

communicating for LEARNERS

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featured in this issue

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What if . . .

We aspire to design a learning environment that challenges students to become self-directed learners.

What if we employ learner-centered activities and innovative methods to assess learning, while we incorporate critical thinking about values, engaged pedagogies, residential learning communities, community-based learning in professional and non-profit settings, curricular engagement, and distinctive partnerships between academic affairs and student affairs.

What if our students are asked to demonstrate their achievements through both intellectual work and hands-on application of knowledge through project-based learning activities.

The reality is there are

no ifs During the past decade the University has been closing the gap between aspiration and practice. We are making a clear statement about our learning environment through our newly revised **University Learning Outcomes**. The ULOs provide a framework to guide students' cumulative progress throughout their college experiences. They are our common responsibility for shared educational values, among differences in the content of many majors, disciplines, and activities offered at Bowling Green State University. The University Learning Outcomes are also expectations of our general education program and of the many facets of student life, ranging from residence halls to student clubs and organizations.

Guided by the University Learning Outcomes, a BGSU education provides the foundation for a lifetime of continued learning, self-awareness, career success, contribution to community, and purposeful living.

Our students develop **Intellectual and Practical Skills**, including

- *Critical and Constructive Thinking*—Students develop inquiry skills, examine values, and solve problems creatively.
- *Communication*—Students use written communication to communicate clearly and effectively to an identified audience, and they have effective presentation skills to speak, show, demonstrate, exhibit, or perform for an individual or a group.

- *Engaging Others in Action*—Students demonstrate effective participation by active engagement in activities and learn leadership by guiding or influencing groups to achieve their goals.

BGSU students have both **General and Specialized Knowledge**.

To be an effective and prepared citizen, capable of understanding and responding to the diverse challenges present in the modern world, students must be conversant with the core concepts of disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and arts, along with knowledge related to human learning, interaction, and enterprise. Just as breadth of knowledge is a cornerstone of a liberal education, so too is expertise in a particular disciplinary area or major. Both breadth and depth are important concepts, not just in terms of acquired disciplinary knowledge, but also for development of the skills and methods necessary to explore issues that arise in day-to-day life.

Our students accept their **Personal and Social Responsibility**.

BGSU recognizes and intentionally fosters a learning environment in which students strive for excellence, cultivate personal and academic integrity, contribute to a larger community, take seriously the perspectives of others, and develop competence in ethical and moral reasoning.

“Knowing” is not enough; our students **Integrate, Apply, and Reflect**.

Our students demonstrate synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies as evidenced in project-based work systematically collected throughout the duration of the student's enrollment. Such projects draw on all of the skills and fields of knowledge described above. What has been learned from accumulated experiences is recorded in written reflections.

Bowling Green State University is dedicated to providing quality programs in a learning environment that promotes academic and personal excellence in our students. The University Learning Outcomes are our commitment to students' achievement and success. Demonstrate your commitment by putting the ULOs to work in your classroom; communicate them to your students through your learner-centered course design and assessment. View the ULOs at <http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/ir/page17385.html>

Brain Rules for Learning

How are you with rules?

Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School by John Medina, a developmental molecular biologist and director of the Brain Center for Applied Learning Research at Seattle Pacific University, offers research and practical solutions that can be applied to your teaching and research praxis, no matter what your discipline.

Medina's Brain Rules

- # 1 Exercise boosts brain power
- # 2 The human brain evolved, too
- # 3 Every brain is wired differently
- # 4 We don't pay attention to boring things
- # 5 Repeat to remember
- # 6 Remember to repeat
- # 7 Sleep well, think well
- # 8 Stressed brains don't learn the same way
- # 9 Stimulate more of the senses
- #10 Vision trumps all other senses
- #11 Male and female brains are different
- #12 We are powerful and natural explorers

Compiling and synthesizing findings from recent brain-related studies as well as other well-known research from the past few decades, Medina's rules shed new light on how students learn and how we teach. **Although there are 12 rules, this article focuses on six—the half that arguably can affect classroom practices.**

#4 We don't pay attention to boring things

It's not rocket science why texting, video games, and the latest gadgets are so popular. For many traditional college-age students, these things are new, novel, and exciting. But the precursor to learning is that we first must pay attention to what we are trying to learn. Paying attention can be difficult for students with so many distractions and often little practice in focusing in the traditional sense of sitting still for 50 to 100 minutes at a time.

Getting students active with different activities every ten to fifteen minutes is key to their paying attention. The brain is wired to react to stimuli, so it naturally seeks out exciting, different, or new things to explore or do. Therefore, planning intentional shifts in focus during a class session are essential to create an effective learning environment.

#5 & 6 Repeat to remember and remember to repeat

These two rules really go hand-in-hand for content-heavy learning. Medina suggests that repetition of concepts must occur within 30 seconds and then again within 60-90 minutes or the information will be gone due to a normal "brain dump" or pruning that occurs with superfluous material our brain deems unnecessary. In order to keep things in your brain that you will later need, it's essential to repeat them; verbally is best, and do so often.

#8 Stressed brains don't learn the same way

Today, there are probably very few people who don't feel stressed from time to time. But it's the constant, long-term stress dragging down the physical, mental, and emotional body that can greatly affect learning. Medina reminds us that the greatest predictor of academic success is a happy home life, "If you want your kid to go to Harvard, love your spouse." But this doesn't mean all stress is bad. Short-term, purposeful confusion or stressors actually help challenge us and drive us to learn more or to do better. An important factor is to know about and pay attention to the effects of stress on learners.

#9 Stimulate more of the senses

The brain is "wired for integration." Because our senses are designed to work together to make meaning of the complexities around us, the brain naturally looks for patterns and seeks connections between new and prior knowledge or learning. In the classroom the brain's naturally curious nature thrives on a variety of stimuli to help reinforce a concept or to keep it interested and engaged (see Rule #4). Therefore, providing a variety of instructional methods and resources such as auditory, visual, kinesthetic, and even emotionally charged references can help learners create multiple pathways or connections in their brains, thus reinforcing learning. (See Dale's Cone of Experience - <http://teacherworld.com/dalescone.gif>)

(continued)



HOT 5 (click the link to visit)

1

Scribd
scribd.com

Publish, discover, and discuss original writings and documents; this site has a readership of over 50 million people

2

Mint
mint.com

Keep track of your finances with free online money management and budgeting software tools

3

Timetoast
timetoast.com

Create interactive timelines that can be shared or can help you with a particular course or project

4

Academic Earth
academicearth.org

Listen and view lectures or presentations by scholars covering most major academic disciplines

5

Snappages
snappages.com

Create and manage a quality website using drag-and-drop features

Brain Rules . . . (cont.)

#10 Vision trumps all other senses

Perhaps this should be rule #1, at least for teaching and learning. Most teachers and students realize that an image or video related to a new concept significantly improves future recognition or recall. Medina states that learners remember about double the amount of information and those memories last longer when images are used in conjunction with text or auditory information. Combined with Rule #9, using images or video with other senses or experiences actually increases retention and recall.

Brain Rules Overview

- The “brain-based learning” discipline is fairly new (1990s) and growing quickly with advancing technologies.
- Because the discipline so new, there is much more to learn about how the brain learns and what we can do about it; be careful with making assumptions.
- The brain is malleable at any age; use it or lose it.
- Repetition is important. In-class, formative feedback works well with the needed 10 minute breaks.
- Caring for your students really matters. Reducing stress increases learning and explains why learners want to “have fun” in class? Exercise helps reduce stress too (See Rule #1).
- Make learning active. Incorporate writing (more than “just notes”), discussing (with a partner, group, or Socratic), presenting/sharing, and creating/designing/problem-solving in your course activities.

Medina is not the only researcher who has written a book recently on brain-based strategies for improving learning. In addition to the popular *How People Learn* (1999) - http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=6160, other well known author/scholars on the brain and learning include Diane Halpern, Eric Jensen, Judy Willis, and James Zull. (Click on these names for links to their websites or recent publications.)

For more on this topic, the CTL presents “Brain Rules: Tailoring Learning for Student Success,” a discussion session based on Medina’s work and several other scholars, on Friday, April 10 from 2:30-4:00 and during the summer semester as well. To register, email us at ctl@bgsu.edu or call 372-6898.

Did You Know?

Coming Soon: 2009-2010 CTL Learning Communities

Do you have ideas for meaningful professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and/or graduate students? Are you interested in facilitating a learning community?

Throughout April and May, the CTL will be accepting proposals for new or revisioned learning communities for the 2009-2010 academic year. Contact Bonnie Fink (Director) or Carrie Rathsack (Assistant Director) for more information.

In early July, membership applications for the 2009-2010 learning communities (LCs) will be available and are due back to the CTL by August 1. Look for our summer edition of *Communicating for Learners* in June with more information about next year’s LC opportunities.

visionary STATUS

John Tagg

teacher, speaker, author



For years, John Tagg has been one of the leaders promoting overarching change in higher education. In 1995, Tagg and Robert Barr authored the article, “From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education,” which describes the then-current shift for instructors from providing information to producing learning.

The Learning Paradigm College, written by Tagg in 2003, is a study about how higher education institutions are making the transformation to what he calls the “Learning Paradigm.” Tagg says the days of college instructors being depositories and distributors of information are fading. Because the benefits of student learning are so rich and plentiful, instructors and institutions, according to Tagg, are most influential in helping students become lifelong learners and changing the culture of classrooms in colleges. Tagg also details how instructors can induce this shift in education and offers uplifting examples of institutions that have made the transformation to a Learning Paradigm College.

Tagg is an associate professor of English at Palomar College. His research has been presented at numerous professional conferences and continues to be discussed by the higher education community.

Article - From Teaching to Learning
<http://ilte.ius.edu/pdf/barrtagg.pdf>

Book - *The Learning Paradigm College*
<http://www.amazon.com/Learning-Paradigm-College-JB-Anker/dp/1882982584>

From Instruction to Learning (video)
<http://fpdc.kent.edu/johntagg.html>

Discussions and Workshops

Instructional Design

Discussions

**Designing Courses for Significant Learning
(from L. Dee Fink)**

Wednesday, April 22, 10:00am-11:30am

Pragmatic Practices for Teaching Assistants

Wednesday, April 22, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Workshops

**Extending the Classroom Experience with
Podcasting**

Thursday, April 9, 8:30am-9:30am

**Introduction to Teaching and Learning in
SecondLife (BGSU Island and Beyond)**

Thursday, April 9, 1:00pm-2:00pm

Learning 2.0 with Web 2.0 Tools

Wednesday, April 8, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Monday, April 20, 2:00pm-3:00pm

**Introduction to Clickers for Classroom
Assessment**

Tuesday, April 21, 9:30am-10:30am

Advanced Uses of Clickers in Higher Education

Tuesday, April 28, 3:30pm-4:30pm

Assessment

Discussions

**Using Formative Feedback to Guide Instruction
(with "Clickers")**

Wednesday, April 15, 3:00pm-4:00pm

Using ePortfolios to Assess Student Learning

Thursday, April 23, 1:00pm-2:00pm

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

Discussions

BGSU Teachers on Teaching Series

Motivation 101

Thursday, April 16, 3:00pm-4:00pm

Workshops

**The Work-in-Progress Workshop: Why
Sharing Your Research Early Can Help You
Publish**

Tuesday, April 14, 9:30am-11:00am

**Brain Rules: Tailoring Learning for Student
Success**

Friday, April 10, 2:30pm-4:00pm

Bowling Green Experience

Discussions

**Exploring Latino/a Culture through Service-
Learning**

Friday, April 10, 11:30am-12:30pm

For more information on our workshops or to register, contact the Center at: ctl@bgsu.edu, 419.372.6898, or www.bgsu.edu/ctl/page11755.html