writer's purpose, summarize ideas as I go, remind myself of my purpose for reading, use context clues, read the questions first, think about what I already know about the topic, focus on (underline) key words, monitor my comprehension, read for the big picture, visualize ("put myself in the story"), determine which words I need to know the meaning of and which don't matter, separate my own thoughts from the writer's, analyze and synthesize (in this particular text, identifying the number of characters) (Shoenbach 35).

After we have discussed the reading strategies necessary for comprehen-sion, I ask students what habits of mind are necessary to read strategically, and we compile another list: be persistent, be open-minded, relax (quiet the mind), be curious. We discuss how important it is to be able to tolerate the feeling of failed comprehension, leaving one no alternative but to go back to the drawing board and try again. Comprehension requires a reader to put together evidence in order to draw conclusions. This process occurs in stages. As we continue reading, the unfolding evidence either confirms or negates our preliminary conclusion. If it is negated, we have to be able to tolerate being wrong and returning to the beginning of the process. Rereading and juxtaposing the details differently will lead to the "aha" of comprehension; however, it will only come if one doesn't become discouraged by the process. Therefore, confidence is a necessary habit of mind that is both a precursor to persistence and a result of it (Shoenbach 32).

This kind of explicit and in-depth discussion about the reading process re-quires that the teacher first become acutely aware of what he or she, as a proficient reader, does to comprehend. Only then can the teacher help students appreciate the complexity of the process and gain control over it—what Sheridan Blau refers to as "Performative Literacy."

By utilizing texts like these that depend so much on social interaction, I can address some of my students' underlying fears and insecurities during the first few weeks of class. I can bring into focus the all-important college skill of reading as well as lay the foundation for building a safe, positive classroom environment in which students feel valued and supported, both by me and each

other. Truly, if people aren't comfortable in their environment, no matter what the setting, they can't think straight. However, being supportive—like a cheerleader—is a tricky business. If students relax too much, some of them feel free to make excuses for themselves not to show up or do their best work. Giving frequent quizzes and grades can be a surprising motivator, as can meeting with students individually about the effort they are expending. Being able to strike the balance between "holding their hands" when they need it and still pushing them to apply themselves and do their best work is part of what is meant by that elusive phrase—"the art of teaching."

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