

CTE Today

A Newsletter for
Teachers at USMA

Center for Teaching Excellence

November 2006

Last Days of Class

Capitalizing on the Last Days of Class,

By *Dr. Mark D. Evans, CTE Director*

Classroom dynamics will ebb and flow throughout the semester. The initial “honeymoon” period at the start of the semester is usually followed by a period of increased anxiety after four to six weeks (Mann, 1970). Midterm exams, for which some students may not be well prepared, and the fact that teachers will be evaluating student performance, both serve to place an emotional damper on student expectations for the class. However, in most courses, students exhibit increased capacity for independent work and increased satisfaction with the course during the last half of the semester (Lowman, 1995).

There is often much emotion associated with the final lessons of a course (Lowman, 1995). The final days of class are often hectic, with students completing final homework assignments and planning for final exams. Students are often less receptive to new information in the final days, yet instructors are making sure they get through the final topics of the course – right up to the last day of class (Goldsmid and Wilson, 1980). While there is again

increased anxiety nearing final exams, this anxiety is not usually as high as it was for midterms, since the second and third exams present fewer unknowns for the student. Many students have mixed feelings about the course being over.

“The last day of class is a perfect time to provide a sense of closure ”

While on the one hand students are looking forward to a break from their hard work, most students are genuinely just a little bit sad that your course will be over soon. With this dynamic in mind, it is important that you wrap-up your course by providing a sense of closure and by providing a summarizing or review experience (Gross-Davis 1993). The last day of class is a perfect time to provide a sense of closure by reflecting on the knowledge and skills both students and teachers have learned.

Here are some suggestions that might make the closing of your course as memorable as the

opening. (Sources: Gross-Davis 1993, <http://www.uark.edu/>, <http://faculty.academyart.edu/>).

Conduct a review session, Use a game-show format for conducting the review.

Give a simulated exam, follow up with answers.

Use the syllabus as a tool for course review.

Discuss the logistics of an exam in your course (materials required, format).

Let students brainstorm about key concepts they have learned.

Provide structure by noting the key concepts and their relationships to each other.

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Conferences

Teaching Professor Conference, May 18-20, 2007, Atlanta, GA
<http://www.teachingprofessor.com/>

The First Year Experience, July 24-27, Toronto, Canada
<http://www.sc.edu/fye/events/international/index.html>

Creativity Workshop, July 13 - 22, 2007, Florence, Italy
<http://www.creatingandexploring.net/educatoraward.html>

Last Days of Class, *continued*

- Offer advice on how best to prepare for your TEE.
- Have students write a minute paper on the thing they found most useful in the course, or the most memorable moment in the course.
- Debrief students – what’s on their mind regarding the course, or your experiences, or their future profession.
- Ask students to create a flow chart to graph relationships between/among concepts learned.
- Ask students to set goals for the course early on, then ask them to review those goals in the final lesson. What worked well, what needs improvement?
- Describe what you learned about teaching and about the subject of the course.
- Ask students to write you a letter or send you an email three months from now, telling you one thing they learned that they have actually used.
- Ask students to write a letter, or a few comments on a file card, to someone who will take the course next semester.
- Require the students to come to the last class prepared to present something on any aspect or subject of the course.
- Ask students to work in pairs or trios to write a concise and complete response to the question: What is (the name of your course)?
- Ask students to identify the most important topics, themes, or points from the course in a class discussion.
- Write down main topics on the board and have students work collaboratively to explain the connections.
- Ask students to discuss concepts/skills that were most important and/or useful to them and how they connect to their future goals.
- Get feedback from students about what they liked most about the course.
- Find out about what topics they’d like to explore in greater detail.
- Shake each student’s hand and tell him or her that you enjoyed the opportunity to get to know them.

Some faculty may feel that TEE prep or course review provides too much spoon-feeding of information. After all, if cadets are mature learners, should they not review the course material on their own? Hopefully cadets will study and learn on their own time, but your review provides the necessary structure or scaffolding for the cadets to put

“Shake each student’s hand and tell him or her that you enjoyed the opportunity to get to know them.”

all the material together and see how the parts interrelate. You are the expert in this area, you should provide that structure and share your wisdom on how best to study the material in your course. Bottom line: Provide both closure and wrap –up to reinforce all the good learning that took place and to build that sense of community.

References/Sources:

- Goldsmid, C. A., & Wilson, E. *Passing on sociology: The teaching of a discipline* (pp. 178-180). Wadsworth, Belmont, CA, 1980.
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- http://www.uark.edu/misc/tfscinfo/resources/tips/better_endings.html
- http://faculty.academyart.edu/resources/view_tips.asp?UCID=1155
- Lowman, J., *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*, Second Ed. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1995
- Magna Publications. “How to end Courses with a Bang.” The Teaching Professor. Vol 9, No 5. Madison: Magna Publications, Inc, May, 1995.
- Maier, Mark H., and Ted Panitz. "End on a High Note: Better Endings for Classes and Courses." *College Teaching*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 1996.
- Mann, R.D. et al. *The College Classroom: Conflict, Change, and Learning*. Wiley, New York, 1970



CTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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LTC Sones	Physics
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TEACHING-RELATED REFERENCES FOR ALL FACULTY TO CONSIDER

- Angelo, T. A., and Cross, K. P. (1993). *Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for college teachers*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Bloom, B. S., ed. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives*, Longman, New York.
- McKeachie, W. J. (2002). *McKeachie’s Teaching tips, 11th Ed.*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002.
- Wankat, P. C., and Oreovicz, F. S. (1993). *Teaching engineering*, McGraw-Hill, New York. (Note: useful for all disciplines)
- Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Kauchak, and Gibson (1994). *Teaching Strategies, A guide to Better Instruction*, D.C. Heath and Co., Lexington, MA.
- Browne, M. N., and Keeley, S. M. (1986). *Asking the right questions: A guide to critical thinking*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.
- Epstein, J. (1981). *Masters: Portraits of great teachers*, Basic Books, New York.
- Gregory, J. M. (1998). *The laws of teaching*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Lowman, J. (1995). *Mastering the techniques of teaching*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

We are on the web:

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte/>

Teaching People, Not Classrooms, *By Kimberlee Bethany Bonura, MS, DPE*

It is an old cliché that those who can, do, and those who can't, teach. The reality of the teaching profession is that excellent teaching requires far more knowledge and skill than just excellent doing – master teachers must not only be subject matter experts, but also people matter experts. At some point in our undergraduate or graduate years, we have all suffered through the classroom of the stereotypical research professor – a powerhouse of academia with grants, laboratories, and publications to boast of, but a complete incapacity to translate wisdom into shared knowledge, a lecturer who blathers on while confused students struggle to make sense of fragmented notes. And when we sat in his (or her) class, we may have made a solemn vow to remember, when we became faculty, what it felt like to be a student.

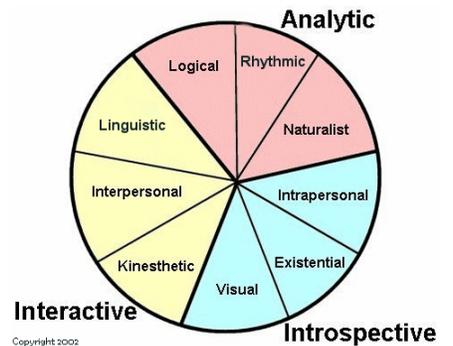
You cannot teach effectively unless you know who your students are and how your students learn. Personality characteristics and learning styles will impact student performance in the classroom. However, learning styles are not intelligence. Intelligence refers to “the computational power of a mental system” (Gardner, 2004, p.3) whereas learning style is “the customary way in which an individual approaches a range of materials” (Gardner, p. 3). At an elite institution of higher learning such as USMA, all students have sufficient intelligence to master the requisite material, but students whose learning styles complement the dominant teaching style will experience greater academic success. As instructors, it is our obligation to understand our students and to become flexible in our teaching styles, so that we may facilitate academic mastery on the part of every student.

“As instructors, it is our obligation to understand our students and to become flexible in our teaching styles”

Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences

Howard Gardner proposed that there are eight different intelligences which are relatively independent of one another: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist. Because the school

system is predominantly focused on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, students with these dominant learning abilities may have experienced greater academic success in the traditional environment. However, when teachers offer material in multiple modes, they facilitate learning for students with other learning styles. For instance, group work will stimulate learning for students with strong interpersonal intelligence, while self-reflection will be useful for the student with intrapersonal learning preferences. A traditional problem set works well in mathematics for a logical-mathematical learner, but the bodily-kinesthetic learner will grasp the material better if it includes hands-on manipulation of relevant material. In academic tasks which require repetition (foreign languages, mathematical and scientific formulas), using multiple modes of presentation not only facilitates learning for different types of learners, it also maintains novelty and student interest in what could otherwise be boring.

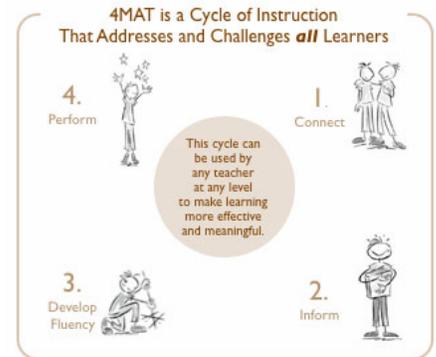


From: http://surfaquarium.com/MI/mi_domains.htm

4MAT Framework

The 4MAT Framework is based on the work of Bernice McCarthy and proposes four learning modes: Analytic, Imaginative, Common Sense, and Dynamic. Teaching and learning can be approached from each of the four modes, and learners may have a dominant style. Analytic learning focuses the use of information and facts to formulate facts, with the key question “What?” Imaginative learning focuses on seeking associations and meaning. The purpose is to make connections and the key question is “Why?” Common Sense learning focuses on thinking and doing, and the ultimate purpose is application of ideas. The key question is “How?” Finally, Dynamic

learning focuses on seeking possibilities and exploration. The key question is “If” and the purpose is to create new adaptations.



From: http://www.aboutlearning.com/what_is_4mat.htm

Jungian Personality Types

Carl Jung proposed four dimensions of personality: introversion/ extroversion, intuition/sensation, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving. These are often assessed in counseling settings for career guidance, personal development, and interpersonal relationships. The Jungian personality types also have implications for the classroom, as different types of learners approach new information in characteristic ways. For instance, feeling individuals look at the whole and attempt to identify similarities, whereas thinking individuals look at the parts and attempt to characterize differences. Judging individuals prefer learning in a chronological and sequential manner, while perceiving individuals prefer learning in a less structured format. Dr. John Shindler at California State University, Los Angeles and Dr. Harrison Yang at State University of New York at Oswego have developed the Paragon Learning Styles Inventory, which applies understanding of Jungian personality styles within the learner context. Shindler and Yang suggest that understanding of personality type can be useful both for teachers and for learners. Teachers who know their students will be able to adapt to their unique needs, and teachers who know themselves will be more capable of identifying those areas where they must adapt. Likewise, students who are armed with self-knowledge

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Teaching People, *continued*

will be more aware of their own learning strengths (and weaknesses) and therefore will be better able to adjust to each teacher and classroom which they encounter.

Types Provide Insights, Not Answers

According to Shindler and Yang, it is important for educators to understand learning theory, but they should not become dependent on it. "The three major sins for facilitators of typing theory are (1) looking at people as types and not human beings with boundless potential; (2) using type to reinforce value judgments related to behavior; and (3) using type to abdicate responsibility for one's actions" (Shindler & Yang). "The intelligences should be mobilized to help individuals learn important content and not used as a way of categorizing individuals" (Gardner, 2004, p.6). Ultimately, it is not necessary for us to actually give our students learning styles inventories. Rather, we can fairly assume that in a classroom of 15- 20 cadets, we probably have at least one of each, and we should, therefore, structure our lesson plans and teaching methods to reach every style. It would be redundant to teach every piece of information in every style, but you should strive to structure each unit to include every type. With each method of teaching, you will facilitate the natural learning styles of some students and challenge other students to stretch and reach for new learning abilities. You will also challenge yourself to stretch your natural preferences and to continually learn more about teaching.

For More Information:

Websites:

<http://www.howardgardner.com/index.html>

<http://www.ldpride.net/learningstyles.MI.htm>

<http://www.aboutlearning.com/>

<http://www.oswego.edu/plsi/index.html>

<http://tip.psychology.org/>

Further reading:

Briggs-Myers, I. (1980). *Gifts Differing*.

Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. NY: Basic Books.

Gardner, H. (1999). *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st century*. NY: Basic Books.

McCarthy, B. (1996). *About Learning*. Barrington, IL: Excel, Inc.

CTE Purpose and Mission

The purpose of the CTE is to enhance cadet intellectual development through high quality faculty development programs.

The mission of the CTE is to:

- ... provide consultation and resources to faculty
- ... conduct educational research & development
- ... serve as a conduit for educational information

"A teacher who is attempting to teach without inspiring the pupil with a desire to learn is hammering on a cold iron." - Horace Mann

CTE

Center for Teaching Excellence

Dr. Mark D. Evans, P.E., Director

119 Thayer Hall

Phone: 845.938.5502

Ms. Maretta Melvin, Secretary

Phone: 845.938.7947

Mr. Jeffrey Rohrluck, Instructional Technologist

Phone: 845.938.4670

Advanced Technology Classroom Laboratory (ATCL), 120 Thayer Hall

ATCL, Advanced Technology Classroom Laboratory

The ATCL (120 TH) is available for you to teach your sections in. Cadets have access to tablet computers while in the ATCL along with TurningPoint Student Response System, ipods, and other technology. If such technology would improve teaching and learning in your classes, contact the CTE to schedule. Contact Mr. Jeff Rohrluck for

Newsletter Submissions

Editor

Dr. Mark D. Evans, P.E.
Director, Center for Teaching Excellence
United States Military Academy

119 Thayer Hall

West Point, NY 10996

Phone: 845.938.5502

E-mail: mark.evans@usma.edu

<http://www.dean.usma.edu/centers/cte/>

Submissions to *CTE Today* are welcome and encouraged. When submitting, please keep these guidelines in mind:

...We are interested in a wide range of teaching and learning topics.

...We are interested in innovative strategies, techniques, and approaches that facilitate learning

...We are interested in reflective analyses of educational issues of concern.

...Write with the understanding that your audience includes faculty in a wide variety of disciplines and in a number of different departments.

...What you describe must be relevant to a significant proportion of USMA faculty.

...Write directly to the audience, remembering that this is a newsletter, not a journal publication.

...Keep the article short; generally between 1 and 3 double-spaced pages.

...If you'd like some initial feedback on a topic you're considering, you're welcome to share it electronically with the editor.