## Creating Meaningful Students' Learning Experiences

### Reflecting on Students’ Learning

One of the best gifts teachers can give students at university are the experiences that open their eyes to themselves as learners. Most students do not reflect about how they learn. Below are some prompts that can help motivate students to consider their beliefs about learning. The prompts below ask about learning in an integrated sense, and challenge you as an instructor to analyze the effectiveness of your teaching approach. Share one or all of the following prompts with your students as a warm up in the form of a class discussion, online forum or a Socrative quiz:

- “What kind of student are you?” or “What kind of student would you like to be?” List three specific things you are doing to become the student you want to be?

- Think about your first semester at the BUE. Identify three important lessons you learned. Discuss how you learned them and how those lessons will contribute to your success in other modules or in your chosen degree area.

- Which module has been the hardest for you? What study strategies did you use that did not work? What other study strategies would you try?

- How quickly do you give up on something? How long do you work on it before you decide you can not do it? What strategies do you use when you are stuck?

- Does what you believe about yourself as a learner have any effect on how you perform academically?

- Have you ever learned something you did not think you could learn? How did you feel once you had learned it?

### Research Says . . .

Research recommends that faculty “educate” students about the benefits of office hours. If there is an ILO which several students are struggling with, schedule office hour time announcing that you will work on that topic with individuals, pairs, or small groups. Research also recommends soliciting feedback from students as to the “convenient” scheduling of office hours. Identify two possible time slots that work with your schedule and check which is more convenient for the students. Although we hold office hours as a way of supporting students, they benefit teachers too. Office hours help strengthen our connections with students. We learn of student concerns about assignments, course content, and their progress in the module.

References:


Summarised and adapted from: Three Strategies for Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences

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Initiating Students’ Self Regulated Learning

Few of our students demonstrate self-regulated learning. They see learning as something that is “happening” to them, and our job is to make it happen and make it easy.

Self-regulated learning has a strong positive impact on student achievement that is just as important as teacher clarity, addressing differentiation, receiving feedback, pacing and computer-assisted instruction (Hattie, 2009).

Self-regulated learning involves getting students to ask themselves questions like:

⇒ How motivated am I to do the task, and how can I increase my motivation if I need to?
⇒ If my confidence in my ability to learn sags, how can I boost it without becoming overconfident?
⇒ Am I resisting material that is challenging my preconceptions?
⇒ How can I create a distraction-free physical environment for completing my learning tasks?
⇒ What is the best way to work with this task?
⇒ What am I still having trouble understanding?
⇒ What can I recall and what should I review?
⇒ How does this material relate to other things I have learned?

References:


Summarised and adapted from: The Secret of Self-regulated Learning By: Linda B. Nilson, PhD June 16, 2014

Effective Classroom Discussion Strategies

Students struggle with academic discourse. They do not always know exactly how they are supposed to talk about academic content when discussing it with teachers and classmates. Besides the uncertainty of how to discuss, students are also confused about what they should take from a discussion. Providing structure to the discussions provides clarity and makes the value of discussions more obvious to students. Below are two discussion strategies:

1– Strategy # 1 Starter and Wrapper
A discussion “starter” and “wrapper” can provide a concrete beginning and end to classroom discussions. Assign students the “starter” and “wrapper” roles for an assignment which involves a reading that will be discussed for the first 10 minutes of class. The “starter” launches the exchange with a question, a quotation or a comment from the text passage. The “wrapper” identifies themes, key ideas, or lists the questions that need exploration.

2– Strategy # 2 Save the Last Word for Me
Ask half the students to find a quotation from the reading, select one which students do not think they really understand or would like to understand more fully. Ask them to write the quotation on the board or on the e-learning forum or on Socrative.com and then the other half of the students can offer their ideas, interpretations, and understandings of the quote. Every quote must have at least two responses from two different students. After a designated amount of time, the student who posted the quote explains what he or she learned from the “discussion” of their quote. Then the students switch roles. Discussions can also be structured with prompts that tie them together.

Example: "Here's a question we discussed last time and here's how some of you answered it. Given this new reading or the content talked about yesterday, would you change your answer? How? And Why?"

A note to remember:

There is a fine line between a lecture and a discussion which is easily crossed, finding a good balance between leading and guiding without controlling discussions requires ongoing development.

References:

Summarised and adapted from: Effective Ways to Structure Discussions by Maryellen Weimer, PhD January, 14, 2015 © Copyright 2015

Content in this newsletter has been summarized and adapted to fit the current learning context for the purpose of using the ideas as useful classroom teaching strategies and best practice. All sources have been acknowledged.