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ABSTRACT

For those educators who work with college students either as teachers, advisors, or in learning centers, the construct of learning style can be a powerful tool in their interactions with students. Educators can sometimes tune in to students' styles by listening to the verbs the students use. An informal assessment of students' learning styles is to have them write one paragraph on how they learn best. Once the students have an understanding of their particular styles it is easier to help them understand how to utilize their learning strengths and strengthen their less dominant modalities. Once students understand style it becomes much easier to help them adjust and cope with style differences. (Contains a self-assessment instrument, a description of time management strategies for different learning styles, and four questions for teachers to ask themselves the next time they give their class an assignment.) Contains five references. (RS)

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Learning Styles: Strategies for Successful Teaching

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Learning Styles: Strategies for Successful Teaching

How our students learn greatly impacts how they react to our teaching style. According to learning style theorists(Messick, 1976,Witkin,1954) our cognitive or learning style is the way we see and make sense of the world, the way we give attention to different aspects of the environment, the way we problem solve, and the way we process information. For those of us who work with college students either as teachers, advisors or in learning centers the construct of learning style can be a powerful tool in our interactions with students. This presentation will focus on materials and strategies that may be used to facilitate students' learning.

We can sometimes tune in to students' styles by listening to the verbs that they use when they meet with us. Visual learners will usually see what you want them to understand, auditory learners hear and tactile-kinesthetic learners tend to feel that they know. Since, in any given classroom situation, you will have a broad range of styles, it is important that you present classroom information in a variety of ways.

C.E. Cornett(1983) lists ten suggestions for teaching to style. These include: use of questions to stimulate levels of thinking, provide overviews of lectures, ask students to share one new idea that they have learned that day with the other students, set clear purposes for each learning experience, use a warm up before each lesson, use spaced practice, use multisensory approaches-write on the board, say orally, have students write down directions, use descriptive feedback and use a variety of review and reflection strategies. Hashway and Duke(1992) suggest using peer tutors, limit presentation of new knowledge so that students are not overloaded, use objectives to provide a guide for learning outcomes, avoid being a "talking head" and use a variety of teaching methods other than the lecture.

As faculty we need to be aware that we teach either as we have been taught or because our strategies are comfortable for our style. If you would like to be able to accommodate your style and those of your students, an informal assessment you might use would be to ask your students to write one pararaph on "How I Learn Best"(Erickson and Strommer, 1991). This will provide you with some insight into your students without having to use a more elaborate style inventory.

An example of how to help students through their learning style is in the area of time management. Students often complain that they don't have enough time to do assignments, homework or study. You might suggest to your visual learners that they should use a daily planner or calendar so that they can see what they must do each day while your auditory learners might tape their daily schedule and listen to their tapes each day. Tactile-kinesthetic learners may find a computer calendar very useful or they might enjoy making a calendar or time sheet to guide their daily schedule.

I have included two very easy to administer learning modality surveys. These will help students evaluate their more dominant learning modality or modalities. Once the students have an understanding of their style it is easier to help them understand how to utilize their learning strengths and at the same time to strengthen their less dominant modalities so that ultimately they use all modalities.

As you work with students there are cues that may alert you to incongruities between your style and the students. Such statements as "your test is unfair or your questions are tricky, I can't concentrate during lecture, I don't remember what I read, my professors don't care about their students, I hate having to work with a group" are often indicators that learning styles and teaching styles are out of step. Once students understand style it becomes much easier to help them adjust and cope with style differences.

As Erickson and Strommer(1991) state "for teaching to be effective learning must take place." That means we need to know as much about our students as we can so that we provide as fulfilling a classroom experience as we can.

SOURCES

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Witkin, Herman. Personality Through Perception, an Experiment and Clinical Study. New York: Harper, 1954

SELF-ASSESSMENT

	No Problem	Some Problem	A Big Problem
1. Generally, I understand what I hear.			
2. I can listen attentively as well as most people.			
3. I can express myself orally with little difficulty.			
4. I am able to read and understand required materials with little difficulty.			
5. I can organize and express my thoughts in writing.			
6. My written work is relatively free of grammatical and spelling errors.			
7. My handwriting is legible.			
8. I consider my math skills sufficient for most situations.			
9. I have little difficulty making decisions.			
10. I trust my decisions in most situations.			
11. I manage my time wisely.			
12. I know how to create what is a good study environment for me.			
13. I have specific study strategies that work for me.			

	No Problem	Some Problem	A Big Problem
14. When new concepts or skills are being introduced, I have no difficulty when the primary mode of instruction is			
(a) Auditory.....			
(b) Visual.....			
(c) Involves bodily movement.....			
15. I understand my unique learning style and needs.			
16. My long-term memory, or ability to remember past learning or experiences, is sufficient in most situations.			
17. My short-term memory, or ability to remember what I have just experienced, is sufficient in most situations.			
18. My self-evaluations are generally reliable.			
19. I complete most tasks once I've started.			
20. I notice an unusually large difference in my performance in different courses that seems to reflect real differences in my abilities.			

21. I learn best:
(Check One)

(a) In the morning _____
(b) In the afternoon _____
(c) In the evening _____
(d) It doesn't seem to matter _____

MANAGING TIME MAXIMIZING

YOUR LEARNING STYLES

1. VISUAL LEARNERS: YOU NEED A SCHEDULE YOU CAN SEE: DAYTIMERS, CALENDARS, SCHEDULES YOU PIN UP IN YOUR ROOM. YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO "SEE" WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO, WHEN IT MUST BE DONE AND WHERE YOU HAVE TO GO.

2. AUDITORY LEARNERS: TAPE YOUR DAILY CALENDAR AS WELL AS EACH WEEK AND THE SEMESTER. YOU CAN TAPE EACH DAYS' EVENTS, PLAY YOUR RECORDING DURING THE DAY AND LEAVE SCHEDULE REMINDERS ON YOUR ANSWERING MACHINE. AT THE END OF EACH DAY, REVIEW YOUR TAPE, ERASE WHAT HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND RETAPE FOR THE NEXT DAY.

3. TACTILE-KINESTHETIC: A COMPUTERIZED CALENDAR SHOULD WORK WELL FOR YOU. COLOR CODE YOUR SCHEDULES, DRAW YOUR OWN CALENDAR.

Think about the next assignment you are going to give in your class.

1. **Describe how you would typically make the assignment.**

2. **Now, keeping in mind that you have a variety of learning styles in your class, how could you modify the assignment to be more learning style compatible?**

3. **What types of tests do you now use? How could modify your testing procedures to be more learning style compatible?**

4. **Or do you feel that you already are learning style compatible in the teaching and testing strategies that you use?**