

Lesson Delivery: What Every Instructor Can Do Everyday

Start every lesson by welcoming students to class. Use name tents, folded card stock upon which the student writes their name and some basic, sharable information about themselves. Name tents build rapport and establish supportive, respectful, and safe learning environments. Name tents can also create opportunities for students to make connections with their peers, and can help create an environment in which they learn about each other. Creating a safe, supportive, trusting, collaborative environment may encourage students to attend more regularly, arrive on time, and in some cases early to class as it becomes a place to which they are connected, have built relationships, want to be, and are willing to learn. Lemov (2010) suggests that instructors who build non-transactional relationships, those that don't involve rewards or consequences, demonstrate that they care about their students on a personal and individual basis, and are able to create a positive classroom culture.

At NCC: Instructors, across the campus, work to build relationships with students; they know student names, something about them, and create meaningful opportunities for the students to interact and collaborate with each other. The faculty is purposeful and proactive with regard to cultivating a positive classroom and campus environment for students.

2: State (S2) the learning.

Post an essential question (EQ). An EQ, a broad overarching question usually linked to one or more of the learning objectives, can help students align their thinking as they transition from one subject to the next or from their life outside to inside the classroom. An EQ also helps students develop an understanding of why the lesson is important and what it is they are about to learn. Establishing an EQ also helps set the context for student learning. Posting and stating learning outcomes or objectives helps put students in a learning frame of mind because they will know what will be expected of them and their learning. Explicitly stating the objectives also allows the students to know when and where to focus their attention.

At NCC: Many of the faculty state, clearly and concisely, and discuss expected leaning outcomes at the start of every class. Many post learning outcomes in their classroom and all are required to list learning outcomes on their Moodle page, NCC's learning management system.

3: Scaffold (S3) the learning.

Scaffolding creates opportunities for students to connect what they have learned previously and what they will learn going forward. Review the information from the last class, preview the learning planned, and review the new information again at the end of the lesson (Review-Preview-Review or RPR). At the same time, scaffolding "chunks" the learning into more manageable pieces and/or tasks, and builds learning concepts from simple to more complex. Success with less difficult tasks or items may help students develop academic confidence in their ability to learn new and more difficult concepts. Just as scaffolding is used to support buildings during the construction process, educational scaffolding provides support for students during the learning process (Rutherford, 2008).

At NCC: Faculty often use higher order questions (such as investigating, analyzing, and/or synthesizing) or Costa's Levels of Questioning for example, to build on and/or link less difficult concepts to more difficult and complex problems. Students experience success with lower level questions, build a foundation of understanding, and develop their strength as a learner. As a result, NCC's faculty report that students are more willing, and able to tackle more difficult problems.

4: Differentiate (D) the learning.

Develop and implement multiple instructional strategies. The last few decades of educational research have resulted in a greater understanding with regard to the way people learn. Suffice to say, and I think we can or perhaps should all agree, that people learn in different ways and at different rates. It follows then that every lesson should contain a variety of learning strategies. For example, some lecture, including planned opportunities for reflection and discussion for auditory learners, some reading and writing for read/write learners, and some collaboration/active learning for kinesthetic learners. Faculty who differentiate their instruction and use diverse teaching methodologies create learning environments that increase the likelihood of meeting the needs of most, if not all students. A positive change for learners is dependent upon a number of things, including the ability to implement best practice through differentiated instruction (Pearce, 2011).

At NCC: Instructors have learned about their own learning style and the learning styles of others. They have learned about the types of instructional strategies that work best for different kinds of learners. The faculty at NCC has also participated in ongoing instructional professional enrichment focused on improving their ability to use diverse teaching strategies, which has helped the faculty make critical improvements to their instruction.

By planning and implementing multiple strategies, and differentiating their instruction, they are better able to meet the learning needs of all students.

5: Assess (A) the learning.

Check for understanding throughout the lesson. Formative Assessment (FA) strategies such as direct questioning, four corners, quick writes, and exit tickets help an instructor gauge student learning/understanding. Used throughout the lesson, FA strategies let the instructor know to continue with the lesson or to stop, review and/or re-teach. FA is usually low stakes, non-threatening, and non-evaluative. Most importantly, it is not punitive and as a result, students are more likely to participate and take risks. It lets them know as well, where they are with their learning. The best college teachers (Bain, 2004) use assessment to gauge their own efforts, and avoid judging students based on arbitrary standards in the process. FA strategies can be implemented throughout a lesson activity, and can be used to gather feedback. Instructors are able to make immediate changes in the lesson activities and/or assignments and give students prompt feedback on their strengths and weaknesses (Suskie, 2009).

At NCC: At any point during the lesson, an instructor might use a think-pair-share activity to provide students with an opportunity to reflect, discuss, and share their learning. When students share and report out (share) as a small group they are more confident and, right or wrong, know that they are not alone in their thinking. The instructor knows instantly if the students are “on the right track” with their learning or if re-teaching or individual/small group attention is necessary.

6: Close (C) the lesson.

Develop a culminating activity (or several) that brings closure to the class. Tie the lesson together with a review of the learning outcomes, and remind them of what it was that they were supposed to learn as a result of your teaching. A culminating activity gives the students a chance to demonstrate or share their learning, and provides more opportunity for the instructor to give feedback. A closing activity also gives the instructor an opportunity to describe what will come next for the students and what will be expected from them.

At NCC: Instructors use Exit Tickets at the end of lectures as a non-threatening, non-evaluative way to assess student understanding, and to bring closure to the lesson. The Exit Ticket may ask the student, for example, a question relating to the intended learning outcome(s) or ask them to write a sentence identifying the main ideas of the lesson. The feedback they receive from the assessment helps the instructor gauge student learning and guide planning for the next lesson. Additionally, the students know that they are able to leave the class once they have submitted their Exit Ticket.

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