Enhancing Teaching and Learning  
by Understanding our Students Better  

Dr. Desmond Tsoi (desmond.tsoi@cityu.edu.hk)  
Division of Computer Studies, Community College of City University  

Description:  
High school students who decided to do Associate Degree rather than Higher Diploma are mainly targeted on getting a place of undergraduate program after their sub-degree study. With this goal in mind, they are generally eager to work hard and make efforts on study. This is good however, most of them do not really understand the standard they need to meet in order to be success or have no idea how good they have to be for getting good results (refer to point #1 for tips/suggestions). In addition, they are rarely able to express what they feel in mastering new ideas and concepts during the course of learning (refer to point #2). The big change of teaching and learning style from high school to sub-degree (refer to point #3) could also be another hindrance for them, especially at the very beginning of AD study.  

Tips / Suggestions  
1. A general introduction could be given at the first lecture, sharing with them on what they expect to do in the course; what standard they need to meet if they want to get a place of undergraduate program and how the course is related to their further study.  
   
   Example: DCO10103 Programming in Java  
   a. Students are being told upfront they are expected to (1) build up a solid foundation on problem solving using Java; (2) spend tremendous amount of time on program debugging in order to get an error-free and workable solution. This is painful, but definitely comes with satisfaction.  
      (Set clear goals and avoid giving them a wrong perception on what they are expected to do.)  
   b. Several pieces of coursework that are in different academic levels (excellent, good, average, bad, etc.) are demonstrated to show the expected standard of the course and at the same time, point out the one in degree standard.  
      (Give them ideas on what they have to achieve by showing them good and concrete examples.)  
   c. Students are also being told programming is one of the most important skills they have to acquire for further study; this is particular true for those who want to do Computer Science, Computer Engineering, and Information Engineering in the near future.  
      (Relate what they are going to learn to their further study.)  

2. Students are encouraged to put down what they feel about the lesson and their difficulties they encounter at the end of each lecture / tutorial. This is an effective way to get instant feedback from students.  
   (Facilitate the possibility of addressing their problems from time to time. Comparing this to the ordinary approach (i.e. collect feedback during programme committee meeting), it is more effective.)  
   (Colleagues are encouraged to collect feedbacks using Google form.)  

3. Regular group consultation could be conducted (say in bi-weekly basis) to discuss with students how to cope with the change of teaching and learning style. During each consultation, a case study could be presented to demonstrate the advantages of adopting different styles. Suggestions could also be given to students, helping them to address their weakness.  
   (Face-to-face consultations are a golden opportunity for us to figure out students’ problems and more importantly, to explain the rationale behind our teaching.)