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EDAE 620 - Discussion Post regarding Learning Style Preferences

I have found that learning about my learning style preferences and others has been very helpful in understanding my own tendencies to teach in a certain way and to adapt my teaching to acknowledge and accommodate other styles.

I am an extravert who loves brainstorming and enjoy using it in facilitating workshops and class discussions. After learning about the different processing styles and the differences between those with a preference for extraversion and those for introversion, I have made a small adjustment in how I start a brainstorming activity.

For example, when posing a question to groups for brainstorming, I ask people to think about the question first and suggest that some people might even want to write some ideas down first. I then open it up for verbal brainstorming. This takes a few extra minutes but the payoffs are worth it. I have received feedback that it was helpful for those who have a preference for introversion. I learned from those who are more reflective, that this made a difference for them as they had an opportunity to be heard. Those with a preference for introversion, process internally first rather than thinking on their feet. The reflection time given at the beginning puts them on a more even playing field.

I understand the concern that you can't meet every learner's need every time. That is why it is helpful to design instruction with a wide variety of methods and activities that address a variety of needs but not necessarily all at once. For example, in a stress management workshop that I deliver, I use a wide variety of techniques. Not every technique works for everyone. For example, there is a guided visualization activity that causes a physical reaction to demonstrate how the body responds to thoughts. I find the visual learners respond well to this activity. Some people do not respond to it but have reported that they were fascinated and learned a great deal by the discussion after. I let them know that what works for one person does not necessarily work for another and that we need to discover what works best for them. As such, we explore concepts from a variety of perspectives and incorporate diverse activities so that a variety of learning needs and styles are met.

At the college that I worked for, we believe in learning about diverse learning styles and using that knowledge to include a variety of activities that accommodate them. We had a group of professors from China participate in a summer program to learn about Canadian teaching practices. We had them involved in a variety of workshops including those addressing Learning Styles. I facilitated a Personality Dimensions workshop with the aim of helping these educators to identify their own preferences and develop

strategies to better meet the needs of diverse learners. This was a very interactive workshop where they were able to see and experience the differences first hand. The response was very positive with many planning on making small changes or additions to what they are doing to reflect a wider scope of learning styles.

The examples that I used in this discussion address personality differences and visual learners, however, I try to use a variety of teaching methods and techniques where the opportunity presents itself. I feel that by doing this, I am better able to engage the learners and meet their diverse needs. Sometimes that will be lecture, discussion, role plays, group work, case studies, simulation, guided visualization, and more depending on the context and needs.