

Chat

Noisily crunching potato chips, feet up on desks, the teenage students giggled and laughed amongst themselves. No one appeared to notice. The middle aged lady finally arrived, 15 minutes late as usual. She found a seat squarely in the middle of the room, apologizing vociferously for once again disrupting the progress of the class. The students around her cast dark, darting looks of disapproval at her. The retired military man nodded off to sleep in the back corner. The virile young man with fashion model good looks embellished a classroom example with stories of his personal conquests over the weekend.

Additionally, we had to suffer through hot summer weather, partial cafeteria facilities, and enormous sheets of drywall being tossed into the dumpster outside our classroom windows. Hammers and drills and the hollering of construction workers frequently interrupted our sessions.

I later learned that one of the teen age girls had been kicked out of her home the night before and this was a place of refuge from her father, the middle aged lady was going through a divorce, coming out as a lesbian, and found solace in a favourite radio show she listened to in the parking lot before class, the retired military man was trying to obtain an exit visa for his fiance in Viet Nam and the phone lines were down in her village do to monsoon rains, and the good looking young man, well, what can I say, he apologized on the last day for his disruptions ...and kissed my hand.

Begin every class with a chat...just shoot the breeze...we're all humans and we all have stuff...honour the learner

- **overcomes barriers and resistances to learning**
- **shows where confusions and weaknesses are**
- **honours learners**
- **opens pathways to learning**
- **creates synergy**