

# Supportive Connections and Conversations with First Generation Students

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Center for Teaching  
and Learning





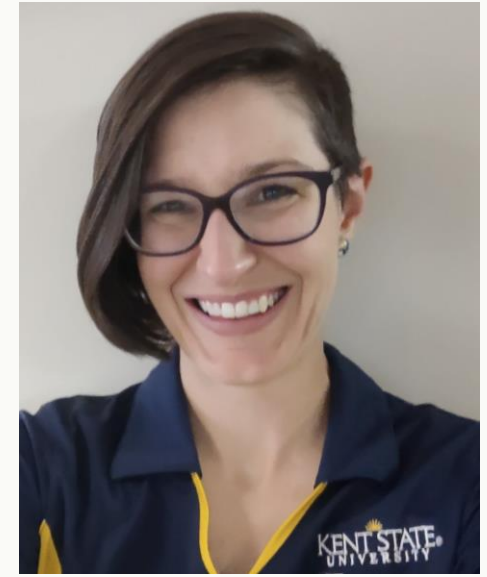
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# CTL FACILITATORS

# KSU Student Quotes

***How does it impact you when faculty do build supportive connections and conversations?***

**It lets me relax and not stress**

**It helps with approachability – in terms of asking for help**

**When my teacher connects with me, I don't feel like just another student they have. When they know my name, I feel like they care to know me**

**I am much more comfortable in the classroom as well as asking questions**



# Workshop Preview

**The Hidden Curriculum**

**1**



**Key Constructs for Success**

**2**



**Strategies to Connect**

**3**



**Strategies for Conversation**

**4**

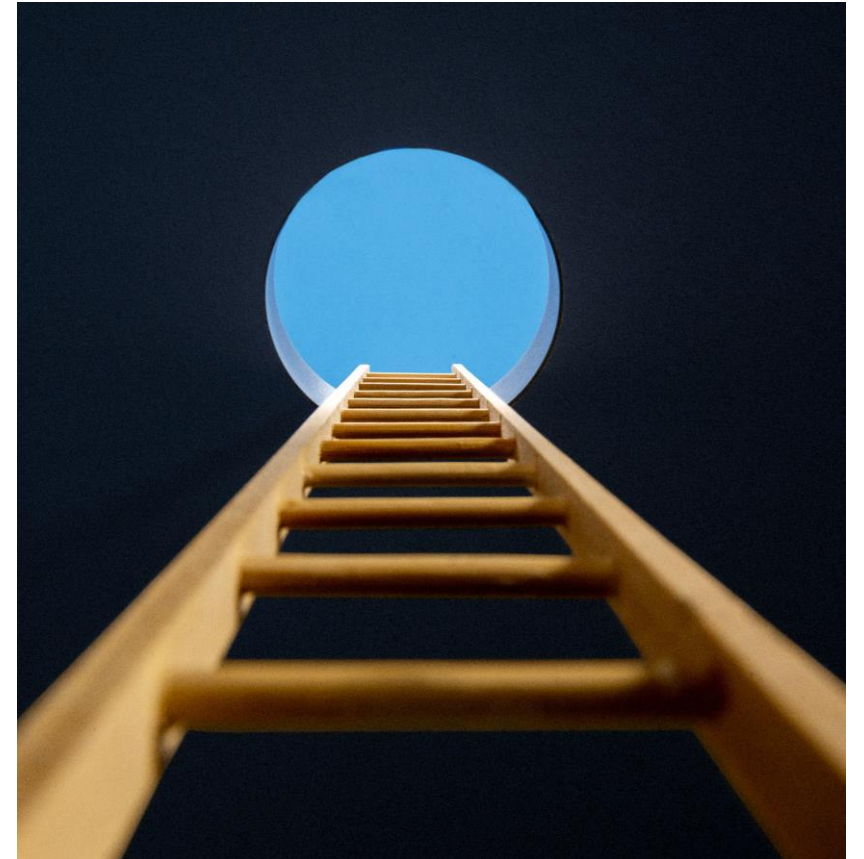


# The Hidden Curriculum

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**What did you NOT know when you came to Kent State?**

- “Some things are places, names, and abbreviations, like the M.A.C.C. Annex, the C.U.E., and the one walking road that goes through campus.”
- “How to schedule classes and make appointments.”
- SAS
- Office Hours
- “. . .but with me asking one question I got the help I needed.” What if a student doesn’t know to ask?



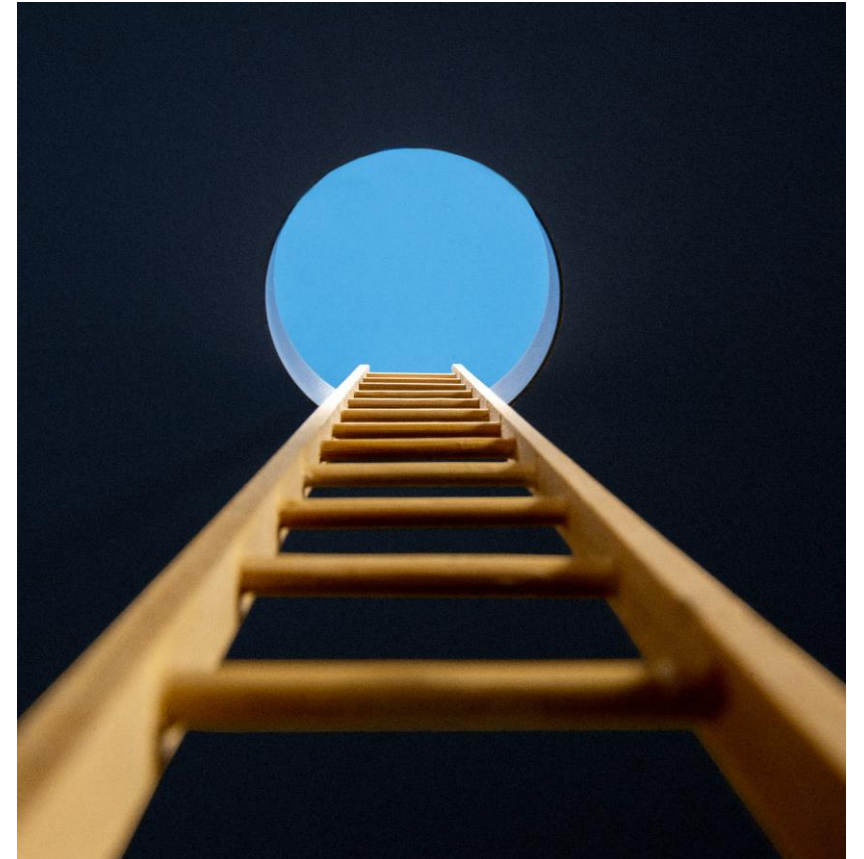
# The Hidden Curriculum

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**Definition:** “implicit academic, social, and cultural messages,” “unwritten rules and unspoken expectations,” and “unofficial norms, behaviors and values. . .”

## Why are some students hurt more than others?

- The hidden curriculum disproportionately affects underrepresented and first-generation populations.
  - [Teaching the Hidden Curriculum](#)
- Being transparent about policies and expectations, as well as modeling skills that are needed but not all have will help all students. **CLEAR IS KIND!**
  - [Hidden Curriculum Impact](#)



# Workshop Agenda

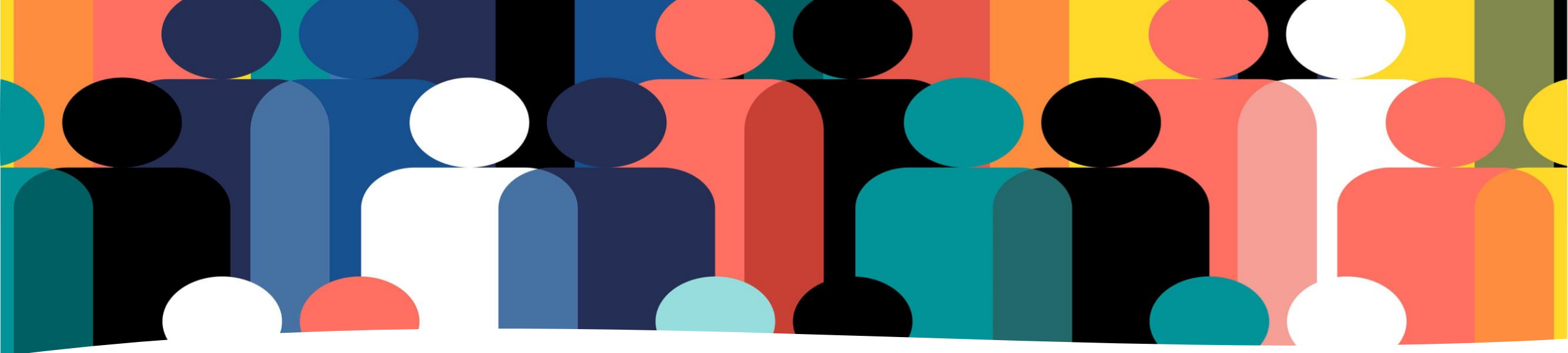
## The Hidden Curriculum

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## Key Constructs for Success

2



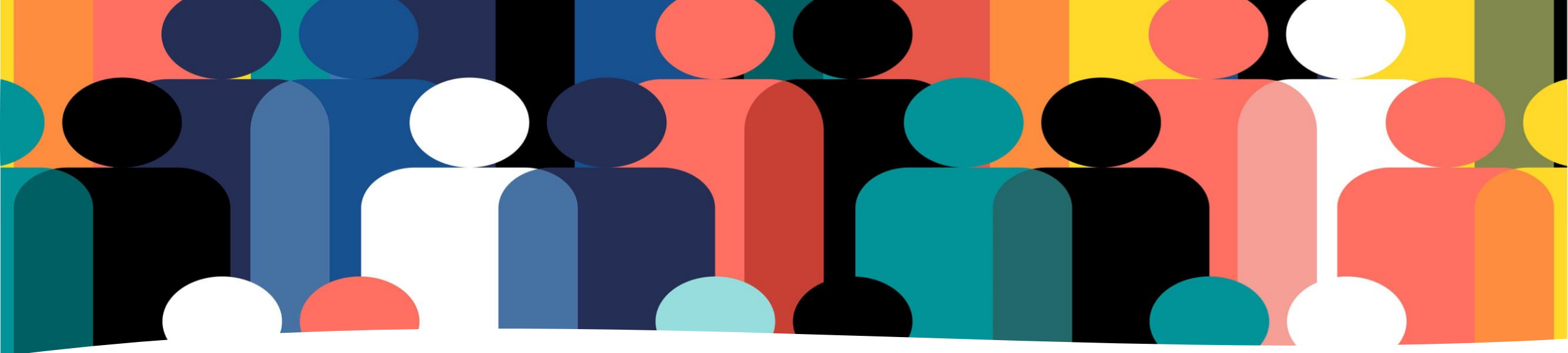


“Social connectedness refers to the creation of bonding relationships. . .[and] are essential elements of student satisfaction, academic success, and retention. . .” [Practices to Encourage Social Connectedness](#)

## Social Connectedness

- Relationships can be student to student, or student to instructor
- When we know people, we are more likely to show up to the spaces where they are; when we show up, we succeed; when we succeed we decide to stay.
- Social Brokenness = Lack of Accountability and Care





## Social Connectedness

### Student Quotes:

*"It impacts the way I learn. Being able to learn next to people I know makes it easier."*

*"When they [know my name], I feel valued and listened to in the class. It makes me more relaxed and looking forward to coming. When they don't, I don't enjoy going and I feel too intimidated to ask questions."*

# Identity Safety

- **Identity safety** is the feeling that an individual feels valued in a particular context.
- **Identity threat** is the feeling that one's social identities are devalued; feeling safe is lost in that context.
  - [Practices to Promote Identity Safety](#)
- Safety is a precondition for learning well.
  - [Trauma-Informed Pedagogy](#)



# Practices for Social Connection & Identity Safety

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- The goal is to make all students feel “welcome, valued, respected, and as though they are recognized as having the potential to succeed.”
- Community Agreements are one way to value each student and create an identity safe/r community.
- [Community Agreement Teaching Tool in a Flash](#)
  - [Ensuring Classroom Identity Safety](#)



## Belonging Uncertainty

- Might/might not belong
- Watch for signs about belonging
- Feel like they belong when things go well; don't belong when things go badly



What happens?  
Put your answer in the chat!





# KSU 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student Responses

When an instructor does not build supportive connections and conversations...

"Makes me way more nervous to share in class and talk to other students"

"It makes it feel disconnected and harder to learn the material"

I think they don't want me there and it shows in my grades

I don't enjoy going and I feel too intimidated to ask questions

"I feel frustrated, I develop a little resentment..."

"Makes me feel more distant and not like they're an actual teacher"

# How Do We Communicate Trustworthiness and Fairness?

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- Create student-centered course policies
- Provide transparency in designing and evaluating student work



# Communicate Belief in Students



- Asset-minded approach
  - Leverage what students can do, what they know and their unique contributions
- Capacity for growth
  - Through persistence
  - Specific approaches to learning
  - Feedback

# How Do We Communicate Belonging?



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA](#)

- Everyone faces challenges
- Feeling challenged is not a sign that a student does not belong
- Time and taking agentic steps lead to greater belonging
- Tell a belonging story!



# Belonging Stories

- Share your own experience that led to belonging uncertainty
- Show how you utilized resources and support to navigate this uncertainty

## Nobel Chemistry Winner Failed His First College Chem Exam

HUMANS 05 October 2023 By AFP



Moungi Bawendi, co-winner of the 2023 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

# Key Steps to Telling a Belonging Story

- Identify situation (academic, being the only, navigating the system, difficulty making friends)
- Why did the situation make you question belonging?
- How did the belonging concern get resolved or improve?



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What support services do you think students should know about and/or use?

Type in the chat but wait for me to say "Send"

Building Supportive Connections: Support Services



# Building Supportive Connections: Support Services



Easily Accessible  
(linked)



Click-through



Purpose  
explained



Decrease  
stigma

**“a lot of people  
expected me to  
know how to use  
Canvas”**

## Need Help?

- [Canvas Student Guides](#): ➡ View concise Canvas overviews and how-to guides.
- [KSU Helpdesk](#): ➡ Locate information and request support with Canvas and educational tools. Call, chat, or submit a support ticket 24/7.
- [Academic Success Center](#) ➡: Scheduled tutoring, drop-in tutoring, e-tutoring, supplemental instruction, and academic coaching in person and online.
- [Other Resources for Student Success](#) ↓ : Campus specific links to counseling services, CARE team, Student Accessibility Services (SAS), student ombuds & local administrators for Academic Complaints.



**KSU Engage  
App**

# Building Peer Connections: Fast Friends Example



- Students pair up & ask other partner questions for 2.5 minutes, then switch
- Do activity once per week
  - Same partner for 2-3 weeks
  - Switch every so often
- *Alternatively* – specify a question for them to ask or provide list of examples

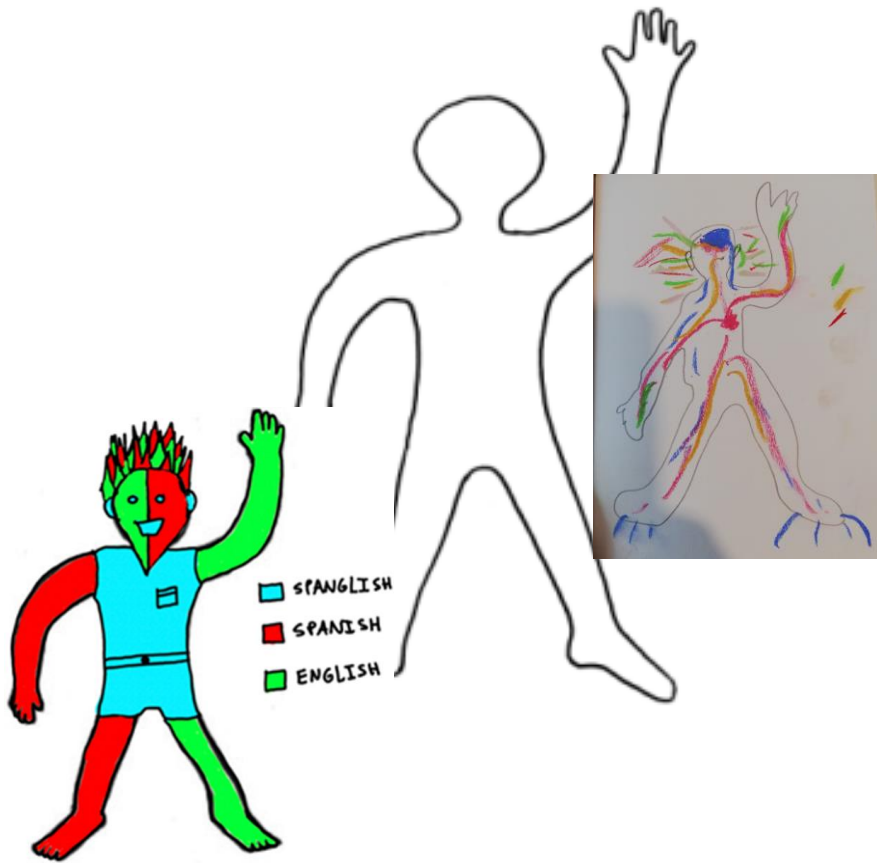
# Human Scavenger Hunt Example

	Someone who likes the same activity as you (gaming, hiking, etc.) <b>Fatema</b>	A group of people who can spell a word by using the initials of their names	Someone who grew up with the same kind of pet situation (dog → dog)
Someone who has the same eye color as you	Someone who likes one of your top foods		Four people wearing blue in their clothing <b>Connor, Clare, Jamal, Lana</b>
Someone who likes the same music/show as you <b>Reese</b>		Someone who is first generation	
Someone who has the same number of siblings you do	Two people with the same birth month	Two people who have the same initials	Someone who has the favorite color as you do

Near beginning of the semester & review or do again later

# Self Portrait Example

Ask students to identify important elements about themselves they want others to know about, depict it visually & use the images in sharing



Inspired by language portrait by Brigitta Busch 2018





## Daily Share Examples

- Students answer a question on the board/via technology
  - Favorites, fears, campus related (resources, food, course), content related

*Students turn in questions/examples they'd like others to answer*

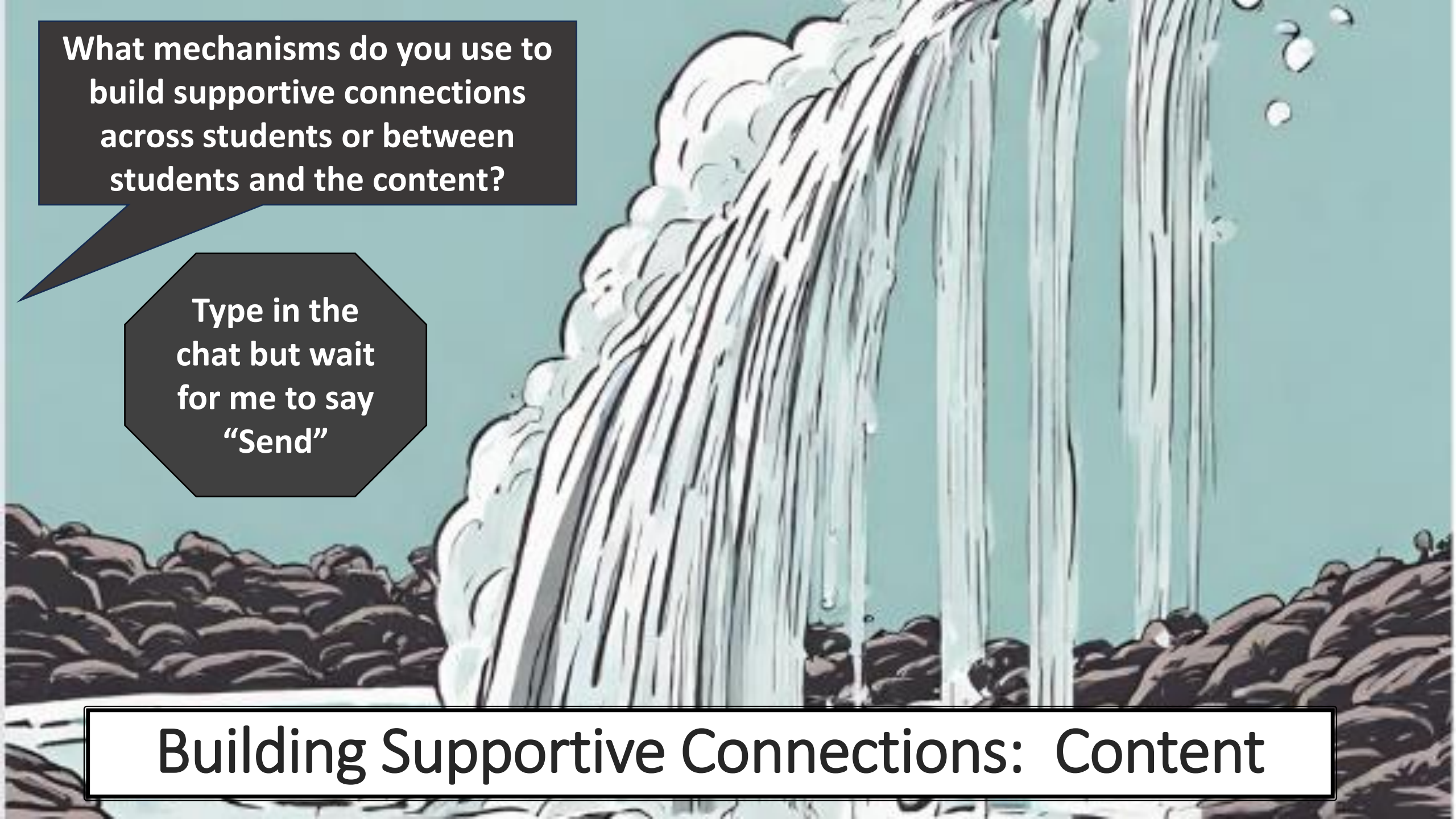


# Blueberry Picking Example: Crowdsourcing Success

- Share what you've overcome
- Share a success
- Share a suggestion
  - Places you've found to study
  - Helpful resources
  - Navigating the course/college

*"Instructor set up a GroupMe"*





What mechanisms do you use to build supportive connections across students or between students and the content?

Type in the chat but wait for me to say "Send"

Building Supportive Connections: Content

# Building Supportive Connections: Content

## Reflective Questions:

- Write three sentences about your emotional connection to the content so far (scary, funny, sad, other). What emotions does this content elicit? Why?
- How would knowing this content a year ago (or more) have helped you? Share a specific example.
- How can you apply this content to your life? What connections can you make to yourself or someone you know?



# BUILD CONNECTIONS

Connect school topics to personal interests in your daily life.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

① What are your interests, hobbies, and personal goals?	② What topics have you learned about in class recently?	③ Brainstorm connections. Draw lines between any interests in column ① and topics in column ② that you think are connected.
Zumba	Homeostasis	<p>④ Develop a connection by filling in this sentence:</p> <p><u>Zumba</u> and <u>Homeostasis</u> <small>interest from ①</small> <small>topic from ②</small></p> <p>are connected because _____</p> <p><u>There has to be the right balance of water</u> <u>&amp; electrolytes for me to be able dance</u></p>
Kayaking	Neuromuscular transmission	
Baking	Circulatory system	
Finding waterfalls	Fight or flight	
Food trucks		
The 100 - netflix		
Golden Rockettes		<p>⑤ Think more about your connection by filling in this sentence:</p> <p><u>Homeostasis/Zumba</u> could be important to <small>topic from ④</small></p> <p><u>I can't be at my best without balance</u> my life because _____</p>

# Building Supportive Connections: Content

## Minute Paper Prompts

- What in it reminds you of your own experiences, your family, friends, community?
- If you could do one thing to make the world a better place, what would it be? How can information/skills/experiences in this course contribute?
- What did you learn or experience today that will make you \_\_\_\_\_? (a more marketable job applicant, a better employee, a more effective advocate, a better member of your community, etc)



# Workshop Agenda

## The Hidden Curriculum

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What mechanisms do you use to build supportive connections between you and your students?

Type in the chat but wait for me to say "Send"







# Building Supportive Conversations between You and Your Students





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# Get to Know Your Students

- Learn names and pronouns
- Before class small talk
- 2-minute challenge
  - Talk about anything other than content!
- Add something personal in all communications
- Student surveys

# Syllabus

- In this course, students will learn...
- To contact the instructor...

VS.

- Together, we will learn...
- You can contact me... I appreciate the opportunity to connect with you.

# Syllabus: Communicating an Asset Mindset

This is a difficult course. Succeeding on tests and assignments will require a thorough understanding of the course material. Students who are not quick learners should consider dropping the course.

This course will include challenging material. However, the tests and assignments are designed so that any student who is willing to put in the time to attend class consistently, work extensively outside of class, use or develop good study strategies, and contact the TA or instructor when they are struggling, can develop a thorough understanding of the course material and ultimately succeed in the course.



# Syllabus: Communicating Care

- Introduce yourself and your enthusiasm
- Measured flexibility
- Focus on learning > punishments
- Support services



# Supportive Syllabus: Support Services

Linked to resources, easily accessible

## Endorsed Statements:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Kent Campus Academic Support
- Basic Needs Support & Mental Well-being
- Land Acknowledgement Statement
- Student Accessibility Services
- Required: Request for Religious Accommodations

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# Supportive Syllabus: Review


- How might this wording/policy/practice make a student feel?
- Is there anything that makes me feel positive, understood, and supported?
- Is there anything that makes me feel negative, judged, or not supported?
- Are any parts of the syllabus confusing? Is anything missing that would be helpful to include?
- Does understanding the syllabus require knowledge that a new student or transfer student might not have?



## Supportive Student Hours

- What is the value of attending?
- Communicating value
- Personal invitations
- Try not to look busy!
- Conversation starters and FAQs





What questions  
do you have?

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## What is “*One Small Thing*”?

Think about what aspects from this event might be most applicable to you. How can you translate this knowledge, skill or behavior into an action?

As you choose your “*One Small Thing*,” consider the following to guide your ideas:

1. **It’s manageable.** When you think about achieving your “*One Small Thing*,” you should feel energized – not overwhelmed.
2. **It’s specific.** You should be able to easily describe the steps you’d take to put your “*One Small Thing*” into action.
3. **You’ll know when you’ve done it.** It should be concrete and actionable, something you’ll be able to show or tell people about.
4. **It matters to you.** It should be something you’ll be proud to accomplish.

\*adapted from Colleagues in Connection; WCCC meeting, Sept (2017)

# Workshop Survey QR Code



<https://tinyurl.com/110623ctl>





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