

Learner-Centered Teaching

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Learner-Centered Teaching

- Learner-centered teaching focuses attention on what the student is learning, how the student is learning, the conditions under which the student is learning, whether the student is retaining and applying the learning, and how current learning positions the student for future learning.
- We have tended to assume that learning was an automatic, inevitable outcome of good teaching and we focused on the development of our teaching skills.

Learner-Centered Teaching

- The path to good teaching can be much easier to navigate when we view students as our traveling companions.
- The more we know about them and how they learn, the more likely we are to experience the joy of teaching.

What Constitutes Good Teaching?

- Any number of factors contribute to an instructor's overall effectiveness.
- Students and teachers know good teaching when they experience it, but often find it difficult to articulate the specific things that make it good.
- A review of the research literature that synthesized the results of thirty-one studies gave high rankings to the following seven categories.

What Constitutes Good Teaching?

- Sensitivity to and concern with class level and progress
 - Instructor is concerned with whether or not students learn the material, determines whether or not there are common problems, and realizes when students are bored or confused.
- Preparation and organization of the course
- Knowledge of the subject

What Constitutes Good Teaching?

- Enthusiasm for the subject and for teaching
 - Instructor conveys interest and enthusiasm for the subject matter
- Clarity and understanding
- Availability and helpfulness
- Impartiality of evaluation and quality of examinations
 - Exams require synthesis of various parts of the course
 - Instructor uses more than one type of evaluation device

Interpersonal Considerations

- Teaching is one of the most essential of the communication arts.
- It involves two people—teacher and student—exchanging ideas, building knowledge, and influencing attitudes.
- Finding ways of connecting with and responding to students is critical for good teaching and learning.

Teaching Inclusively

- We may unconsciously respond to the many differences among our students from a biased or stereotyped perspective, or we may simply ignore those who are different.
- How do we as teachers keep from treating some students in our classrooms as though they were invisible?

Teaching Inclusively

- Look for a pattern in the attention you give to certain students. You may be sending signals to other students that they are invisible in your classroom.
- Eye contact is crucial in communicating group acceptance. Do you tend to use eye contact selectively—looking more frequently and for longer periods of time at those in the front of the room than those in the back?

Teaching Inclusively

- Give encouragement to students who don't find it easy to volunteer. Learn to tolerate silence.
- Be aware of different learning styles, but avoid grouping or labeling students by types.
- Be sure your examples and illustrations don't exclude some members of the class. Seek out sources that provide the authentic voices of others that are applicable to the subject you are teaching.

Teaching Inclusively

- Don't take the dominant classroom culture for granted. Make an effort to increase the sensitivity of the majority students to cultural differences.
- Don't single out any student or group of students because of their gender or ethnicity.

Motivating Students

- Motivated students are easier to teach.
- Students who are interested in learning do, in fact, learn more.
- Research indicates the following teaching behaviors correlate with positive student motivation:
 - Explaining the course material clearly
 - Summarizing materials to help students remember

Motivating Students

- Making it clear how each topic fits in the course
- Making the subject interesting
- Demonstrating the significance of the subject matter
- Being able to change approaches when needed
- Being available to help
- Giving reasons for criticism of academic performance
- Using humor

Motivating Students

- Strategies to get and keep students interested in learning
 - Know who your students are.
 - Establish the relevance of the course material
 - Involve students in choice of materials
 - Arrange learning tasks at levels appropriate to students' abilities
 - Give feed back as soon as possible

Motivating Students

- Offer positive comments rather than negative ones
- Use students' natural curiosity. Stress understanding more than facts. Encourage students to critique their own work, to analyze their strengths and weaknesses, and to do their own research.
- Use teacher-student interaction. Let students actively participate. Take a variety of roles from active direction to reflective support.

Understanding Students' Learning Styles

- Students vary dramatically in the way they process and understand information.
- These differences, called “learning styles,” refer to students’ preferences for some kinds of learning activities over others.
- A student’s learning style has to do with the way he or she processes information in order to learn and apply it.

Understanding Students' Learning Styles

- Low satisfaction or poor performance in a course or activity may be misinterpreted as lack of knowledge or ability, when it actually reflects difficulty with a particular style of learning.
- Students who understand their own styles are likely to be better learners, achieve higher grades, have more positive attitudes about their studies, feel greater self-confidence, and exhibit more skill in applying their knowledge in courses.

Understanding Students' Learning Styles

- Teachers who understand their students' learning styles
 - Are better able to adapt their teaching methods appropriately
 - Help students develop skills with a style of learning in which the student is weak
 - Help poorly prepared students develop their learning skills

Understanding Students' Learning Styles

- Most people exhibit some combination of learning style or prefer one style to another depending on the type of learning task they are undertaking.
- We can learn to adopt a learning style even if it may not be our preferred way to learn.
- One classification system defines learning style according to the learner's sensory mode.

Sensory Learning Styles

- Visual learners—prefer to study graphs, look at models and pictures, and take notes to review later
- Auditory learners—prefer to listen closely in class, read aloud when studying or subvocalize during lectures in class, or confer with peers in class to confirm information
- Verbal—likely to absorb reading materials and lectures easily, prefer written materials over visual materials such as graphs and illustrations

Sensory Learning Styles

- Sensing: tactile—favor subjects that allow them to work with their hands or handle the textures and shapes of objects as they apply their knowledge
- Sensing: kinesthetic—learn and remember by moving around physically
- Most sensing learners also prefer inductive rather than deductive learning.
 - Inductive learners prefer to begin with experience or hard data and infer the principles behind them.

Inductive and Deductive Learners

- Deductive learners prefer to start with abstractions or principles and enjoy deducing the consequences.
- Most college classes are taught deductively because it is easier and less time-consuming and because the teachers themselves are often deductive learners
- Deductive learners may often be reflective learners who prefer to think about the topic by themselves or in pairs in order to work out solutions. They do not react well to group work.

Global and Sequential Learners

- Most university teachers are verbal learners and find it easier to relate to and teach students who are verbal learners.
- Global learners see a project as a whole and often have trouble understanding material when first faced with a variety of pieces of information that make an incomplete picture.

Global and Sequential Learners

- Sequential learners can take partial information and organize it into a logical order and can wait until the end of the class to see the complete picture the teacher is trying to present.
- Most courses are organized sequentially and the sequential learner excels in the typical college class.

Accommodating Learning Styles

- Some experts say teachers should accommodate learning style differences, while others shift primary responsibility to students.
- Any approach to accommodation of learning styles should recognize the constraints inherent in teaching at the university level.

Accommodating Learning Styles

- The most realistic approach is to help students develop an awareness of their own learning styles and varying your teaching methods and assignments so that no learning styles are totally disadvantaged.

Teaching Techniques for Learning Styles

- Provide a balance of concrete information (facts, data, and experimental results) and abstracts concepts (principles, theories, and models.)
- Balance materials that emphasize practical problem-solving methods with materials than emphasizes fundamental understanding.

Teaching Techniques for Learning Styles

- Provide explicit illustrations of intuitive patterns (logical inference, pattern recognitions, generalization) and sensing patterns (observation of surroundings, empirical experimentation, attention to details.)
- Use pictures, schematics, graphs, and simple sketches liberally before, during, and after the presentation of verbal material.

Teaching Techniques for Learning Styles

- Give students the option of cooperating on homework and class assignments for active learners.

Teaching Techniques for Learning Styles

- Use computer-assisted instruction when possible for sensory learners
- Do not fill every minute of class time lecturing and writing on the board. Provide intervals—however brief—for students to think about what they have been told.
- Give students opportunities to do something active besides transcribing notes, such as small group brainstorming activities.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Many students haven't yet acquired the skills they need to be effective learners.
- Effective instructors teach not only the subject matter of a course, but also give students the tools they need to learn that subject well.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Explain What Learning Means
 - Many students tend to equate learning with memorizing. One objective of college teaching should be to help students move into higher order thinking in which their learning is tested by the ability to apply what they know.
 - Show students the types of questions they can expect on exams. The ability to use knowledge in new situations requires study activities different from memorizing.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Talk about good study practices early in the course.
 - Let students know in your class presentations and in your syllabus what techniques and strategies will help them learn best from the readings and from class.
- Teach students how to take notes in your class.
 - Early in the course, take some time to model good note taking and to provide guided practice.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Teach students how to process reading assignments for your class.
 - State explicitly what students should try to get from the reading.
 - Suggest they skim the assignment to identify main ideas before they read
 - Encourage them to read with pen in hand, marking the main ideas, writing them in the margins or noting them in a reading journal
 - Urge students to stop every ten minutes to look back at the key ideas and try to summarize what they've read.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Develop assignments that actively engage students in study activities.
 - Ask students to make outlines or draw concepts maps.
 - Ask them to find additional examples in newspapers or media.
 - Assign case studies or problems drawn from different settings

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Help students form study groups
 - Research indicates that students working in groups learn more and remember it longer.
 - Students do not always realize the benefits of group interaction nor do they form study groups on their own.
- Help students understand their learning styles.
 - Paraphrasing is a powerful strategy for making material meaningful. Only meaningful information is transferred to long term memory.

Helping Students Learn How to Learn

- Expose students to a variety of study techniques not just those that served you well.
- Encourage students to reflect on the usefulness of various study strategies for them.
- Ask them to indicate how satisfied they are with their performance, to identify which study techniques they think helped them most, and to describe what they intend to do differently before the next exam.

Assisting Troubled Students

- Behaviors that may indicate a student is in trouble
 - Poor grades or a change from good to poor grades
 - Excessive absences
 - Depressed mood
 - Exaggerated emotional response
 - Dramatic loss of weight
 - Highly disruptive behavior
 - Overtly suicidal thoughts
 - Homicidal threats

Assisting Troubled Students

- To help students get assistance
 - Talk to the student when you both have sufficient time and in a private place
 - Be matter of fact and control your emotions
 - Give the student your undivided attention
 - Express concern in clear, direct, non-judgmental terms.
 - Listen in a respectful, non-threatening way
 - Convey support and understanding
 - Suggest that the student call the Counseling Service for an appointment.