

## **CTLT's Spring Semester 2006 Teaching Tip for March 29**

At the very core of the Center for Teaching, Learning, and Technology is the belief that teachers are important in motivating and facilitating learning. How we structure our classroom activities and when and how we make learning materials available to students results in students learning a great many things they might not otherwise learn.

It is not good enough to “teach” students learning skills and then “launch” them into their learning activities; most students need ongoing encouragement in order to help them learn what they need to know in today’s world.

There was much discussion about teaching and learning activities and also about today’s postmodern students at the 2006 Ohio Digital Commons for Education Conference. One of the keynote speakers, Dr. Mark Taylor, stressed that “everyone in higher education needs to recognize and respond to influences and student characteristics beyond their preparation and outside the experience of many educators. “Postmodern pedagogy” is the application of learning centered and active learning philosophies and techniques with specific recognition of and respect for these characteristics of Generation NeXt.”

His address was both thought-provoking and entertaining as he profiled generational groups and then settled on today’s students. Since the Center is always hoping to provide teachers with information and activities that may help create positive learning environments, we hope the following selections from Dr. Taylor’s information will spark your interest to look at more of his materials. Whether you agree or disagree with him, thinking about today’s students and how they learn is always a productive teaching activity.

Here are three points that Dr. Taylor includes in his recommendations for “postmodern pedagogy.”

**Establish clear behavioral expectations, and communicate these expectations early and often.**

- Gen NeXters have adapted to a wide variety of circumstances and environments that have not provided clear expectations for desired outcomes or behavioral expectations.
- Exploit the adaptability of Generation NeXt by giving them clear expectations to adapt to.

**Teach "up" educational taxonomies**

- Knowledge level factoids are available in print, on-line and from any cell phone and should not be the focus of instruction.
- Incorporating facts into application, application to theory, applying theory to real life, and demonstrating the worth of information can contribute to student learning at process, not just content, levels and can improve critical, creative, and practical thinking.

**Increase flexibility in course schedules, semesters, and flexibility in entry and exit.**

- If all the course outcomes are truly important then allowing students to exit before they have true mastery is counterintuitive, as is keeping students after they have demonstrated mastery.
- Many students prefer alternatives to the 16 week term.

To download his handout, listen to an interview with Dr. Taylor or view his presentation, visit

<http://www.olin.org/conferences/ODCE2006/ODCE2006keynotes.php>