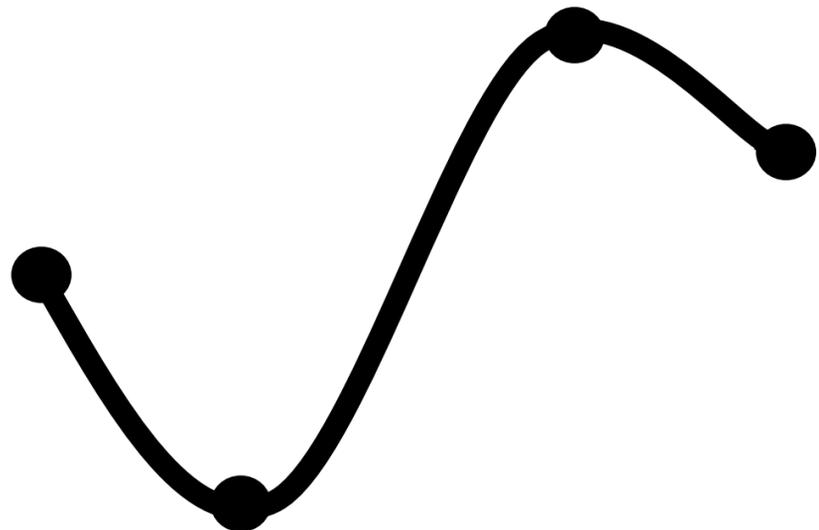


Learning as a Transformational Journey



Introduction

Learning as a Transformational Journey is a framework that empowers new instructors to design engaging, meaningful and student-centered learning experiences. Inspired by transformational experiences research and based on curriculum design principles, it helps instructors design memorable and engaging learning experiences that allow self-reflection for students, fostering a deep shift in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that change the way students view the world.

Instructors start by identifying the start and the end of the journey: where students are and where they are going. Then instructors map content and activities onto the 5 stages of the journey: surface the known, disrupt the known, connect the dots, celebrate the new known, and integrate the new known. Each stage has a set of activities as inspirations. The goal for each stage is to not only foster cognitive learning, but also create social, emotional, and meaningful learning experience.

1. Why

Why should we foster transformation in students?

Where we are now

Take a minute and reflect on the best learning experience you have had. Chances are that the learning experience did not simply involve a PowerPoint lecture, but a challenge to tackle with others, a mind-blowing discussion, or an engaging activity.

However, most learning does not happen that way. Half of the teenagers in the U.S. uses “bored” to describe school, as learning often involves passively listening of content that is not relatable and applicable.

How can we change that? How can we scale the best learning experiences? How can we really make an impact in students’ lives?

Where we are going

“Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world.”

(O’Sullivan, 2003).

What if this is students’ experience in school, every single day?

Point of view

Learning is a transformational journey with a mix of cognitive, emotional, and social experiences.

Going through it transforms the learner and changes the learner's view of self and the world.

All educators can become transformational experience designers.

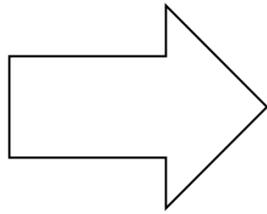
Good teaching and learning can and should be well designed.

2. What

What transformation do you want to create in students?

Before your class,

What are students' existing knowledge, beliefs, and perspectives?

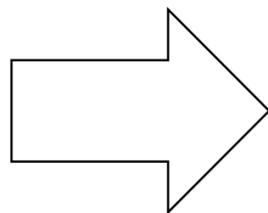


After your class,

How are they going to see themselves and/or the world differently?

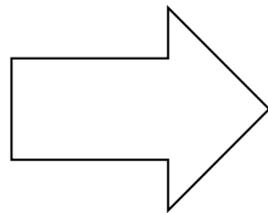
Here are some examples:

There are right and wrong ways of looking at art.



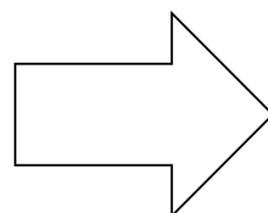
There is no wrong way of looking at art.

You need to make time to be mindful.



You can be mindful anytime anywhere.

Math and music are so different and not related.



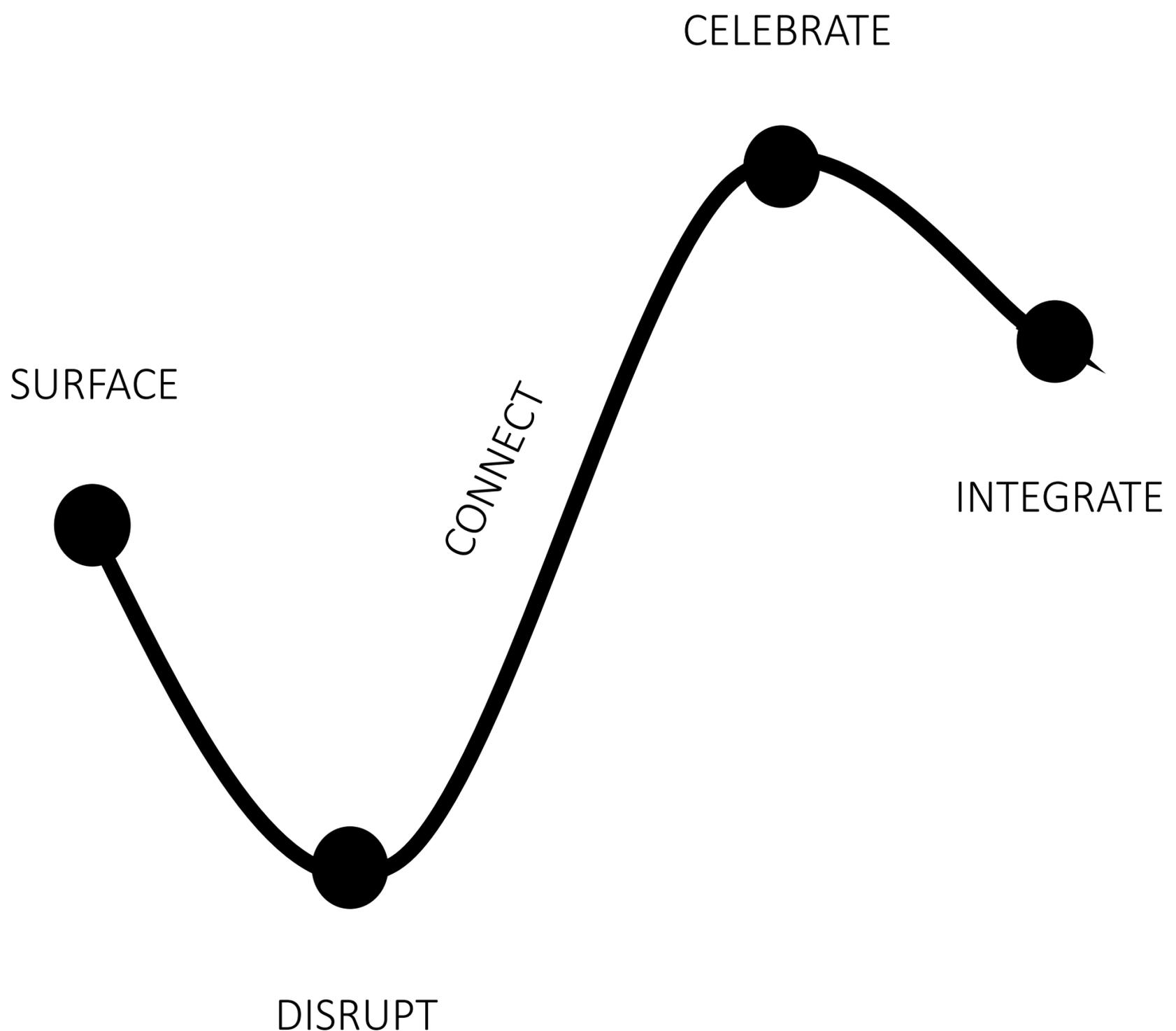
Math can help us better understand music.

Use the worksheet at the end of this document to identify the transformation you want to foster in students.

3. How

How are students going to be transformed?

This section introduces activities that can be applied to different stages of the learning journey to create the transformation you identified in last section.



Use the worksheet at the end of this document to brainstorm activities that can be applied in your course.

Before you start

What kind of space will enhance learning?

Going outside? Having whiteboards with movable tables and chairs? Having participants sit in a circle?

What kind of experiences can you create before and after the class?

A welcome email with a pre-survey? A video to watch ahead of time? A discussion thread? A list of actions to do next?

How to use the activities

If you are new to the activities,

Go through the activities one by one to familiarize yourself with each stage of the journey.

If you only have a vague idea about what to teach,

Go through the journey step by step.

Use the activities as inspirations to generate learning experience along with content.

If you already have a draft syllabus,

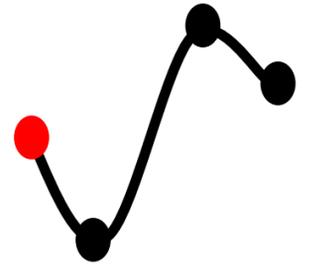
Pick out the key learning moments and map them onto the journey.

Use the activities as inspirations to create more interactive learning experience with your content, and generate new experience.

Introduction to the journey

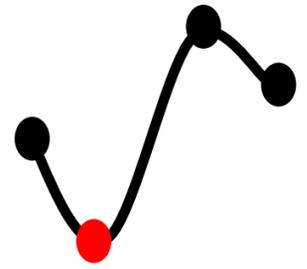
SURFACE the known

Externalize existing knowledge of students.
Students would feel heard and valued.



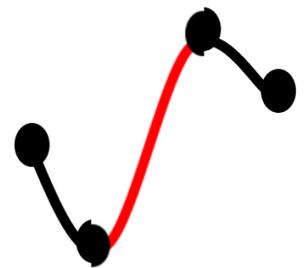
DISRUPT the known

Help students realize they have to change.
Students would feel surprised, frustrated.



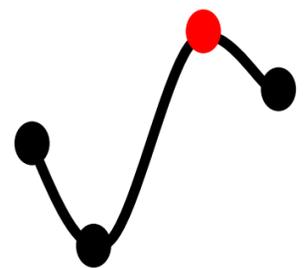
CONNECT the dots

Put it together into an experience arc.
Students would feel engaged throughout.



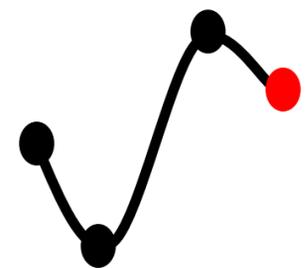
CELEBRATE the new known

Design the climax of the journey.
Students would feel energetic, joyful.



INTEGRATE the new known

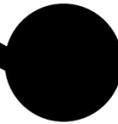
Make learning applicable and relevant.
Students would feel meaningful.



SURFACE

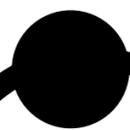


DISRUPT

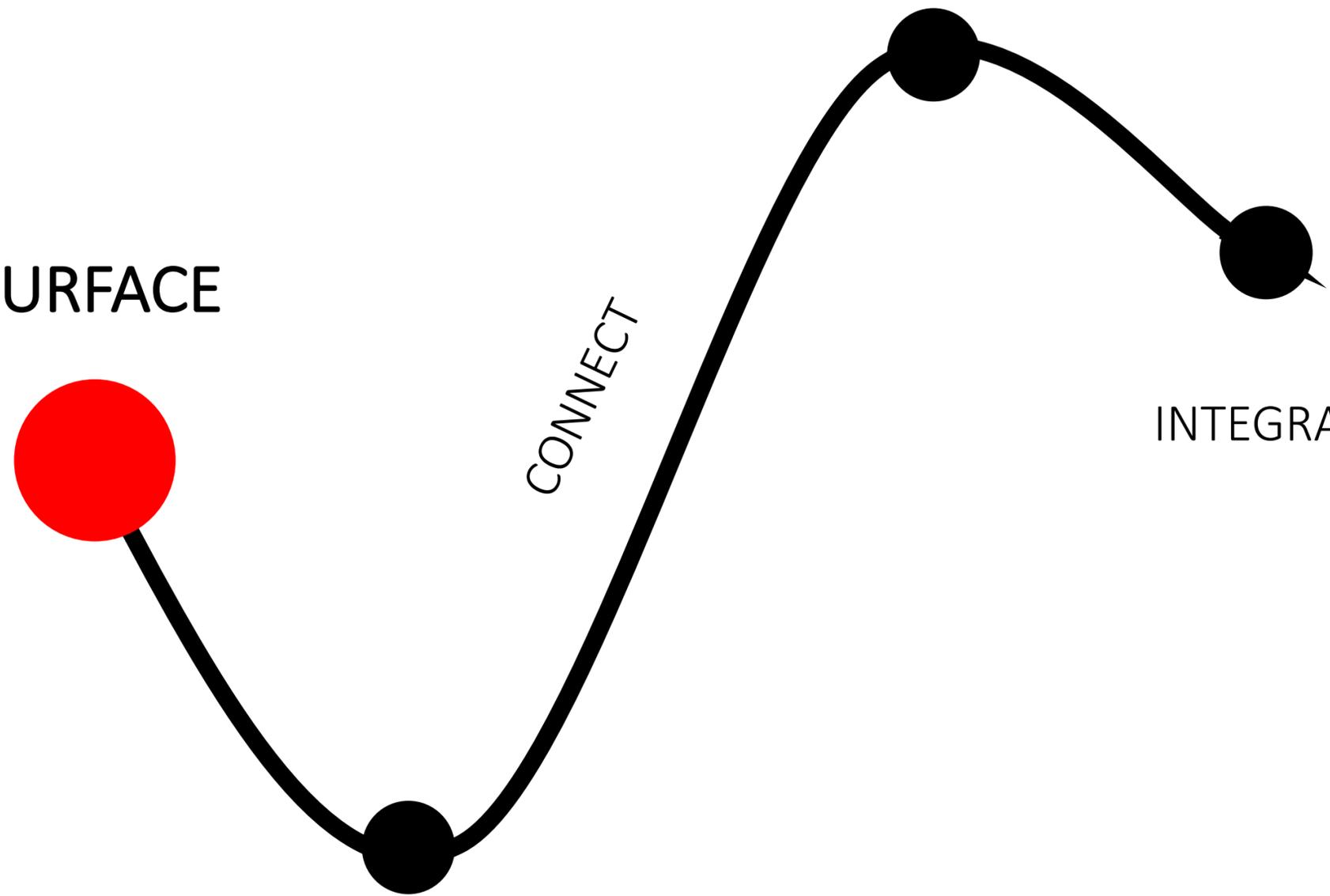


CONNECT

CELEBRATE



INTEGRATE



Raise Hands

Test the water in the room

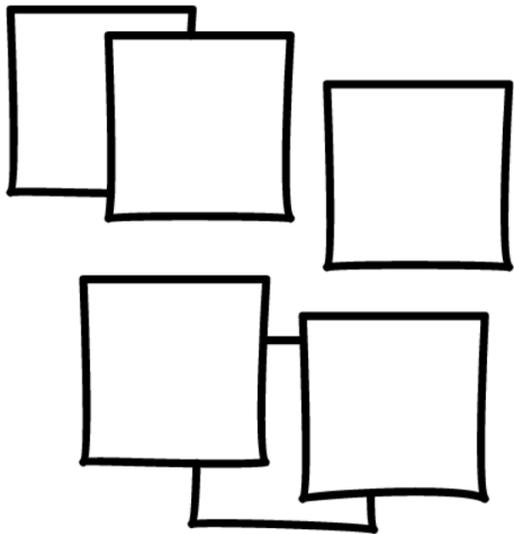


How do I gather quick responses from students?

1. “Raise your hands if ...”
2. “Keep your hands up if ...”
3. Debrief what it shows about the students.

Post, Group, Share

Externalize existing knowledge in a group

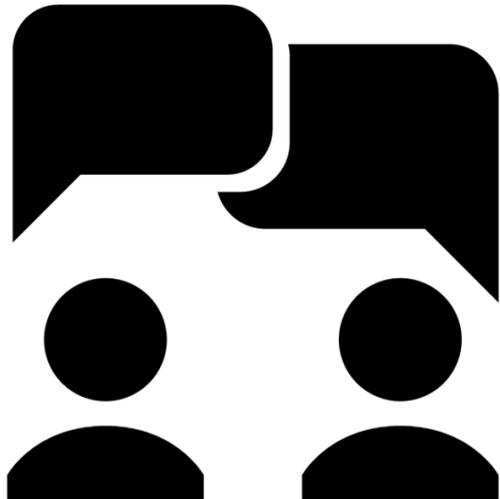


What knowledge and preconceptions do students have?

1. "What comes to mind when thinking about this topic? Write on post-its as many ideas as possible and post them on the board."
2. "Group the ideas and add titles to groups."
3. "Which idea is most interesting or surprising? Can the authors elaborate?"

Think, Pair, Share

Compare thoughts with a partner

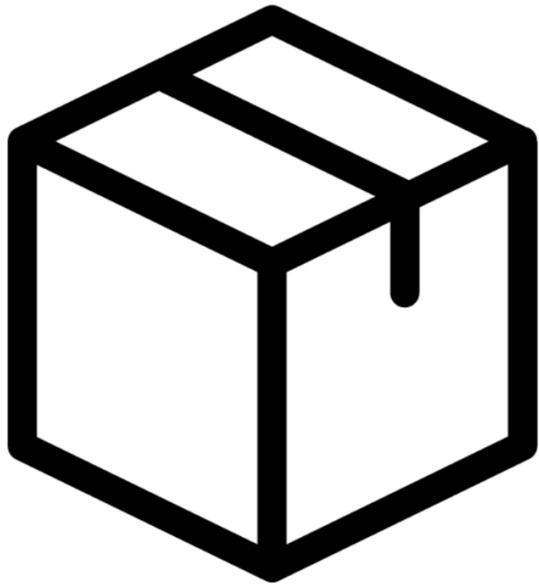


How to quickly boost the energy in the classroom and get students to learn from each other?

1. Ask students to think about it individually.
2. “Turn to a partner and discuss.”
3. “What is something interesting your partner said?”

Anonymity Box

Surface emotionally sensitive experiences

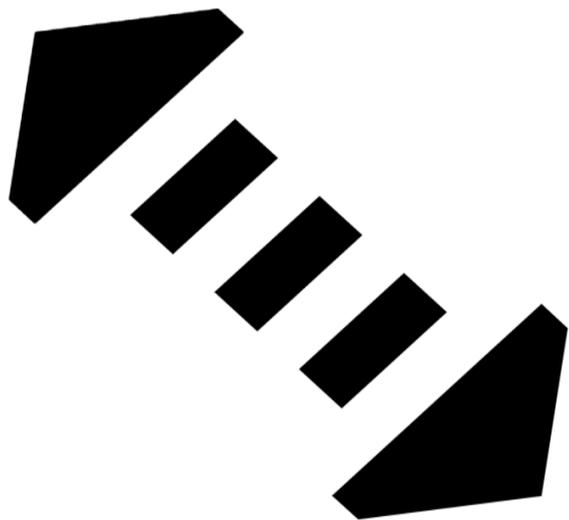


How to get students to openly talk about sensitive topics?

1. "To make you feel safe to share, we will do this in an anonymous manner."
2. Ask students to write on a piece of paper and drop it into the anonymity box.
3. Randomly draw a few to share, or ask each student to draw one and share within a group.

Spectrum

Encourage the share of differences

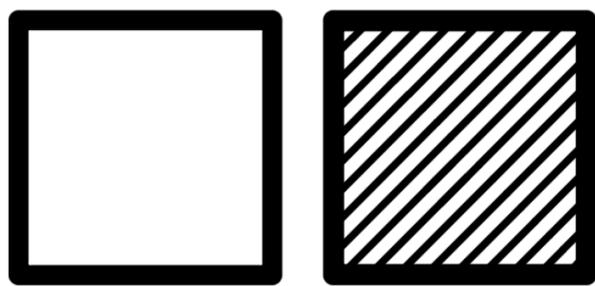


How to get students to share their different perspectives?

1. Ask a question with two extreme answers.
2. “Based on your position, stand up and distribute yourselves across a spectrum.”
3. Ask students at two extremes and in the middle to articulate their perspectives.
4. “Anyone want to move based on what you heard?”

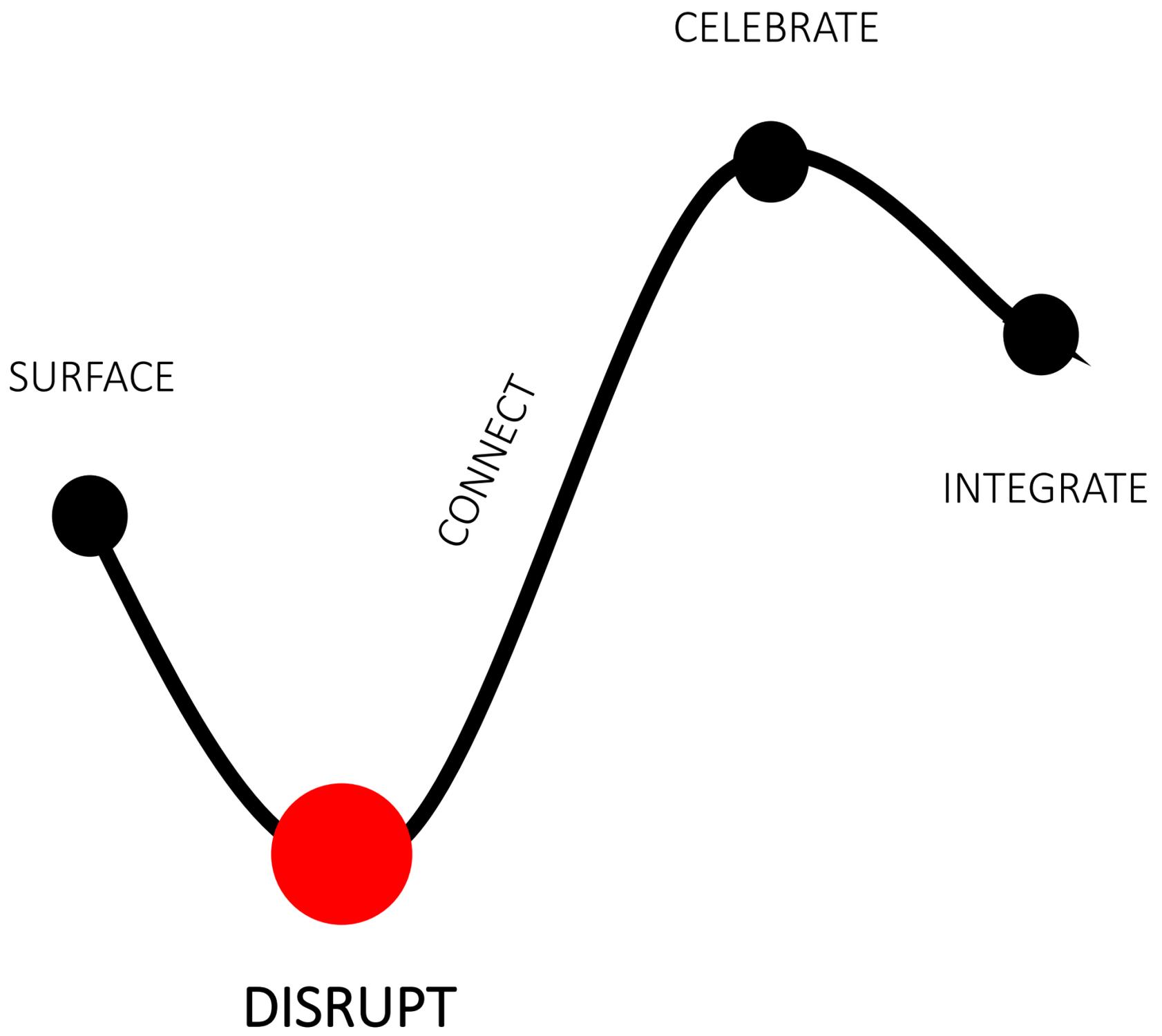
Comparison Groups

Foster comparison and contrast



How to externalize differences between two topics?

1. Divide the class into two groups.
2. Each group works on a different task or brainstorm a different question without knowing what the other group is doing.
3. Reveal the differences and ask students to talk about the contrast.



Data

Engage using unexpected data

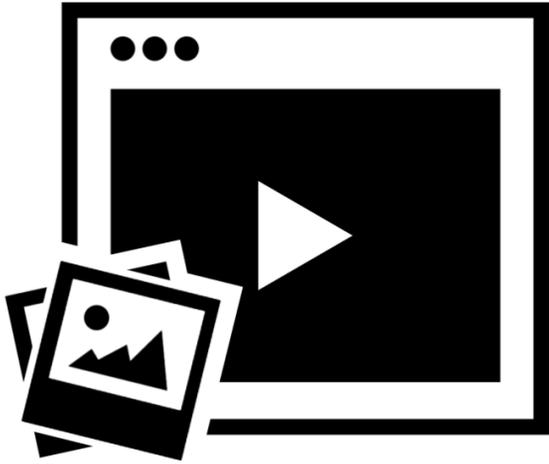


How to get students to realize the gaps in their knowledge?

1. "What'd you guess the number might be?"
2. Present unexpected data.
3. "How does this make you feel or wonder?"

Media

Surprise via photo, audio, or video



How to engage students
and expand their views?

1. Ask a question to get students thinking about their related perspectives and experiences.
2. Show the photo, audio, or video that wows the students.
3. “How does this make you feel or wonder?”

Personal Story

Show your passion and vulnerability



How to connect with students and get them interested in the topic?

1 a. Share a personal story on how you first got interested in what you're doing.

1 b. Share a personal story of something your students didn't expect you'd experience, like a rejection or failure.

2. Talk about the key message you want to get across.

Interaction

Gain insights by interacting with others



How to foster learning by observing and talking to other people?

1. Give students a question or a prompt.
2. Ask students to interview each other, or go outside to engage with strangers.
3. “What did you learn?”

Action

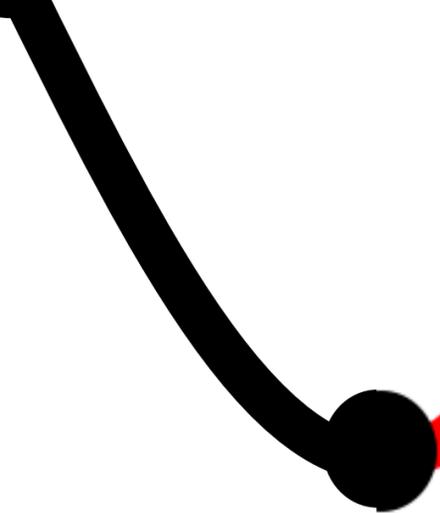
Learn from unexpected behaviors



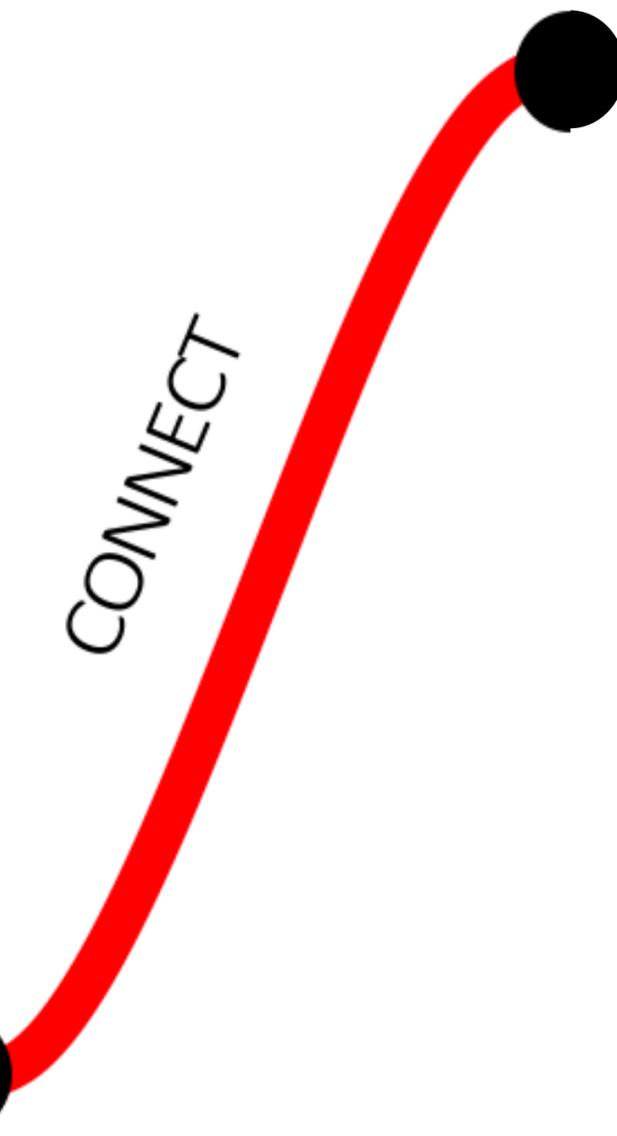
How to get students to learn from their own behaviors?

1. Give students a task to do.
2. Provide time for students to do it.
3. “What did you learn from your experience?”

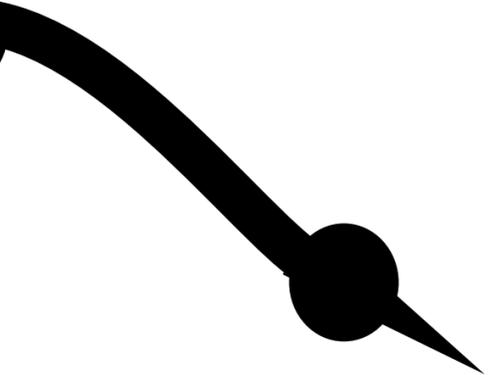
SURFACE



DISRUPT



CELEBRATE



INTEGRATE



CONNECT

Project

Develop new aspects of a project



How to make learning relevant and meaningful to students?

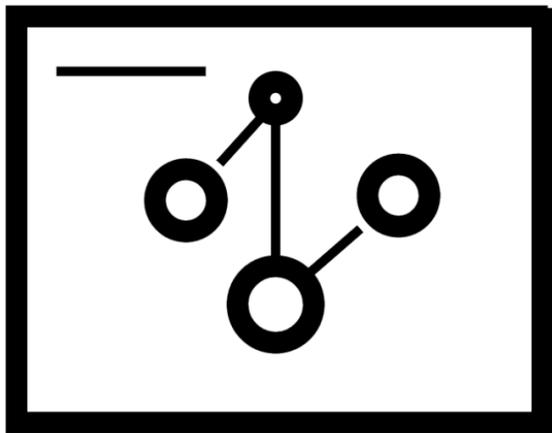
1. At the beginning of the class: Divide students into groups and ask them to identify a project to work on throughout the class.

2. Multiple points during the class: “Apply what you just learned to your project.”

3. At the end of the class: Ask students to share their finished projects and key learnings.

Visualization

Add new components to a visualization

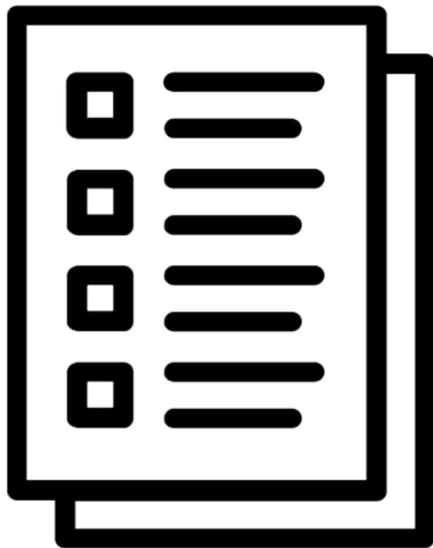


How to get students to see the evolution of a concept?

1. At the beginning of the class: “Originally, this is what the concept looks like.”
2. Multiple points during the class: “Because of what we just learned, the concept has these new components.”
3. At the end of the class: “How do you see this concept differently now?”

Worksheet

Fill a new section of a worksheet



How to reinforce learning through individual reflection and application?

1. Design a worksheet that students can use to apply learning to their work or life.
2. Multiple points during the class: “Given what you just learned, take out your worksheet and fill in the next section.”
3. Ask students to use the worksheet to refresh their learning after the class.

Artifact

Apply new perspectives to an artifact



How to externalize the change of perspectives throughout the class?

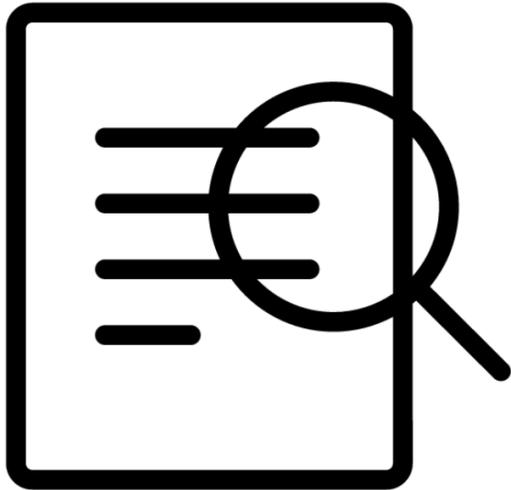
1. At the beginning of the class: “What do you see in this artifact?”

2. Multiple points during the class: “How can we apply what we just learned to this artifact?”

3. At the end of the class: “How do you see this artifact differently?”

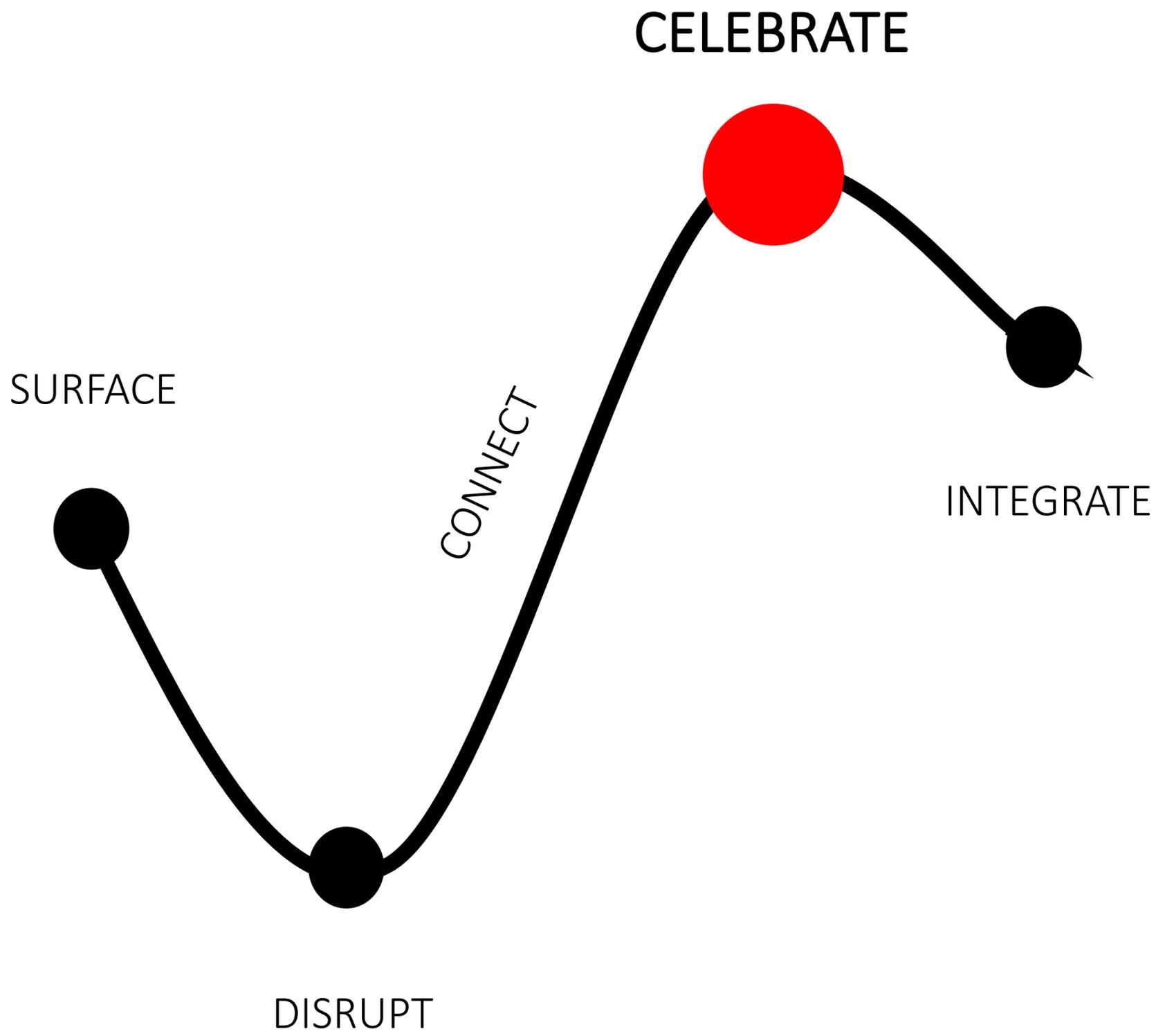
Scenario

Apply new approaches to a scenario



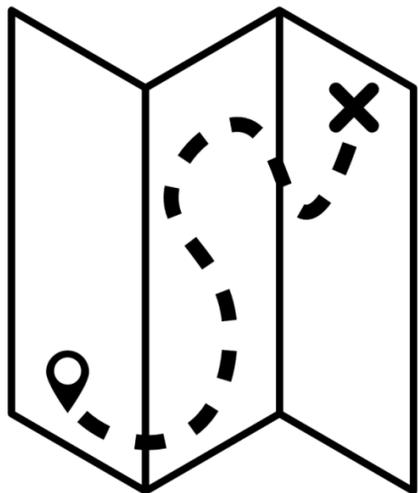
How to externalize the learning of new methods and approaches?

1. At the beginning of the class: “How would you approach this scenario?”
2. Multiple points during the class: “How can we apply what we just learned to this scenario?”
3. At the end of the class: “How do you see this scenario differently?”



Storytelling

Embark on an emotional journey



How to get students to engage with each other's work?

1 a. Ask each student to create a story about a person interacting with his/her work.

1 b. Ask student groups to create a story connecting their ideas into one experience.

2. Ask students to tell or perform their stories in front of the class.

Pitch

Get points across quickly

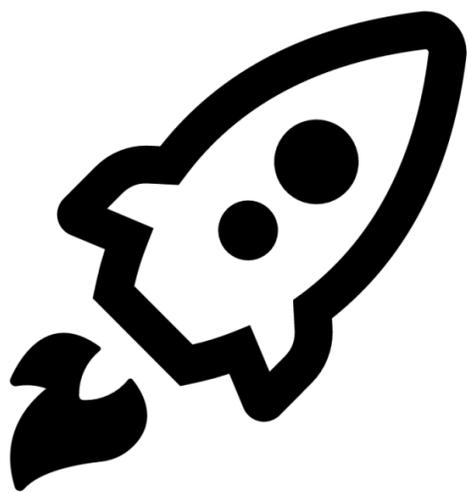


How to get students to share their idea or project and receive feedback quickly?

1. Student teams prepare for a 30-second or 1-minute pitch introducing their idea.
2. Select a representative from each team to come up and give the pitch.
3. After each pitch, the rest of the class can ask questions and give feedback.

Launch

Get energy, laughter, and cheers



How to get students excited and proud about their design?

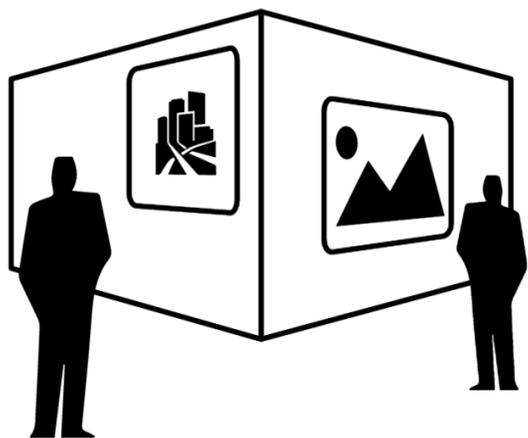
1. Ask student teams to bring their design to the same space.

2a. Launch together.

2b. Get student teams to compete against one another.

Gallery Walk

Celebrate the work of all

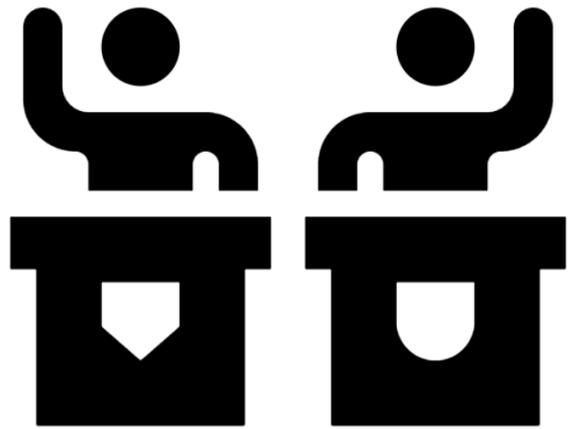


How to get students to experience each other's work in a short period of time?

1. Ask students to display their work on the table or wall.
2. Ask students to walk around and take a look at everyone's work.
3. "Which one caught your eye?"

Debate

Learn from contrasting views



How to get students to understand complexity and think about different views of a topic?

1. Create a scenario or statement with two sides.
2. Divide students into two teams, and each team works on supporting one side.
3. Select representatives from each team to present and respond to the other team.

SURFACE



DISRUPT

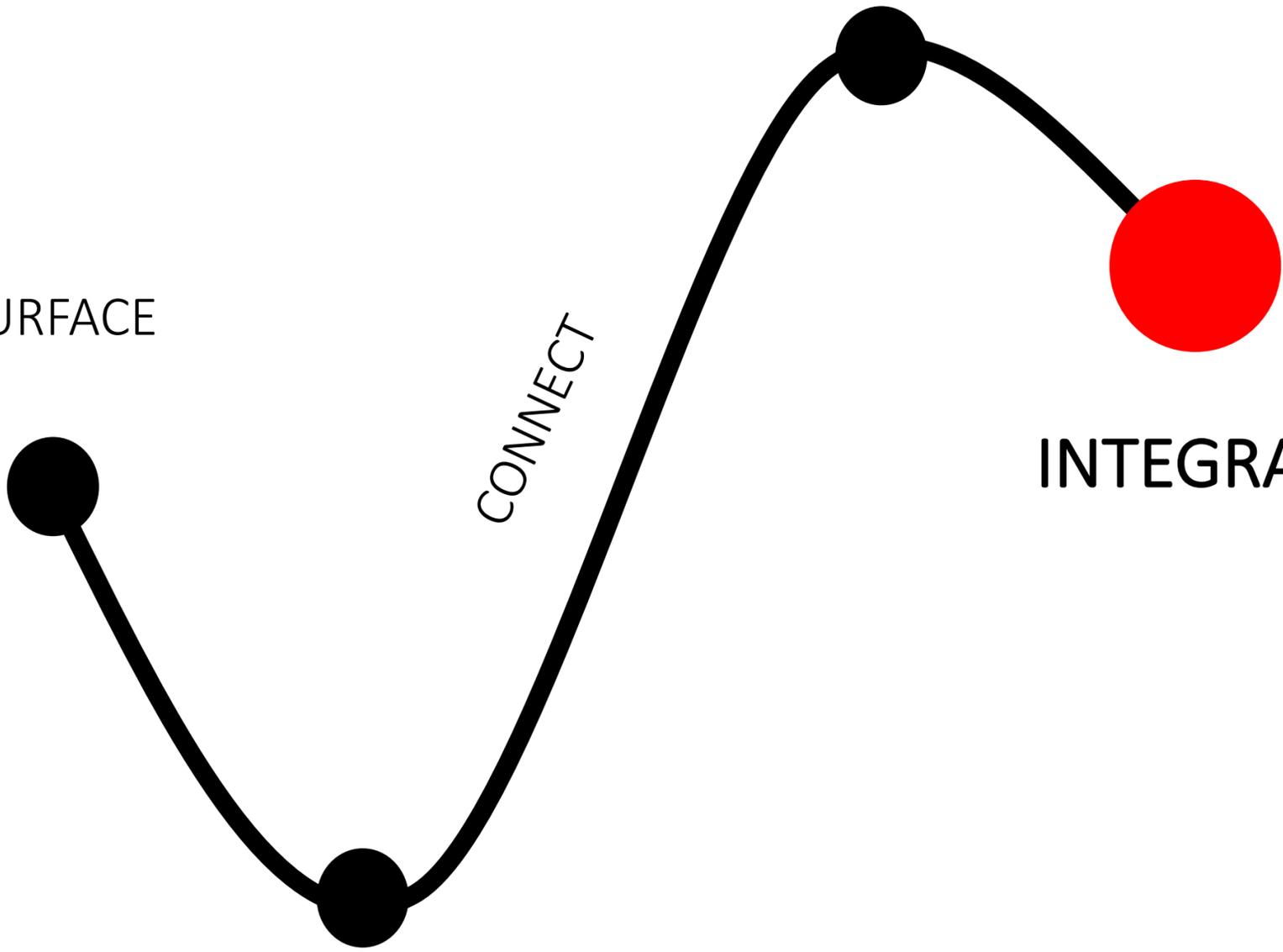
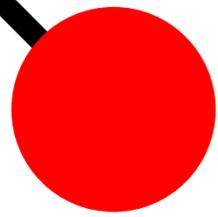


CONNECT

CELEBRATE

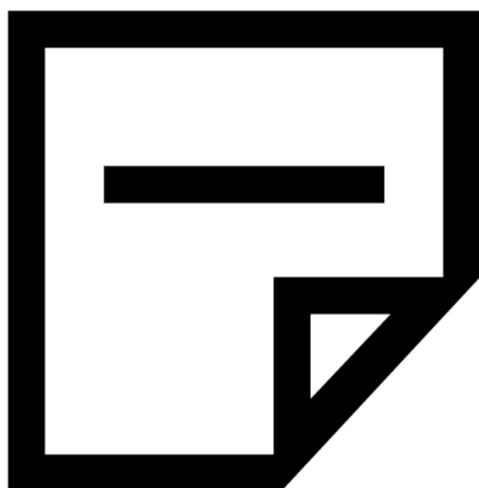


INTEGRATE



One Thing to Remember

Reflect on key learnings



How to reinforce key learnings as a class?

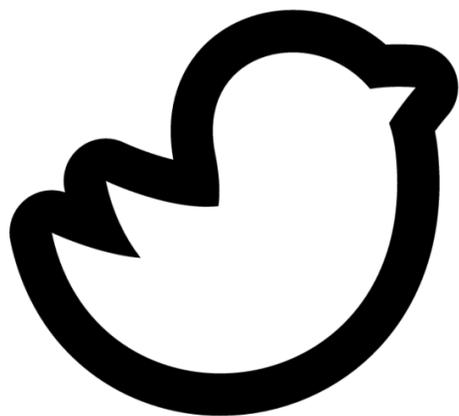
1. “What is one thing you learned from the class that you want to remember?”

2a. Ask students to reflect individually, then share with the class or in small groups.

2b. Ask students to write down their answers on a post-it, post to the board, and discuss.

Learning in a Tweet

Reflect on the key learnings



How to distill key takeaways?

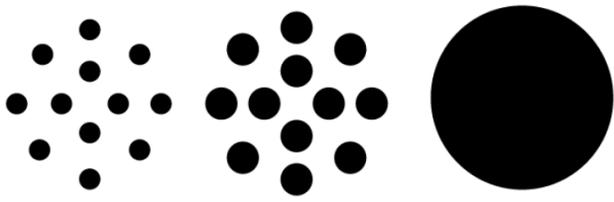
1. “Create a tweet about what you’ve learned from the class.”

2a. Ask students to write it down individually, then share with the class or in small groups.

2b. Ask students to write it down on a post-it, post to the board, and discuss as a whole class..

What Changed

Externalize the transformation



How to remind students their transformational journey with the class?

1. Remind students where they were at the beginning of the class.
2. “What changed? What’s your understanding now about the topic?”
3. Ask students to share with the class or in small groups.

Reminder

Carry it on in day-to-day life



How to make learning relevant to students beyond the class?

1. "Create a reminder to yourself so that you can apply what you learned to your life.."
2. "You can create a note, an artifact, an alarm, a daily routine, etc."
3. Ask students to share with the class or in small groups.

Application

Prime a real-life scenario

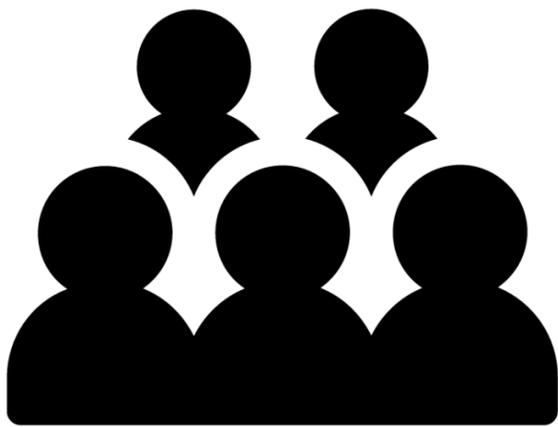


How to get students to connect the learning to their lives?

1. “How would you apply what you learned to your daily life?”
2. Give students time to think individually before sharing with a partner.
3. “Anyone want to share? It can be from you or your partner.”

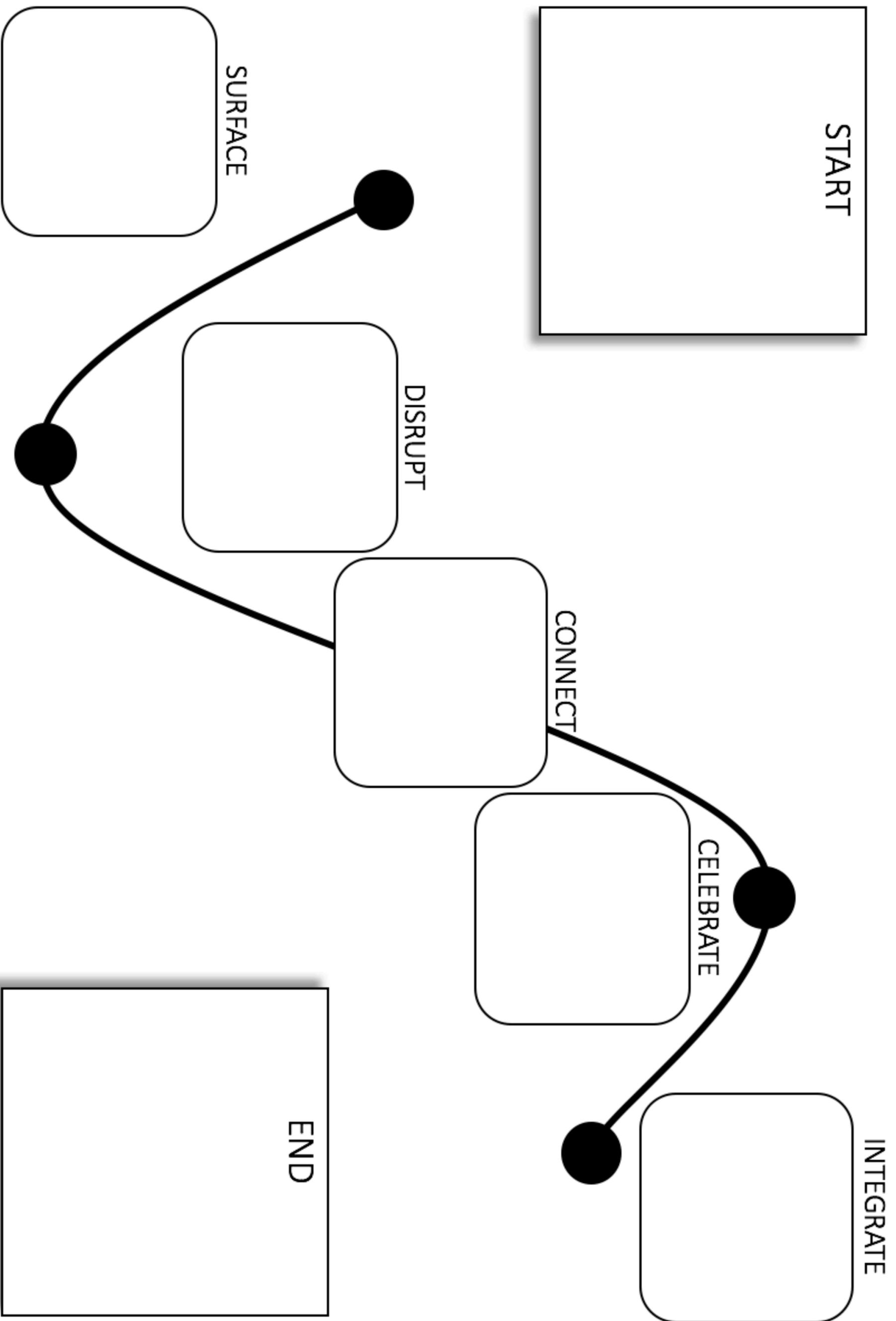
Community

Make the connection beneficial in long term



How to get students to share and support each other beyond class?

1. Think about ways for students to stay in touch with each other through events and social media beyond class.
2. Discuss the benefits of creating a community with students and get their approval.
3. Talk about the next steps.



Questions? Feedback? Need a thought partner?

Please get in touch!



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