Targeting what we teach to the people we are teaching and taking into account what they tell us they understand is one key to effective diagnostic-based teaching. A quick and easy diagnostic tool useful at any time assesses students’ “Confidence Levels.” Pick 4 or 5 topics that you believe are difficult for students to grasp and use the following Student Feedback Technique (SFT) to check their confidence level with what they are learning. After reviewing their feedback, design instructional tasks and allocate class time to target the topics that students feel the least confident with.

Attached (or below) you will find the “Confidence Levels” SFT. For this SFT, choose your topics ahead of time. This SFT can be used at the beginning or end of any class period, administered every three weeks, or used intermittently.

When using an SFT, tell students you need their input to adjust the course to their needs, strengths and weaknesses. Reassure them that these are not evaluation tools, that you need their honest answers, and that you will share with them what you learn and how you will use the information to help them. Tell them there is no need to put their names on the forms (you will get better answers if they are anonymous).

Allow 10 minutes for students to complete the SFT.

In the next The Practical Professor: Tip Series #2.
Confidence Levels

I need feedback from you concerning some key topics. *This is not a quiz, and I am not going to use your answers to develop a quiz or test.* Your responses will help me develop some instructional activities to help you better understand topics that you tell me you do not understand well. Here is the scale to use.

1 = I cannot explain this to someone else  
2 = I do not think I can explain this clearly to someone else  
3 = I can explain this, but not well  
4 = I am pretty sure I can explain this so someone else will understand it  
5 = I can explain this clearly to someone else

I will give you five topics. For each one, use the “Confidence Levels” scale above and write the number that best represents your feelings. Remember, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. *This is only feedback to me.* Be honest!

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

If there is some other topic, or theory, or concept that you would like me to explain more please list it right here.

Thanks for your help!
Also available!

Teaching

A series of practical and innovative teaching tips for college faculty

The Top 10…

No. 1 – The All-Important First Day of Class
No. 2 – Ways to Make Your Teaching Life Easier
No. 3 – The Crucial Second and Third Classes
No. 4 – Ways to Show Students that You Respect Them
No. 5 – Promote Effective Student Study Skills
No. 6 – Components of a Well-Planned Class
No. 7 – Observe Your Teaching Tendencies
No. 8 – Ways to Keep Your Students Learning
No. 9 – Ways to Get Feedback on Teaching from Students
No. 10 – Using Short Writing to Assess Learning
No. 11 – Getting More (and Better) Student Questions
No. 12 – Mixing Things up Mid-Semester
No. 13 – Engaging Different Input Preferences
No. 14 – Helping Students Stay the Journey
No. 15 – Ways to End Your Course
No. 16 – Resources for Learning and Teaching
No. 17 – Create a Memorable AND Functional Syllabus
No. 18 – Ways to Build Your Students’ Self-Efficacy
No. 19 – Practical Study Tips to Share with Your Students
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No. 23 – Using Student Groups
No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
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No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire
No. 30 – Paths to Mindfulness

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