

Case Study: Tracy Nirdon and her online class

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Both students and instructors need to understand that they both have expectations that dictate the outcome of the class. One key to ensuring that both players understand the rules of the game is to make sure a good syllabus is in place. A good syllabus addresses the concerns of the student, outlines expectations and establishes the communication style of the instructor.

As an online student, one of my first duties is to read the syllabus to get an idea of the workload and expectations of the course. I find that after reading the syllabus, if there are any concerns, I can contact the instructor to ask questions. Based on my experience, I would recommend that Tracey read the syllabus thoroughly and then initiate communication with her instructor about her concerns. It may be safe to assume that the instructor would expect Tracey to reach out if she was having difficulties or found issues with the class since “[s]tudents at a distance seem to assume more responsibility for their own learning earlier in the process...” (Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, & Zvacek, 2011, p. 225).

In addition, the instructor is responsible for conveying information in a timely manner and reaching out to students who are having difficulties. The instructor could also establish a learning environment that spreads the responsibility of teaching to everyone involved in the class, including classmates. If the instructor feels that the students may find some difficulties with the class, the instructor could, on the first day, have students introduce themselves so everyone knows who is part of the class. By doing so, the instructor is encouraging students to come forward and ask for assistance from their classmates. I think this is an excellent way to ensure communication is flowing and everyone is learning what they need to. Personally, I knew I could reach out to my classmates after reading the syllabus for this class and completing the introduction assignment, which made asking my classmates for help so much easier.

Reference

Simonson, M., Smaldino, S., Albright, M., Zvacek, S., (2012). *Teaching and learning at a distance: Foundations of distance education*. Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc.