

Enhancing Teaching Effectiveness and Student Learning Outcomes

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Abstract

This manuscript addresses how post-secondary educators can enhance their teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes through student assessment. Highlights will include evidence-based practices, teaching style, methodology, and the use of assessment data for university instructors. Primary focus will be data obtained from key stakeholders to improve teaching practices to better meet the needs, expectations, and goals of their students, programs, and institutions, including consideration of implications for institutional program assessment on a broader scale.

Keywords: Assessment, feedback, data, student outcomes, teaching effectiveness.

Assessment of effective teaching at all levels as a function of student learning outcomes has become a major focus of discussion across the U.S. Graduation rates among African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and low-income students are lower than other socio-ethnic groups in the U.S. (NCATE, 2010). Forty-five states are now implementing common core state standards to better align the K-12 curriculum across the country, and many areas are tying teacher evaluations to student achievement. Unlike K-12 education, higher education lacks uniform measures to assess the quality of classroom instruction. Some proponents of assessment advocate for common final exams in large multi-section introductory courses in departments at postsecondary institutions (Chingos, 2013). Since no universal college-level assessment measures exist, however, we must focus on aspects of instruction that positively correlate to teaching effectiveness, and use student feedback and program benchmarks to assess that efficacy.

Literature Review

Teaching Excellence

Effective instructors commonly pride themselves on having positive student interactions in and out of the classroom, provide prompt feedback, and encourage teamwork amongst students (Hammer, Piascik, Medina, Pittenger, Rose, Creekmore, Soltis, Bouldin, Schwarz, & Scott, 2010). The most impactful teachers also obtain and implement constructive feedback, and use different techniques to encourage active learning oriented towards students becoming self-directed, independent, and critical thinkers (Hammer et al.,

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2010). Exceptional instructors are culturally sensitive, respectful, passionate, and charismatic. They challenge students to work to their potential by setting high, yet reasonable expectations, emphasizing open communication, and asking higher-order thinking questions that stimulate discussion. Committed to their craft, they practice teaching as an art that requires modification and mastery.

Evaluating Teaching Excellence

Three predominant sources for teaching excellence assessment include students, colleagues, and the teacher. Students complete evaluations at the end of the semester to provide formative and summative feedback about the course and its outcomes. Colleagues provide constructive feedback for their peers by acknowledging strengths, as well as areas for further improvement. Self-evaluation requires self-reflection and enables the instructor to assess his or her growth over time in order to highlight and acknowledge improvement (Hammer et al., 2010).

Best Practices

According to researchers from Flinders University (2013), several aspects of teaching in Australia warrant evaluation, including a myriad of best practices that educators can use to enhance student-learning outcomes. The primary evaluative aspect is assessing the quality of classroom teaching. University instructors must be skilled, knowledgeable, informed, and prepared in order to create optimum learning experiences (Flinders, 2013). The most effective teachers deliver concrete, explicit, and engaging instruction, implement evidence-based classroom management and teaching strategies, and build strong relationships with their students (Macsuga-Gage, Simonsen, & Briere, 2012).

Instructional Delivery. Teachers must prioritize the material they address to ensure that it meets the course's learning objectives. Effective teachers focus on core topics and sequence information to cover basic material before introducing new topics. Additionally, they organize activities in strands, presenting content through small segments of instruction over several days, rather than planning one activity to address the entire concept. They assign students activities that promote understanding of skills and knowledge (Macsuga-Gage et al., 2012). They focus on engaging students to build their communication and social skills, learn how to work interdependently, and enhance their self-efficacy. Effective instructors use specific praise, reinforcements, and constructive feedback to give students a holistic understanding of a topic.

Utilize empirically supported classroom management practices. Mastery instructors engage in self-management and consultation, tracking their usage of classroom management skills and developing action plans to modify their practices based on data (Macsuga-Gage et al., 2012). Through consultation, instructors work with colleagues to collect and implement data to gauge student strengths and weaknesses, and then use protocols to turn weaknesses into strengths. The most effective teachers monitor progress and assess how their changed practices have impacted student outcomes (Macsuga-Gage et al., 2012).

Building positive relationships with students. To connect with students and impact their lives personally and professionally, teachers must be student-centered and demonstrate respect for their background, ideologies, beliefs, and learning styles. The best instructors use differentiated instruction, display cultural sensitivity, accentuate open communication, offer positive feedback on students' academic performance (MacSuga-Gage et al., 2012), and foster student growth by allowing students to resubmit assignments prior to assigning a grade.

Emphasizing quality over quantity. According to Weimer (2006), teaching content and methods are inextricably linked and co-dependent; teaching material impacts student learning more than the number of topics covered in class. Emphasizing quality helps students gain a mastery understanding of topics through engaging in discussion and activities that help them grasp and retain materials (Weimer, 2006). Instead of teaching a vast amount of information over a semester, instructors are encouraged to spend time on topics that are most relevant and critical to targeted student-learning objectives for that course and program (Weimer, 2006).

Challenging Course Curricula Emphasizing Higher Order Thinking Skills. Essential targets for instruction include encouraging students to focus on the most compelling course concepts, develop higher-order and critical thinking skills, and demonstrate the application of their knowledge. Research has shown that students put less effort into difficult courses compared to less rigorous courses, find them to be less meaningful, and are less confident that they can do well in the class (Lynch, 2008).

To challenge students and create a stimulating, engaging environment, instructors need to assist them in thinking outside of the box in critical and creative ways. Connecting curricula to students' lives and offering opportunities for them to innovatively employ their knowledge to solve relevant issues are also effective teaching practices (Lynch, 2008). Experiential activities such as role playing, completing case studies, cooperative group work and thought-provoking discussion questions all allow students to apply their knowledge. To captivate students' attention and help them retain information, instructors can ensure that assignments address and contribute to identified outcomes for the major. They can also use techniques to foster maximum learning (asking higher-order critical thinking questions, problem based learning, case studies, computer based learning), critical reflection (logs, journals, collaborative learning), and inquiry (small group learning) (Lynch, 2008).

Faculty and Student Interaction. Faculty and student interaction refers to the degree of responsiveness, helpfulness, concern, approachability, compassion, and understanding that instructors' display towards their students. Research shows that students are more likely to interact with instructors and be more academically successful if their instructors possess leadership skills, and are sociable, intelligent, objective, and supportive (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzik, 2005).

In accordance with Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya (2010), researchers found that students who believed that their instructors were respectful and available reported higher

levels of confidence in their academic skills and increased levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students who felt that faculty lacked interest in them reported feeling less motivated (Komarraju et al., 2005). Faculty who encourage students to come to office hours, 'bring themselves to the classroom,' share personal anecdotes, and demonstrate a genuine personal and academic interest in students report stronger student outcomes (Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Louvsky-Quaye, 2010).

Numerous techniques can increase positive interactions between faculty members and students. Instructor availability fundamentally impacts student success and educator effectiveness. Students who feel that their instructors are understanding and communicate frequently will be more likely to succeed academically (Bain, 2004). Instructors who communicate openly, respond quickly to email, clearly address expectations, provide students with substantial constructive feedback produce positive student outcomes. Providing assignments that students find relevant, timely, relatable, and encourage personal investment can build trust amongst class members and instructors (Bain, 2004).

Lessons that encourage students' opinions and feedback increase students' sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Showing empathy and sensitivity towards students who may be struggling personally or academically can strengthen the student/instructor relationship (Bain, 2004). If students sense that instructors care about them and are invested in their success, they are more likely to feel hopeful about their chances of succeeding and be more willing to engage. Developing a strong rapport with students stimulates student motivation, classroom discussion, and rates of satisfaction, better communication, and trust. Instructors who take the time to know their students create a more productive and proactive classroom experience (Weimer, 2010).

Supporting student success is vital for student persistence, learning, and satisfaction (Weimer, 2010). Active mentorship can connect students to opportunities for counseling, peer mentoring, and writing. Student retention depends on teachers effectively communicating concepts, expectations and identifying resources for support. Students' likelihood of using such support often correlates to the quality of relationship they have developed with the faculty members who are encouraging them to reach out.

Differentiating Instruction. Differentiation is an aspect of a teachers' professional, pedagogical competence that ensures that each student achieves the intended learning target (Burton, 2003). Effective instructors utilize a variety of learning modalities to differentiate instruction for an array of student learning styles. Some argue that schools are responsible for adapting to the developmental needs of every learner (Coffey, 2007). Due to the increasing heterogeneity of students, attention is increasingly paid to ensuring that all students receive an appropriate education through auditory, visual, and kinesthetic materials (Humphrey et al., 2006). Instructors attempt to meet their students' learning needs and use additional techniques if students struggle to understand course content and applications. Congruent teaching implies that a teacher models his or her pedagogical theories, and can be used in addition to differentiated instruction to stimulate student learning and ensure that all students' needs are met (Loughran & Berry, 2005). Congruent instruction

is innovative in that it allows students to introduce a variety of educational principles in classroom practice (Loughran & Berry, 2005).

Learning is Culturally and Socially Relevant to Students' Lives. Learning outcomes describe the measurable skills, abilities, knowledge, or values that students should have amassed upon finishing a program (USC, 2010). Culturally relevant teaching empowers students socially, emotionally, intellectually, and politically by creating a connection between students' home and school lives, while meeting district curriculum requirements (Ladsen-Billings, 1994). Learning must be socially relevant to students' lives to help them apply classroom content outside of school. According to Anderson & Burns (2013), one strategy that instructors can use to assess relevance is to ask students to write a one-minute paper on the topics that they found most significant during the class. This allows students to consider what they deemed relevant, and to explore the depth of their knowledge (Anderson & Burns, 2013).

Course Organization and Planning. Bain (2004) states that organization and planning assess several key factors: an instructor's ability to clearly communicate course expectations, create course assignments that aid student learning, prepare lessons that demonstrate knowledge of course content, and emphasize relevant course concepts.

Benton, Duchon, and Pallett (2013) conducted a study on the relationship between student self-reported ratings on their perception of learning and performance based upon course organization and importance of material. Students who rated themselves as exceptional found the course to be organized, perceived the material to be relevant, and performed better on exams and coursework than students who rated their progress as being moderate or less (Benton et al., 2013). This study substantiates the importance of structuring courses to foster positive learning outcomes.

Research also shows that students excel when they feel the instructor is prepared, knowledgeable, and organized (ETS, 2013). It is essential for educators to provide detailed syllabi with course information, objectives, assignments, course policies, grading rubrics, due dates, and a tentative schedule. Teacher preparation, knowledge of subject matter, and organization play an instrumental role in student success (Bain, 2004). Well-prepared and organized instructors produce higher-achieving students, who score higher on aptitude and achievement tests, demonstrate higher grade point averages, and complete assignments in a more comprehensive and detailed manner (Teitel, 2004).

According to the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010), two components are essential ingredients for teacher preparation: knowledge of the subject matter, and the ability to effectively disseminate knowledge. Data results from this scale enable instructors to make changes regarding their preparedness, course structure, course objectives, and relevant assignments, to clarify the course's purpose and connect the materials and assignments to enhance student-learning outcomes (NCATE, 2010). A direct correlation likely exists between course organization, planning and student success; the more organized and planning-oriented an instructor is, the more likely students will be to view him or her as knowledgeable and learn the material in a struc-

tured manner. In contrast, receiving a low score on the Course Organization and Planning scale may indicate that the course lacks cohesion and clarity. The instructor may not have effectively disseminated information about course requirements and their impact on student learning. Low scores on this scale may indicate students' dissatisfaction with the scope or delivery of the course (ETS, 2013).

Instructors can use the following suggestions to improve course organization:

Course objectives are derived from an approved program or major. Well-organized courses consider learning objectives as an essential component of each course's design. Such objectives are achieved via course content, assignments, readings and supplementary materials, and frequent classroom discussions.

Organization is pivotal for instructors to disseminate information in a clear and orderly manner. Creating a semester agenda, which highlights relevant topics and activities to be covered during a given class, gives students a clear and detailed syllabus with course requirements, timelines and expectations.

Identifying challenging course curricula that encourage students to work collaboratively equips students to creatively and/or critically apply knowledge to solve relevant problems or questions. Such learning is more likely to be retained over time.

Conducting a "post mortem" on lessons can help instructors decide if instructional changes are needed. An instructor should reflect on questions like: 'To what extent were students participating?' 'To what extent did students make connections from the lesson to targeted learning outcomes?' 'How did students perform on formative measures (quizzes, papers) related to the content of the "post mortem" lessons?' While university faculty typically focus on content, the absence of emphasis on pedagogy may explain why student learning may not meet expectations.

To enhance student learning and help students meet expectations, instructors can prompt them to gain proficiency in research skills by assisting them in moving beyond using personal opinions as the sole basis for responses. Recognizing that critical thinking involves assessment, examination, and reflective reasoning of existing information, ideas, beliefs, and speculations, effective instructors encourage students to gain proficiency in locating and retrieving scholarly information on the assigned topic.

By integrating scholarly research into their instruction, instructors can respectfully challenge a student's viewpoint to elicit a deeper, more reflective response using a reply supported by peer-reviewed literature. Instructors can mandate the use of peer-reviewed sources in addition to course textbooks, ask questions directly related to the student's response, and limit the overuse of direct quotations.

Instructors can choose not respond to students in an authoritative manner that limits discussions, and be more flexible and open-minded to keep discussions moving. They can solicit opposing views by encouraging students to make a justified argument for or

against a topic, and offer questions that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. By stimulating a student's reasoning process through thought-provoking questions, instructors move students beyond defining a topic to making an evaluative value judgments based on in-depth interpretation of relevant information.

Communication. Effective communication is a fundamental component of good teaching. An instructor's communication skills during lesson delivery is a distinguishing factor in student learning outcomes. According to Meyers (2004), students' perception of instructor credibility holds much clout. Credibility includes competence (instructors' knowledge), character (honesty and integrity), and caring (ability to express concern about a student's welfare) (Meyers, 2004). Research shows a significant and positive relationship between instructors' credibility and their ability to communicate effectively with perceived teaching effectiveness and student motivation (Meyers, 2004). Students who perceive instructors as highly credible see them as more effective and competent, and report higher levels of motivation.

Effective communication also increases according to an instructor's degree of enthusiasm, a classroom environment's level of stimulation, and the use of challenging questions to provoke critical thinking skills (ETS, 2013). According to Sidelinger (2010), perceived instructor clarity and non-verbal immediacy were strong predictors of students' willingness to participate in class and engage in self-regulated learning. Sidelinger (2010) also found that students who take ownership of their assignments, communicate effectively with their instructor, and feel engaged and stimulated, experience a greater degree of student involvement and more positive student outcomes.

Instructors can adopt a variety of practices to improve their communication skills. Charismatic instruction engages and stimulates student attention and participation, which positively impacts student outcomes. Preparing well-developed lessons with specific, illustrative examples, varying speaking tones, and integrating experiential and hands-on activities can energize students and boost their engagement. Instructors who are effective communicators are aware of the variety of learning modalities that can address differences in students' learning styles when they struggle to understand course content and its applications.

Open communication builds rapport and allows instructors to connect with students both personally and professionally. Research demonstrates that students who feel that they can talk honestly and openly with their instructor are more academically successful (Drummond, 1995). Such communication enables students to feel comfortable and safe in learning situations, and frames questions as positive rather than punitive. It is critical for faculty to create a learning environment that encourages students to be authentic and willing to ask questions without fear of criticism or negatively impacting their grade.

Stimulating Class Environment. Creating a stimulating and engaging classroom environment is pivotal to student success. Research has demonstrated that experiencing positive emotions can foster well-being and improved student outcomes (Williams, Childers, & Kemp, 2013). Williams et al., (2013) found that students who experience positive emo-

tions and are stimulated in the classroom also experience higher levels of motivation, and demonstrate behaviors that lead to academic success including studying, attendance, enhanced participation, and increased understanding of course materials. Williams et al. (2013) also found that such students also had a more positive outlook on their academic accomplishments.

To further stimulate students, instructors can employ activity-based learning strategies that empower them to enhance metacognitive abilities by applying classroom information to their own lives (Pang, 2010). Through using activity-based learning strategies and stating course expectations and goals, instructors help students increase their self-regulation skills and take responsibility for their learning and application of material (Pang, 2010). Encouraging students to take ownership of their learning also allows them to experience enhanced self-direction and self-awareness.

Student Effort and Involvement. Research shows that student-learning outcomes are not solely controlled by an instructor (ETS, 2013). Other variables include their time spent studying and completing assignments, their level of preparation for each class, and attitudes towards content (ETS, 2013). Instructors can use evidence-based teaching practices to increase student effort and participation through hands-on experiential activities, cooperative learning in small groups, asking higher-order questions, and large group discussions (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2009).

Instructors may work individually with students to help them accept responsibility for their performance, increasing their self-motivated involvement. When held accountable for their own learning, students adopt an active role in the process through engagement in their assignments, class activities, and special department or program events. By preparing, rehearsing, learning, and remembering knowledge through watching tutorials, completing practice exercises before learning new material, and tracking their progress, students are more likely to succeed academically (Khan Academy, 2013).

Asking students what they want to learn and accomplish by the end of the course empowers them and makes the information relevant to them. Providing timely and expert feedback assists students in understanding course material, while giving positive feedback enhances a student's belief in his/her abilities. Assigning papers and projects that are relevant to student lives and interests helps foster connections between instructors, students, and peers, thereby creating a stimulating and collaborative atmosphere that conducive to learning.

Involvement and engagement are the main components in student learning. Having students work in small groups on experiential tasks allows them to brainstorm, learn from one another, and collaboratively apply knowledge. The more that instructors motivate and encourage their students to succeed, the more likely students will be to feel connected to the material, believe in themselves, and increase their learning outcomes.

According to Webber, Krylow, & Zhang (2013), student involvement and effort are key factors to success in college. Higher levels of student engagement significantly enhanced

GPA and students' perception of their college experience. Students who were prepared for classes they considered to be challenging had higher GPAs and reported more fulfilling college experiences (Webber et al., 2013).

Cultural Sensitivity and Culturally Responsive Teaching. Students will be more likely to participate in a classroom experience in which they feel the instructor is culturally sensitive and displays an awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences. Instructors can express their valuing of diversity by expecting all students to be active in the classroom regardless of disability, race, language, religion or SES status (Fallon & Brown, p. 192, 2010). Instructors can foster inclusivity by helping all students feel welcomed, accepted, understood, challenged, and accomplished. In this environment, students who are enabled to develop social and cultural capital through relationships with others foster a community of engaged learners (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2009). Through culturally responsive strategies, educators can create a classroom learning environment that merits learning for all (Fallon & Brown, 2010, p. 192).

According to Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehmeyer (2007), instructors need to “reflect on what they believe about cultural groups other than their own and attempt to identify patterns across environments that contribute to or detract from student growth.” Students are motivated differently depending upon their culture, and therefore require differential learning instruction to meet their needs. Ginsberg & Wlodkowski (2007) state that teachers need to create a respectful, inviting, and inclusive classroom environment that celebrates student similarities and differences, since cultural isolation decreases motivation. Instructors should modify assignments that only examine an individual's perspective, develop a collaborative environment that encourages group work, assign creative tasks that enable students to explore their strengths, promote differing worldviews, and give assignments that encourage critical thinking. To maximize learning, instructors need to integrate the different cultures in their classroom into their teaching practice (Gay, 2000). Culturally responsive instructors encourage students to use their cultural experiences to deepen their learning, and develop learning tasks that are relevant and meaningful for students (Gay, 2000).

Instructional Strategies. Instructors can use a myriad of strategies to optimize student learning. Cooperative learning groups give students opportunities to collaborate on brainstorming ideas and completing assignments. Instructors can enable students to think critically and problem solve by integrating problem-based group assignments for students to complete individually or in a group.

Experiential learning includes experiencing an activity, sharing or publishing reactions or observations, analyzing or determining patterns, inferring or generalizing, and applying information (NCCIC, 2009). Activities in this mode allow students to apply knowledge, encourage collaborative participation and engagement, and boost students' communication, social, and problem solving skills. Personalized reflection and applying learning to other contexts are critical factors in effective experiential learning. A comprehensive review of research literature on college learning determined that in studies measuring information retention after a course, transfer of knowledge in new situations, problem solv-

ing, thinking, attitude change, and motivation, active learning was always more effective than solely lecturing as a teaching technique (Felder, 2007). Instructors can also develop hybrid courses that integrate online components into traditional classroom settings, allowing students to interact with the teacher and students and complete group activities in class, and complete assignments and submit them via e-mail, Google Drive, Blackboard, or other venues.

Supplementary Instructional Materials. In this technologically driven society, integrating technology into classroom learning is key. Using technology enables students to see tutorials online, access course information and submit assignments, instantaneously discuss opinions with peers, and review presentations for supplementary information to deepen learning. Solely utilizing a didactic approach prevents students from optimally processing and applying their knowledge, and negatively impacts their ability to conceptualize material and practice skills. Instructors who integrate technology into their classrooms increase student engagement (ETS, 2013). A professor can speak over a Power Point presentation that students have reviewed prior to class, and have students complete experiential activities based upon the presentation. Classes conducted in virtual chat rooms, discussion boards and Internet forums allow users to instantaneously post assignments, questions, or messages for other class members or the instructor.

In a study conducted by CompTIA, 78% of instructors believed that technology positively impacted their classroom. Generation Y students who have grown up in a digital world feel a great sense of disconnect when educators put them in a 19th-century traditional classroom setting (Lytle, 2011). Incorporating popular new technologies as new learning tools can impact the effectiveness and delivery of student instruction (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).

Supplementary instructional materials include online tutorials, instructional software and other web-based resources that enhance student engagement in place of standard presentation formats. Students practice skills through interactive tutorials and exercises, computerized or digitally recorded presentations and demonstrations, reading materials developed by instructors or in assigned textbooks, examples and exercises in the student's field of interest, links to other relevant online materials; and individual and group laboratory assignments.

Students in large lecture classes are more passive than students who personally interact in smaller classes (ETS, 2013). Thus, students benefit from online discussions where they can easily communicate with each other (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Working in assigned peer learning groups assists at-risk students in building social and communication skills, while message boards, chat rooms, Google Documents, and blogs build communication between students and instructors (NCATE, 2010).

Using Evaluation Assessments to Improve Practice

Universities use many different course evaluation tools to assess students' perceptions of effectiveness of their instructor and course. Using a rating scale from most effective to

least effective, sample questions may include, ‘The instructor was prepared,’ ‘The instructor was available,’ ‘The course was organized well,’ ‘The instructor clearly communicated expectations,’ or ‘The instructor was enthusiastic.’

Over 800 universities nationwide use the SIR II Student Instructional Report (ETS, 1994) to assess students’ perceptions of their higher education learning experience. This survey helps educators improve teaching effectiveness and quality of student learning by revealing students’ perceptions about course design and instructional delivery without taking up an exorbitant amount of class time. It provides comparative data on variables including course design, instruction, and grading practices to help faculty members compare their scores to data from similar national institutions and courses. If not the SIR II itself, most universities use a survey that assesses teaching effectiveness addressing similar categories. The SIR II provides students with an anonymous platform to evaluate both course and instructor in a given semester, and allows them to assess their own learning outcomes.

Open-minded instructors can use results from the SIR II to gauge which aspects of their course or teaching could change to yield better student outcomes, as well as identifying areas in which they are excelling (ETS, 2013). Primary targets include utilizing evidence-based practices to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and demonstrating the degree of satisfaction of student-learning objectives. University faculty members should be responsive to student feedback, as this data is essential to ongoing course, program, and instructor improvement.

Conclusion

The most impactful student-centered instructors utilize specific interventions including the following: creating stimulating curricula, interacting with students, being available and approachable, using differential instruction, addressing relevant material, being cognizant of depth vs. breadth, offering cultural responsiveness, and developing structured courses that enable them to facilitate information and empower students. Effective instructors also gather, collect, interpret, and implement data to assess student strengths and weaknesses, student learning, and the value of their instruction. The SIR II survey is an extremely effective tool in obtaining data. Similar to deliberate practice, which includes practicing and mastering strategies shown to elicit positive outcomes and assessing effectiveness of services via stakeholder feedback, using the SIR II enhances teaching effectiveness through a structured template with specific categories that reflect student learning. Instructors who utilize SIR II results to guide their practice develop classrooms that foster engaged teaching and learning.

Building a competent community of learners also requires that instructors be prepared and well-versed in their subject matter, design courses that reflect standards, and clearly communicate course content and expectations. Such instructors stimulate students’ interest via discussion, experiential and action-oriented activities, and group work. Active learning occurs when instructors connect relevant material to students’ lives. The best instructors provide high expectations, challenge students beyond their comfort zone,

make learning collaborative and interactive, and display care and concern for their students' learning and growth.

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