

December 3, 2004

Note Taking Revisited

Recently, I discussed the topic of note taking and how such practice can lead to better learning for students in particular situations. I received several emails after the last tip on note taking from faculty asking for some different methods for showing students how to take notes properly and strategies/techniques for note taking that might be most effective. On the one hand, each class has its own goals (learning outcomes) and its own strategies for achieving and measuring those outcomes. Consequently, methods for note taking are adjusted for each class. On the other hand, there are some methods and strategies that have proven effective within and across disciplines in higher education.

One example that fits very well with notions of Active Learning is a method of note taking used at Dartmouth College. The Dartmouth method is basically a method based on dialogic principals espoused by many theorists, including Anne Berthoff (Rhetoric/Composition) in the 1980s. I have seen this dialogic method applied in curriculums of the life sciences, English, and business from many different universities, but Dartmouth has helped perpetuate this method by developing a mini tutorial for faculty and students that explains the how to's and why's of the "split page" or dialogic method. In essence, students draw a line down the middle of an 8 ½ x 11 inch page and write their notes on the left side of the page, and on the other side...check out the following video for a clear description.

Here is a link at that will allow you to access this clear and short video:
<<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/videos.html>> You'll need Quciktime player to view this video. Enjoy it!

December 10, 2004

Hello everyone. The semester, except for exams, is now over and it's just about time to think about taking a break. Unfortunately for most of you as teachers, your break may not totally be work free as you begin to prepare for the upcoming semester in January. While you are re-working your syllabus for next semester, consider adding a feature to your class that could really enhance student learning in a number of ways. That is, the notion of inviting a guest teacher into your class.

We know that to sustain a viable learning environment we must find ways in our classes to encourage the exchange of shared experiences. Those experiences include giving your students opportunities to interact with guest speakers who might better bridge the world of theory with that of application. As an added bonus, the guest teacher model fits very neatly into BGSU's current engagement initiative that encourages an interaction with local communities and their human resources.

In keeping with the Guest Teacher philosophy, I have invited Leora Baron (UNLV) to share with us her tips on how to prepare for the guest teacher. Well, actually I have referenced her work 😊 Her suggestions follow:

**The Guest Teacher (Leora Baron, ULNV Office of Teaching Excellence)*

Guest teachers (sometimes referred to as “guest lecturers”...) are wonderful resources for enriching a course by:

- Bringing diverse points of view to the students.
- Bringing real world applications to complement theory.
- Adding a different dimension to the dynamics of the course.

Once a guest teacher has been identified, a process needs to be put into place that will ensure the greatest benefit to the students and the course’s permanent teacher.

Preparation

- Provide the guest teacher with information about the course’s progress, about the students and how the specific topic to be taught fits into the big picture.
- Explore potential for hands-on and interactive opportunities in lieu of a straight lecture.
- Discuss the possibility of using supportive handouts and be willing to help prepare them.
- Ask for introductory information.
- Prepare the students for the guest teacher’s session—outline the topic (s), have students prepare questions.

During the Session

- Plan to be present for the entire session---a guest teacher is NOT a substitute teacher.
- Introduce the guest teacher.
- Provide assistance to the guest teacher as needed. Help distribute the handouts, circulate while students are working, give the guest positive feedback, help the guest make connections to what the student’s might already have learned in the class, etc.

Following the Session

- Debrief students about the guest’s lesson—point out (or have students point out) connections to the material previously covered. Depending on the purpose of the visit, relationships between theory and application, for instance, can be highlighted.
- Follow up on any special assignments resulting from the guest teacher’s session.

- Send the guest teacher a thank you note.
- Continue to refer to the information and activities covered during the visit...if it was worthwhile having the guest teacher, it should have a long-term impact.