The Practical Professor

Quick and easy tips, questions, and suggestions for improving teaching and learning.

Transparent Assignments

Teaching Tip Series #5

The Transparency in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education movement is built on a very simple philosophy: learning is enhanced if students clearly understand the assignment, know the criteria for success, and are told why it matters.

Too often, our assignments do not clearly state these three things. And yet, we know that people are more motivated when they know what they are supposed to do, have a context for why it is important, and understand how they will be evaluated. In fact we often demand just these things in our own professional lives.

All Transparent Assignments must clearly state the following things:

**Purpose:** What is the purpose of this assignment? Why is it important that students learn it? How does this learning task connect to a learning task that will come later in the course, a skill necessary for a program or major, or a career?

**Task:** What exactly is the assignment asking students to do? Do not take words like “analyze” for granted: very few of our students know what we mean when we use this word. Search for words like this in your instructions and define them clearly in terms of tasks.

**Criteria:** How exactly will students be evaluated, how will they know that they have been successful? Can you provide a notated sample of a successful assignment? Can you provide a grading rubric before students begin working on the assignment?

For more information, check out the website for the Transparency movement: https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency

In the next *The Practical Professor:* Reflective Practice Series #5
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
No. 20 – Laddering Thinking Skills
No. 21 – Learning Based Ways to End Lessons
No. 22 – Ways and Reasons to Be Vulnerable While Teaching
No. 23 – Using Student Groups
No. 24 – Components of a Complete Learning Experience
No. 25 – Ways to Use Visuals for Learning
No. 26 – Students’ Locus of Control
No. 27 – Help Students with Rigorous Writing Assignments
No. 28 – Ways to Shake Up Your Teaching
No. 29 – Teaching to Inspire
No. 30 – Paths to Mindfulness

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