

Teaching Learning Center

LOOKING AT HOW WE LEARN:

Knowledge is constructed, not received – We begin as children to develop our view of how the world works. All of the sensory input we receive helps us to construct our version of reality.

Ken Bain has found that “at some point we begin using those existing patterns to understand new sensory input. By the time we reach college, we have thousands of mental models, or schemas, that we use to try to understand the lectures we hear, the texts we read, and so forth.”

Mental models change slowly - To accomplish “deep” learning students must (1) face a situation in which their mental model will not work (2) care that it does not work strongly enough to stop and grapple with the issue at hand; and (3) be able to handle the emotional trauma that sometimes accompanies challenges to longstanding belief.

Questions are crucial – Once we are able to get students to think and question the ideas presented to them, we have succeeded in laying a foundation for learning. “The more questions we ask, the more ways we can index a thought in memory,” says Ken Bain.

Caring is crucial – Ken Bain explains that “people learn best when they ask an important question that they care about answering, or adopt a goal that they want to reach. If they don’t care, they will not try to reconcile, explain, modify, or integrate new knowledge with old.”

What motivates? What discourages? – Students seem to learn more when they do not receive external rewards. If they are faced with receiving a reward for completing a certain task their interest in the subject decreases if the reward is taken away. A student who receives positive feedback and encouragement rather than an extrinsic reward is more likely to keep an interest in a given subject over time.

Taking a developmental view of learning – Learning not only impacts what you know, but how you know something.

- ◆ Separate Knowers – These types of ‘knowers’ prefer to remain objective, or skeptical about a subject and are always willing to take part in a debate about it.
- ◆ Connected Knowers – These types of ‘knowers’ examine the other person’s point of view rather than trying to shoot them down. They are not “dispassionate, unbiased observers. They deliberately bias themselves in favor of the thing they are examining.”

Implications for teaching – People are most comfortable learning when they are solving problems that appeal to or interest them. “They develop an intrinsic interest that guides their quest for knowledge, and an intrinsic interest...that can diminish in the face of extrinsic rewards and punishments that appear to manipulate their focus. People are most likely to enjoy their education if they believe they are in charge of the decision to learn,” says Ken Bain.

Taken from “What the Best College Teachers do”, Ken Bain



TIPS FOR FOSTERING LEARNING:

- ◆ Raise questions that challenge a students’ preconceived ideas.
- ◆ Help them deal with the emotional upheaval that follows having long term beliefs challenged.
- ◆ Encourage them to question everything. The more questions they ask, the more involved they are and the more apt they are to learn.
- ◆ Make the subject matter appealing and relevant, help them want to learn the material. The more they care, the more they learn.
- ◆ People learn more if they believe they are in control of their choice to learn.



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-What the Best College Teachers Do

CEDAR VALLEY COLLEGE

Room A206A
3030 North Dallas Avenue
Lancaster, Texas 75134

Phone: 972-860-8239
Tim Xeriland: TLC Director
txeriland@dccc.edu

Instructional
Assistant: Christa Crawford

Faculty Advisor: Ginnette Serrano

FACTS ABOUT JULY:

- ◆ Independence Day was not declared a legal holiday until 1941.
- ◆ Fireworks were made in China as early as the 11th Century.
- ◆ The U. S. Congress didn't adopt Uncle Sam as a national symbol until 1961.
- ◆ The first two versions of the Liberty Bell were defective and had to be melted down and recast.
- ◆ The American national anthem, the "Star Spangled Banner," is set to the tune of an English drinking song ("To Anacreon in Heaven").

USING THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

The TLC has a number of books available for check-out that can jump-start your classroom and take the frustration out of teaching the same thing, the same way again next semester. It's always a good idea to do a little research and inject fresh ideas into your teaching style. When you as the teacher are bored with the subject and or method of delivery, the students are the first ones to suffer. They will be bored and lack the motivation necessary to succeed in the course. Stop by today and energize your classroom!

Here is a sample of a few titles available for check-out:

- ◆ Effective Teaching: A Guide for Community College Instructors
- ◆ Engaging Ideas
- ◆ Classroom Assessment Techniques
- ◆ Effective Grading
- ◆ Multimedia: Making it Work
- ◆ What the Best College Teachers Do
- ◆ Critical Thinking
- ◆ The Well-Managed Classroom
- ◆ Effective Study Skills

HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY JULY 4TH!