

Dialogue Ideas for Environmental Awareness

Acknowledge the Weather

Weather is not just "small talk"--it has a profound impact on mood and can affect access and equity in major ways. Once a week or so, start class by having students write, draw, or talk about the weather. Ask them how they got to class today and how the weather affected that journey, their mood, and their energy level.

Connect to Place through the Senses

This technique reduces anxiety through embodied connection to place: Name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste. Create links between disparate environments over Zoom, or compare and contrast sensual observations in a shared classroom environment.

Practice Silence

Take 3 minutes to simply sit in silence. Don't prompt students to think about or attend to anything in particular. Debrief together after: was that uncomfortable? Why or why not? What kinds of things did students focus on or become aware of? Repeat regularly and reflect on evolving relationships to silence and environment.

Go Outside

Pick a day to take class outside (in a shady and accessible area). Involve students in problem-solving: what are the challenges to business-as-usual in this new environment, and how can you all adapt? Close the lesson with a quick reflection: how did this environment change how students related to the course's content?

Bring the Outside In

Help students unlearn a conceptual sense of "school" as separate from the "real world" by breaking down physical boundaries. Open the windows; use natural light. Ask students to bring in stones, leaves, and other small natural elements to handle and keep on their desks. Reflect in dialogue about impacts on learning and mood.