

## **Solving the Physical Problems of Teaching: Squeaky Chalk, Eye Contact, and Other Common Challenges**

Cassandra Horii, Ph.D., [cvh@caltech.edu](mailto:cvh@caltech.edu)

Director, Caltech Center for Teaching, Learning, & Outreach

**Objectives:** This 2017 Teaching Conference session is intended to help participants:

- Identify common physical challenges of teaching and which ones you want to practice/improve
- Select strategies to help with common challenges that are most important and relevant to you
- Practice those strategies so that you feel more comfortable incorporating them into your actual teaching practice.

### **Note: this session is a highly interactive, practice-based experience...**

It is built upon the participants' interests, prior experiences, and in-the-moment practice. The key idea is that teaching includes many practical challenges. Some of them, like writing on the board while still connecting with students, figuring out where to position yourself in the classroom, and deciding how and when to interrupt a small group of students to help or ask a question, are also physical skills we can learn and practice. Squeaky chalk, too!

In the session, we identify some of the most common and vexing "classroom choreography" challenges, learn solutions to help you move through the teaching with more confidence and skill, and do some drills to practice implementing them. Participants then practice in a fun, supportive environment and get feedback from each other.

**If you can't attend the session:** here are some suggested next steps and resources!

- **Identify your particular challenges.** The next time you teach or present, notice what gives you the most trouble. Make a list. When do you feel most awkward or uncertain? These feelings are VERY COMMON when teaching and are a great signal for what to work on.
- **Watch experts in action.** Find great teachers and sit in on classes (Caltech offers a week with open classes once per year during TeachWeek: the next one is Spring 2018), or look for videos online. Here's a collection of videos showing [evidence-based science teaching in action](#).
- **PRACTICE.** Just like any physical skill, from playing a musical instrument to exceling at a sport, you'll improve through practice. Find an empty classroom and get to it! CTLO can help: we can observe and/or video record and give you constructive feedback. Email us at [ctlo@caltech.edu](mailto:ctlo@caltech.edu)!