January 2016

Tomorrow’s Teaching Newsletter

Tomorrow's Teaching newsletter is a publication produced by the MUSC Online Advisory Council and the Apple Tree Society providing news, advice, and resources for 21st century teaching with technology and innovative strategies.

Included in this newsletter:

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Quick Tips:

Suggestions for Implementing Active Learning

Practice

Provide opportunities for practice (e.g., clickers, students creating their own explanations rather than reading expert explanations)

Logic Development

- Remind students to provide rationale for their answers
- Provide higher order thinking questions in learning environments and on exams because the test includes what students study. Research has found that students learn mainly what they are going to be tested on.
- Ask students to relate a current topic to a past topic
- Design an activity that revisits a past topic.

Accountability (motivating students to participate)

- Give students time at beginning of a discussion to think through questions on their own (e.g., either in writing or using clickers) before sharing with others to increase the likelihood they will join a small or large group discussion
- Ask students to share and explain their answers with other students
- As instructor, explain why answers are correct or incorrect
- Award points for participating either for correct answers and/or for participation – instructor determines most important to them and use associated grading scheme
- Create situations where students have to explain their answers in small groups or to entire class (the smaller the group, the more likely students to participate)
Call on students by name or use a randomized class list; research has shown that when done frequently, students’ comfort level for speaking in class increases and they are more willing to volunteer in class.

**Reducing Student Apprehension**
- Use confirming behavior such as praising students for contributing
- Don’t focus on small groups of students and ignore others
- Avoid belittling a student’s contribution
- Frame students’ mistakes as natural and useful and not something to be afraid of
- Praise on effort rather than ability (“being smart”) – praise based on ability (“being smart”) encourages students to adopt a performance goal rather than a mastery goal (i.e., a desire to get better at a task). Encourage students to think about a personal situation in which hard work helped them improve to see the benefit of working towards a mastery goal.


*For purposes of this “Quick Tip”, active learning is defined as any time students are actively working on problems or questions in an instructional setting. This is not an all-encompassing definition, but appropriate for this focus*

**Teach with Humor and Love**

It is not enough to simply know theory. You must touch students' hearts in order to help impact their minds. [http://www.proteacher.org/a/15653_My_Top_5_Teaching_Strategies.html](http://www.proteacher.org/a/15653_My_Top_5_Teaching_Strategies.html)

**Lifelong Learning**

Why not make a conscious decision to learn something new every day? No matter how small the daily learning, it is significant when aggregated over a lifetime. Resolving early in life to have a continuous learning mindset is not only more interesting than the passive alternative, it is also remarkably powerful. Choosing lifelong learning is one of the few good choices that can make a big difference in our lives, giving us an enormous advantage when practiced over a long period of time.

Learning how to read and finding time to read are two of the easiest and best changes you can make if you want to pursue lifelong learning.

Many read for entertainment. Some read for information. Too few read for understanding. Mortimer J. Adler’s book (How to Read a Book) is concerned with reading to understand. Being widely read is not the same as being well read. The more effort and skill we put into reading, the greater our understanding.

**The Feynman Technique: An Effective Technique for Each of Us and Our Students**
As for testing whether we really understand something after we’ve read it, there is a powerful and elegant technique called the Feynman Technique.

Step 1. Choose the topic or concept that you are trying to understand. Take a blank piece of paper and write the name of the topic at the top.

Step 2. Assume you’re teaching the topic to someone else. Write out a clear explanation of the topic, as if you were trying to teach it. A great way to learn is to teach. You identify gaps in your knowledge very quickly when trying to explain something to someone else in simple terms.

Step 3. If you get bogged down, go back to the source materials. Keep going back until you can explain the concept in its most basic form.

Step 4. Go back and simplify your language. The goal is to use your own words, not the words of the source material. Overly elaborate language is often a sure sign that you don’t fully understand the concept. Use simple language and build on that with a clear analogy. An example that springs to mind is Warren Buffet’s explanation of compound interest (i.e., interest earned on interest), when he likened it to a snowball that gathers snow as it rolls down a hill.

Top Advice from an MUSC Faculty Member

Lindsey Hamil, PhD is an Assistant Professor and Education Specialist for the James B. Edwards College of Dental Medicine. She earned a B.A. in English and a M.S. in Communications from the University of Tennessee, and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration with an emphasis in Higher Education from the University of South Carolina. Dr. Hamil serves the faculty and students of MUSC through her work with teaching, learning, outcomes assessment, and faculty development.

Lindsay’s Advice: I encourage all new faculty members to relish the opportunity to teach. We have the rare privilege to communicate the subjects we’ve studied and mastered to the future leaders of our fields. So for those new to the classroom, I challenge them to consider what they liked and what they hated during their own academic experiences. Often, I think we teach based on how and what we were taught. However, new teachers have an opportunity to consider their material and explore creative and engaging ways of communicating it to their students. New and seasoned educators should explore faculty development opportunities, like Apple Tree. They should also venture into the classroom to see how their course(s) fit into the curriculum, and how their peers are teaching too. But most importantly, I stress that students are VERY aware of whether or not a teacher wants to teach. Students appreciate enthusiasm and they crave learning from people who care not only about their subject, but about them as well. Reflect on the teachers who mentored and made a positive difference in your life, and consider how you, in turn, will make that difference in the lives of your own students.

Trends – Adaptive Learning

Adaptive learning refers to the use of technology and accumulated data to provide personalize instruction based on a students’ level of demonstrated mastery. An adaptive learning system can
be used to provide instructors with actionable data related to student activity and performance, allowing the instructor to make adjustment to teaching approaches. Alternatively, adaptive learning systems can be assessment-driven, with content served to students based on competency with previously learned material. Commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the “Adaptive Learning Market Acceleration Program” provided $1 million to fund programs in higher education to accelerate implementation.

An example of adaptive learning is the Open Learning Initiative (OLI) at Carnegie Mellon. According to the website, the goal of the OLI is to improve learning with targeted feedback and self-assessment tools so students know where they excel and where they need more work. Characteristics of learning activities include opportunities for testing that provides immediate feedback with clarifying explanations, additional exercises based on personalized study plans, and robust “search” features within the course system to assist in identifying key content.

More resources


Carnegie Mellon University Open Learning Initiative https://oli.cmu.edu/

Conferences (through March 2016)

- Winthrop University 3rd Annual Conference on Teaching and Learning, February 6, http://www.winthrop.edu/tlc/default.aspx?id=36898
• Illinois Computing Educators Conference, February 23 – 26, [http://www.iceberg.org/ice_conference](http://www.iceberg.org/ice_conference)
• Southern Regional Faculty and Instructional Development Consortium Sharing Conference, February 24 – 26, [https://sites.google.com/site/srfidconline/conference](https://sites.google.com/site/srfidconline/conference)
• EDUCAUSE Connect, March 2-4, [http://www.educause.edu/events/educause-connect-denver](http://www.educause.edu/events/educause-connect-denver)
• Society for Information Technology and Teacher Education Annual Conference, March 2 - 6, [http://site.aace.org/conf/](http://site.aace.org/conf/)
• Georgia Southern University Center for Teaching and Learning Conference, March 31 – April 1, [http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ce/conferences/sotlcommons/](http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/ce/conferences/sotlcommons/)

**Selected Workshops and Webinars (through February)**

• Universal Design for Learning – Employing Multiple Means of Representation, [http://tltgroup.roundtablelive.org/event-2118243](http://tltgroup.roundtablelive.org/event-2118243)
• ELI Webinar: Improve Your Online Teaching, January 25, [http://www.educause.edu/eli/events/eli-webinar-improve-your-online-teaching](http://www.educause.edu/eli/events/eli-webinar-improve-your-online-teaching)
• Apps and Accessibility in Online Learning, January 29, [http://tltgroup.roundtablelive.org/event-2107124](http://tltgroup.roundtablelive.org/event-2107124)
• From Courses to Colleges to Campus: How to Evaluate Online Teaching for Your Whole Campus, February 17, [http://www.educause.edu/eli/events/eli-course-courses-colleges-campus](http://www.educause.edu/eli/events/eli-course-courses-colleges-campus)
**Resource of the Month**

**Contribute to Tomorrow’s Teaching**
Tell us what to include in this newsletter. Complete this brief poll: [https://redcap.musc.edu/surveys/?s=7WA8ATWAK3](https://redcap.musc.edu/surveys/?s=7WA8ATWAK3). Or, contact mauldinm@musc.edu or annandu@musc.edu to submit ideas, resources or news directly.