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More on The Employable Graduate - with Professor X and Professor Z

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The Weekly Reader

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More on The Employable Graduate—With Professor X and Professor Z

This week, I'd like to think further about the implications of Dr. Amanda Hiner's research and presentation on "The Employable Graduate," specifically the findings that employers want students who can think critically, solve problems, communicate well orally and in writing, and work collaboratively. What do those findings mean for us as teachers, and what do they mean we should do in our classrooms?

Imagine two hypothetical college teachers, Professor X and Professor Z. Both are knowledgeable in their fields, both work hard at preparing for classes, and both care about their students' success. But they approach their classes very differently.

Professor X has a clear set of lectures, carefully prepared for each course. She comes to class every day and begins by asking if the students have any questions. Then she puts up the day's PowerPoint and begins lecturing. She goes through each slide, explaining and underscoring the main points, occasionally pausing to ask if the students have any questions (they rarely do). She fills the entire class time with her lecture. Some students take copious notes, but most of them do not, because they know that Professor X will post the PowerPoint for them on her website or on Blackboard. Professor X covers a great amount of material in each class, and she leaves the classroom each day proud of that coverage.

Professor Z is also fully prepared for each class and each course, but she approaches her class very differently. Rather than ask if students have any questions, she tells the students to write down a question they have, then she answers the ones she sees as most important. She rarely lectures or uses PowerPoint, although she can do both very well when she needs to. When she does do either, she pauses frequently and asks the students to write for two minutes about the most important point covered, or about the point the students do not understand. Then she tells the students to share their short paper with a neighbor, then to share some of these with the class.

Professor Z has the students write each day, as part of class time, writing that forms the basis of discussion, either with the whole class or in small groups or pairs. She takes up the daily writing and often uses it as a springboard for the next class.

While Professor X carries on pretty much the same routine day after day, Professor Z uses a variety of techniques in every class, throughout the semester. Her class may experience half a dozen or more activities in each meeting, activities that she has learned from teaching and learning development, from books on pedagogy, and from her own experi-

Professor Z gets good, and often excellent, course evaluations. The majority of her students praise her for "making what I thought would be a boring subject exciting and interesting," "making me think," "pushing me to really learn the material."

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ence and imagination. She says she tries to engage the students in the material first, then immerse them in learning it.

Professor Z sets up her classes in small groups, groups that are assigned learning tasks in almost every class meeting. She gives them clear assignments and problems to solve, then she monitors the groups as they work. Students are expected to report and discuss their results. She also assigns projects to the groups: instead of lecturing on Chapter Five, as Professor X does, she assigns Chapter Five to one of the groups, and they are responsible for presenting and teaching the material to the class. She finds that, with careful guidance and modeling, her students are capable of mastering the material, making creative and interesting PowerPoints (better than she can!), and teaching the material of parts of the course.

Professor X gives reading quizzes based on particular questions from the assignments. Professor Z asks the students to write a paragraph outlining the main points in the day's reading. Professor X gives tests and exams that are objective, mainly using

multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank, just as her professors did when she was an undergraduate. Professor Z's tests and exams also contain objective portions, but her tests always predominantly call for written responses, both short and longer essays.

Professor X generally gets good course evaluations from her students, especially because she is so well-prepared and because she is a good lecturer. No matter what the course evaluations say, she does not make many changes in her courses from year to year, because she is satisfied that she has everything set.

Professor Z gets good, and often excellent, course evaluations. The majority of her students praise her for "making what I thought would be a boring subject exciting and interesting," "making me think," "pushing me to really learn the material." A few students complain that she made the students do all the work, but most students think she did an excellent teaching job. Professor Z constantly changes her courses, adding new approaches and activities, discarding what did not work, amending others to make them better.

So the question: who is doing a better job of preparing her students for what we know employers say they want in the students they hire? Who is preparing students to think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively orally and in writing, and collaborate with others?

And who are you?

TLC Resources Page

Check out the new TLC Resources page. You will find videos, PowerPoints, and handouts from recent TLC sessions, as well as teaching and technology resources. Thanks to Dana Bruneau for this ongoing effort!
http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/NewDesign/resources_mainpage_old.htm

Go2Knowledge Group

Join us for a group discussion of the Go2Knowldege presentation "Creating an Active Learning Environment." Thursday, February 14 at 11:00 am. Register at the TLC site, watch the video, then join us for the discussion.

XXITE 2.0 ------ The Virtual Gathering Place for WU (The Reboot!)

Jo Koster and I invite you to join XXITE (Twenty-first Century Teaching Excellence)—or if you have already joined, to check it out again as it grows and develops. Maybe you have not been there in a long time—if not, you will see many changes in look and content. For example, XXITE now has groups dedicated to HMXP and CRTW, with those of us who teach those courses sharing ideas and materials. Talk to Jo about setting up your own interest group. Jo is particularly interested in recruiting a few people to blog regularly about their teaching.

Jo set up this interactive site to give Winthrop faculty a virtual gathering space to share ideas about teaching and technology. You'll find blogs and discussion forums on various topics—and we urge you to add your own ideas. Visit again at http://wuxxite.ning.com/ Or email Jo Koster for an invitation to join: kosterj@winthrop.edu The TLC website also has links to navigate your way there or to join: http://www2.winthrop.edu/tlc/

Join XXITE 2.0 or Register for a TLC Session
At
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A New Service From the TLC: Teaching Consultation

The Teaching and Learning Center is offering a new service: teaching consultation. At the instructor's request, I (or another agreed-upon person) will visit your class to observe and consult with you afterwards about your successes and challenges. This consultation has nothing to do with the tenure and promotion process, and no reports will be made to department chairs or deans (unless you so request). The invitation to the consultant can only come from the instructor, not from a dean or chair or any other person.   All conversations will be private and confidential. If you don't want me to visit your class and observe your teaching, we could just meet and talk about your teaching. If I am not available to visit your class because of my schedule, I will find a qualified person to do the consulting. So please let me know if you would like to invite me into your class or for a consultation. Call or email me at (803) 323-3679 or birdj@winthrop.edu.

Go2Knowledge—Learning On Demand!

Go2Knowledge is a website that offers a variety of video presentations on faculty and staff professional development. You will find presentations by nationally-known experts in seven categories: At-Risk Populations, Campus Safety, Organizational Development, Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Technology, and Open Educational Resources. Within each category, you will find a number of excellent and informative videos. The Office of Academic Affairs has provided us a one-year subscription to this service.

People often tell the TLC that they would like to go to sessions, but they don't have the time or they can't at the times sessions are offered. With Go2Knowledge, you can attend sessions on demand, anywhere, 24/7. The TLC will also have frequent Go2Knowledge Groups, where we meet to discuss a presentation. Log in here: http://www.go2knowledge.org/winthrop See you there!

Thought for The Week

"Adam and Eve had many advantages, but the principle one was that they escaped teething."--Mark Twain