As a teacher, my goals are not just to convey information, but to impart knowledge and skills that will allow my students to become competent contributors to society. These goals extend beyond the semester, and must follow them throughout their lives. Hence, the involvement students have in their class may influence their involvement in other aspects of their life. One of the most important lifelong skills one can have is the desire to continue learning. In order to develop this desire, I incorporate such strategies as (a) open expression of knowledge and ideas, (b) application of content to life beyond the classroom, and (c) instilling personal responsibility for attainment of knowledge. As a whole, these are the three primary tactics I use to create a learning environment conducive to student engagement and curiosity to learn within and outside the class.

I am in a minority of instructors who have an affinity for writing-intensive courses (such as ESAT240W – Introduction to Research at Adrian College). Students often find these classes intimidating, because they have not been asked to perform the skills necessary to complete them (e.g., reading scientific articles, scientific writing style, and synthesizing literature). However, this presents a vast opportunity for growth and expression. I enjoy offering feedback to help these students analyze and synthesize information, then verbalizing it in an essay or presentation. Such competence can increase their willingness to pursue their topics of interest with greater depth, a practice they may bring with them outside of class assignments.

Verbal and written expression of ideas may also expose students to how class material can be applied beyond the classroom. This is much easier with technological advances. For every lecture in my sport psychology course, I include a video clip from a popular sports movie or TV show (e.g., showing a scene from *Cool Runnings* where the coach discusses who will drive the bobsled as an example of leadership in sport). These “real-life” examples can help the students recognize instances of sport psychology themes in future movies. More importantly, they can be primed to notice these themes in their own professional practice, be it sport psychology, athletic training, or any other field. Furthermore, there is an element of diversity in these clips. Various sports, skill levels, and cultures are represented throughout the semester. This can promote cultural competence and may also ensure at least one clip is relatable for each student, even in a large class.

In a class of 40-50 people, or even in a small group of four, it can be easy to blend into the crowd. I pride myself on the ability to learn each student’s name within the first month of class, making each student feel welcomed and like they are an important contributor to the class. Greater interaction with the instructor facilitates classroom involvement. Learning each student’s name can establish a rapport that is often necessary for them to feel comfortable interacting with me or with other members of the class.

By knowing everyone’s name, I also hold each student accountable for their presence and engagement in the class. In turn, they will recognize that they play as much a part of their education as any instructor. I reiterate this idea whenever a student asks a question relevant to the lecture that I do not know the answer to. When this happens, I offer extra credit points if the individual who asked the question can look up the answer and send me a document with the answer. This stimulates class engagement and provides the opportunity to pursue information beyond the content of the class. This strategy applies to any class I teach, from *The Healthy Lifestyle* to bowling to athletic training.

Building an engaging learning environment requires strategies at varying levels of the class, from something as simple as learning each student’s name to something as complicated as finding a relevant movie clip for every textbook chapter. Altogether, these strategies foster an environment conducive to the students gaining skills and knowledge to stay with them after the end of the class. On the last day of *The Healthy Lifestyle* class, I finished with the same quote I used on the first day: “This class is not called *The Healthy Semester*, it is called *The Healthy Lifestyle*. I want what you learn in this class to stay with you for the rest of your life.” I stick by this philosophy not only in The Healthy Lifestyle, but in all classes, and the evidence of this is in the outcomes of my students’ experiences.

*“Tyler is a great instructor!! I appreciate when he participates in the physical activity portion. He is also very kind, understanding, and reasonable as an instructor. His effort (and success) to learn his students' names creates a more personalized and meaningful learning environment.”*

-Student in *The Healthy Lifestyle*, Fall 2018

*“Dr. Harris is a very understanding professor and it is so nice to be able to have someone who can understand the stress and pressure that us students are under especially during this time, a little help goes a very long way with him and it is much appreciated. He is always available for questions or if we are having confusion. I see Dr. Harris as a pretty influential professor who loves his job and loves spreading his knowledge with us students. He is amazing.”*

-Student in Pathology of Injury and Illness, Spring 2021

My own experiences and preferences also follow from this philosophy. Although I enjoy all forms of teaching, I tend to gravitate toward classes where the students physically and actively engage with the subject matter, such as writing intensive or lab-based athletic training classes. These classes allow me to instill practical skills for the students to take away and apply in their lives. However, I still apply the same principles and often reach the same positive outcomes in lecture-based courses.