Landmark Teaching Principle™ #6

Include Students in the Learning Process

INCLUDE STUDENTS TO EMPOWER THEM

Many students assume there's a "normal" way to learn and study. They don't know that people use many different approaches to gain understanding and demonstrate what they have learned. Helping students understand their learning process is one of the most important steps we can take as teachers. So often, we teach our students the way we ourselves learn best. In doing so, we may be missing many opportunities to empower their learning.

Essential to being a good student – *and* to good teaching – is awareness of our individual preferences for thinking and learning. These preferences are far more complex than the basic understanding of learning styles that includes only visual, auditory, and kinesthetic.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- Howard Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons* (2006)

- Robert Sternberg's *Thinking Styles* (1997)

- An internet search on "teaching styles" and "learning styles" can also generate many helpful resources.

Formative assessment for learning is a phrase commonly associated with including students in the learning process. Pared down to its basics, formative assessment asks us to assess students *while* they are learning, rather than waiting until afterward, as summative assessment does. Why? Ongoing assessment such as this keeps students and teachers focused on the learning objectives and gives them clear evidence of where their strengths and needs lie before it's too late to do anything differently. Formative assessment for learning necessitates more teacher-student interaction than is commonly found in a traditional classroom. It also happens to be a powerful approach to ensuring success for students with learning disabilities.

GOAL:

Work *with* students to define clear learning objectives for lessons/units and plans for how students will demonstrate their learning. (See the next page for what to do, why, and how.)

What to Do	Why to Do It	How-To Suggestions
Engage & Observe Plan in-class activities that engage students with the content and force them to interact with language.	Allows you to document your observations of individual students' strengths and needs relative to the learning objectives.	Try: debates; simulations; group projects; collaborative note-taking; student-led discussions; and games.
Feedback Give & Take Provide students with daily specific feedback about what they are doing well and what they need to do next so they can achieve the learning objectives.	Offers you the opportunity to answer specific questions and receive feedback from students about what they need in order to be more successful.	Accomplish this as you observe and interact with each student while they engage in class activities.
Confer Frequently Meet briefly with each student throughout the unit to discuss their progress toward demonstrating mastery of learning objectives, and suggest needed steps.	Provides an opportunity to document student progress in writing, and makes sure each student has a clear focus for his or her efforts.	If you're prepared and you keep your eye on the clock, 2 minutes per student should suffice. Confer 1x per week if possible, especially for longer units.
Design Unit Assessments Ensure that summative assessments actually measure the knowledge and skills you've targeted in the learning objectives.	Encourages you to design your assessments prior to teaching the unit so that you can focus on the essentials in your teaching, and test on what you've taught.	Organize assessments according to key knowledge areas and key skill areas you've covered in class. Rubrics can work well for this.
Teach Self-Evaluation Teach students how to analyze their performance on summative assessments and set goals for future learning activities.	Empowers students to assess their own performance with a teacher-like eye. Self-evaluation, and goal-setting are critical executive skills that can be taught.	Try: reflections; portfolio review sheets; test analysis sheets; and rubrics.