

Helping Students to Become Successful Learners
Written by Eileen Anderson

**“The desire to teach and the ability to teach well are not the same thing.
With a rarest of exceptions, one has to learn how to become a better teacher.”**
--Herbert Kohl, (Educator)

As we choose appropriate methods for teaching, our challenge is to accommodate the individual needs of *all* our students. We know however, that education is not a “one-size-fits-all” enterprise! Howard Gardner’s research into the *seven learning styles* has alerted us to the fact that whatever method we are using in a class, only a percentage of our students are involved effectively in the learning at that given moment in time.

From Howard Gardner’s research, we also know that most of us have one or two dominant learning styles with one of these usually being our *dominant* style. Additionally, most of us have one or two supportive learning styles that we use from time to time. Further, research has shown that whatever is our *dominant learning style* will likely become our favorite *teaching* style.

AND-0200

*From the list on the right, can you identify one or two of your dominant learning styles?
How well do these match your favorite teaching styles or methodologies?*

Often it happens that professors find their subject matter seems to be best suited to one methodology or teaching style. For students who also have a matching learning style, a “good fit” will result and student success seems assured. However, faculties need to ask themselves how well they are assisting learners whose personal learning styles are not matched with their professors. There is an old saying that we all tend to teach with the same method by which we were taught. (Our latest model) For most of us, it requires some “stretching” to add variety to our teaching styles.

Developing Critical Thinking Skills

The *Seven Learning Styles* of Howard Gardner

- linguistic
- logical/mathematical
- spatial
- musical
- bodily/kinesthetic
- interpersonal
- intrapersonal

Index of Learning Styles
R.M. Felder

- active/reflective
- sensing/intuitive
- visual/verbal
- sequential/global

AND-0200

Learners are well served when given choices in their learning activities.

Related Links:



<http://adulted.about.com/>

Bloom’s Taxonomy of

In choosing learning/teaching strategies, we need to be concerned with how effective our plans are in developing critical thinking and the higher order thinking skills. At about the same time that Malcolm Knowles was proposing effective techniques for adult learning, Benjamin Bloom was researching how people learn through the process of questioning. He identified three main *domains* of educational objectives: **the COGNITIVE or knowledge Domain**; **the AFFECTIVE DOMAIN, consisting of feelings and emotions**, and the **PSYCHOMOTOR or motor skills Domain**. He further divided these into categories of questions to help learners develop the higher order thinking skills. Bloom referred to these as the “*taxonomy* of learning objectives.”

It is commonly accepted that most classroom and test questioning remains at the level of effectiveness of Bloom’s COGNITIVE domain. Most instructors formulate this type of question with little or no effort. However, as we work to improve our ability to challenge students into deeper levels of critical thinking, most of us find it helpful to formulate the more challenging questions in our written lesson plans.

CONSIDER

Here are some examples of questions using each level of Bloom’s Cognitive Domain:

- **Knowledge:** What is the formula to calculate energy efficiency?
- **Comprehension:** Describe in words the formula to calculate energy efficiency.
- **Application:** Calculate the energy efficiency of this machine. (Provide figure)
- **Analysis:** Explain a way to improve the energy efficiency of this system. (Provide figure)
- **Synthesis:** What change in energy efficiency will take place if the fulcrum in this machine is changed to ___?
- **Evaluation:** Your employer asks you to purchase the most energy efficient machine. Which of the following machines Provide figure)

The Lecture

Cognitive Objectives*

- **Knowledge** (finding out)
 - list, define, tell, identify, show, collect, quote, who, when, where, locate observe
- **Comprehension**(understanding)
 - summarize, describe, contrast, predict, estimate, discuss, extend, distinguish
- **Application** (making use of knowledge)
 - demonstrate, calculate, illustrate, show, solve, modify change, classify, discover
- **Analysis** (taking apart what is known)
 - explain, connect, compare, select, infer, divide, classify
- **Synthesis** (putting things together in a new way)
 - combine, integrate, modify, plan, create, what if? Compose, generalize, rewrite
- **Evaluation** (judging outcomes)
 - assess, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, conclude, summarize, compare

* **Bloom, Benjamin, Taxonomy of Educational Objectives,**

Related Web Links



<http://www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/>

Topics for Discussion

The lecture is the technique of choice in many college settings. Lectures require a lesser amount of preparation of the professor. In addition, lectures more readily accommodate large class sizes experienced often on over-crowded campuses.

If lectures have become your favorite teaching strategy, your students have an accessible way to obtain the course content – if they are listening. If you can illustrate your lectures with visuals, more of the content will be remembered. Starting the lecture with anecdotes, the students can relate to help focus their listening. Plan to inject examples, stories, or illustrations about every ten minutes or so since this is the length of most adults’ ability to listen attentively. Outlines that can be handed out before class, a leisurely pace for note taking, and a good summary are techniques that will help your students.

College Literacy

Not all community college courses require students to be at the college level in their reading and writing skills. For many students, English is not their first language. Others are returning to college after several years since their last experience in formal course work. They may have lost some skills needed for success in college. Is there anything that faculty can do to help within the scope of our responsibilities? Here are a few ideas to try.

Word processors have turned out to be excellent literacy teaching tools. Students, who regularly make use of *spell check* and *grammar check*, report that they have learned a great deal from them. Spelling skills improve, as do skills in writing. The thesaurus becomes a trusted friend. Most of our campuses have programs to help students acquire these literacy skills. They have the staffing and “know how” to help students ease into the level of competency needed for success at the college level. Look for them on your campus!

On



What do you think are the benefits to students when professors improve their questioning abilities? Please prepare to discuss on WebCT.

Does the subject you teach lend itself to one preferred teaching strategy? Please prepare to discuss on WebCT.

Related Web Links



<http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/>
<http://www.coun.uvic/c>