

# Building community in the classroom

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Background:

- Teach experimental design and data analysis to biologists
- I feel like a fraud to discuss community building

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- Teach experimental design and data analysis to biologists
- I feel like a fraud to discuss community building
- I present my best guess on how to build community

# This is where I learned to teach



What I learned: students know whether you have their best interests at heart; when you do, they'll cut you a lot of slack

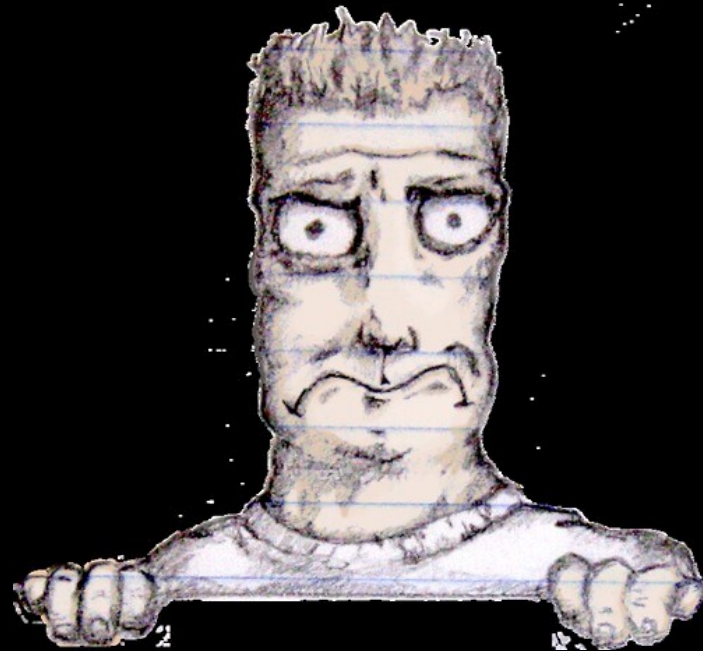
# What do I *think* I do to build community?

- Make myself available; office hours
- Ask open questions that allow discussion (e.g., “why might *this* happen?”)
- Listen to students during and outside class; e.g., refer back to a student’s earlier comment.
- Relate back to when I was in their shoes
- Transparency
- Be accountable
- Ask for feedback during lectures; discuss
- Tell (bad) jokes; be ‘present’ in the moment (not overly scripted)
- Sing
- When replying to email, start with encouraging statement, and finish by asking, “Does this help?”
- Provide opportunities to work discuss / work together

**The bottom line: treat students as people.**

# Why might treating students with respect and as 'people' create a sense of community?

- Imagine the alternative.
- Job experiences?



# Does this match the literature on building community in classrooms?

- ‘Respect’ and ‘trust’ are common themes in this literature
- Peter Felton & Heidi Weston: “Mattering” (“valued”) (IAD talk)

Is ‘mattering’ a more helpful way of thinking about student belonging at university?

Prof Peter Felton, Assistant Provost for Teaching and Learning, Director of the Center for Engaged Learning and Professor of History, Elon University, USA

Heidi Weston, Undergraduate Researcher, Elon class of 2023 (History and Education, Elon University, USA)



Thanks to Celine Caquineau

- ‘Someone takes me seriously’
- ‘I have a voice’
- ‘Someone is invested in me’

# Why have students said that I build community?

- I'm not sure.
- I think it has to do with respect and remembering that students are people.



# Discuss!

Thank you!