

# What's in a Name?

**Michael Simonson**

*A person's name, to him or her, is the sweetest sound in any language.*

—Dale Carnegie

“**C**all me Ishmael” is the first line of the classic novel, *Moby Dick*. Most high school students do not realize the importance of Ishmael's name when they start reading. However, if they wanted an A on the final essay they wrote about the novel, they should have mentioned how this first line of three words set the intellectual tone for Herman Melville's masterpiece.

Today, names have emerged as critically important aspects of teaching. In the world of mask wearing, social distanced class-

rooms, and blended teaching formats, the names of students have become one of the most unifying aspects of the educational experience.

Names promote a sense of accountability. Using a student's name recognizes them as important, that they exist, and to a certain extent that you care. Community building in the distance education classroom is much more difficult, probably impossible, without the use of names, which also produce a sense of positive behavior by students. When an instructor uses a student's name empathy is increased.

Remembering names is a problem for most—except for those rare individuals who seem to always know someone's name. Instructors can improve their name-use by:

- Having a class roster, possibly even a seating chart
- Visualizing names by associating them with a picture of the student
- Paring students so they introduce one another—they learn names and the instructor does, also
- Saying names in class.

When instructors are teaching distant learners, or often both local and distant learners, what are some tips for use of names.

1. Videoconferencing systems such as Zoom display names of distant stu-

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