Engaging 21st Century Students: A Case for Learning Styles

Who are 21st Century Undergraduates?
- 18 to 24-year-old college students...
- ...whose educational and social characteristics don't fit with what schools typically offer.

Digital Natives (mid-1990s +)
Teacher goal adjustment...

- Future orientation
- URGency (What can I do with this information?)
- Value (This matters because...)
- Relevance (How will this help me survive and get ahead in the world beyond and after college?)

Engaging Students Today... Arghh!

1. Developmental approach
2. Clarify learning outcomes & expectations (early & often)
3. Lighten up (Assume the best first!)
4. Rethink content coverage
5. Learner-centered pedagogy
What does learner-centered pedagogy look like?

Learning =

- Comprehension
- Retention
- Application

Learning Styles Research

Pros
- Learner centered
- Varied teaching strategies

Cons
- Allostatic
- Topics and definitions
- Labeling
- Measurement tools
Cycle of Learning  
(Dewey, 1934; Kolb, 1984)

1. Stage 4
2. Stage 3
3. Stage 2
4. Stage 1

Applying What You’ve Learned to a Lesson Plan

- Balance:
  - Lecture
  - Discussion
  - Experiential learning
  - Synthesis
- Consider:
  - Simultaneous occurrence
  - Point of entry
  - Time constraints
  - Formative assessment
Lesson Planning Sample

- Goal: Overarching purpose
- Rationale: So what?
- Learning Outcomes: What will students do?
- Performance Criteria: How will you measure achievement of each outcome? (assessment & evaluation)
- Plan (with time parameters)
- Take home point or question

Lesson Plan (1)

- Goal: Students will learn about the rhetorical appeals used in persuasive messages.
- Rationale: Students will be better producers and consumers of the persuasive messages they get bombarded with everyday.
- Learning Outcome: Students will...
  - Define each type of rhetorical appeal
  - Use each type of rhetorical appeal in their persuasive messages
  - Identify each type of material appeal in messages for others
- Performance Criteria:
  - Think-pair-share and advertisements activity in class
  - Persuasive speech assignment
  - Persuasive speech critique
  - Questions on upcoming exam

Lesson Plan (2)

- Think-Pair/Share: Ask students to write about a time they were persuaded and why, then turn to neighbor and share (10 minutes)
- Post comments on board in 3 columns (without headings) (10 minutes)
- Add labels (ethos, pathos, logos) and definitions (5 minutes)
- Small groups: Magazine advertisement analyses (10 minutes)
- Group Report: (10 minutes)
- Synthesis (Why did we do this?) (5 minutes)
- Assign persuasive speeches for next time (5 minutes)