

The Field Files

From The Office of Field Services
April 22, 2015

Volume 3, Issue 6

How Can We Enhance Learning Opportunities for All Children?

Professional conversations and current evaluation tools used to measure teacher effectiveness often address a teacher's use of varied learning styles in his or her lesson. **However, despite the popularity of learning styles in dialogue around differentiation and student engagement, the current research on the variety of schemas of learning styles available is inconclusive at best.** Conversely, the deeper one looks into this education trend, the more he or she will find cautionary advice regarding buying into any one learning style model.

Pashler et al. (2009) conclude that current evidence does not provide research-based support for integration of learning style assessments into general education. Vanderbilt University shares this deduction as evidenced by their website ([Center for Teaching.](#)) As Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching website explains, "Despite the popularity of learning styles and models such as the VARK it's important to know that **there is no evidence to support the idea that matching activities to one's learning style improves learning.**"

Teaching students how to think about their own thinking through metacognitive strategies, empowers them to believe they CAN LEARN...

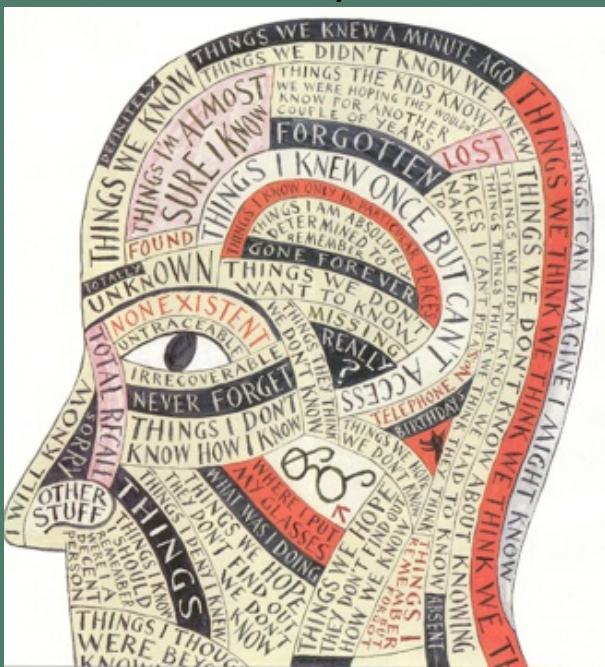
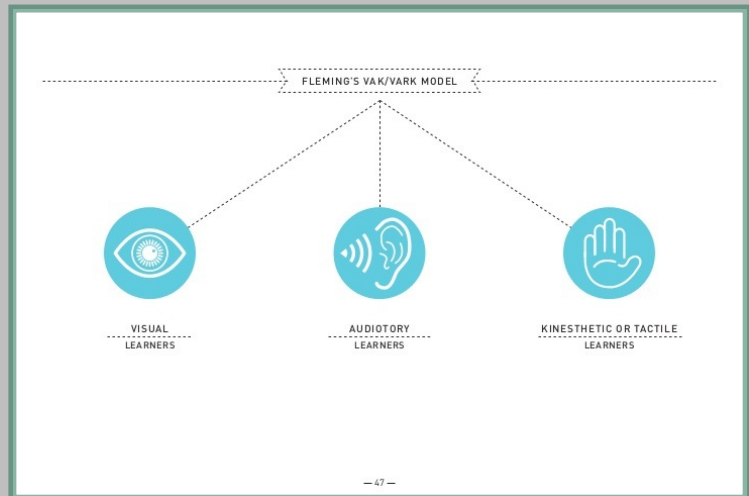


Image from www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de ([click here](#))



Fleming's VAK/VARK learning style model ([click here](#))

We as teachers are accountable for student learning, and we have to have a lot of conversations with others about what we are doing to help students improve their learning. **Always keep in mind that education is an industry, and many people have invested a lot of money and resources into selling ideas about learning styles to us.** Many professional educators, administrators, and parents see learning style models as based on valid and reliable research.

However, the research based discussion really redirects thinking into a more critical path of awareness of metacognition – thinking about thinking. Scientific evidence shows growth when students are taught to think about their own learning process in various disciplines. **Aligned with brain research, metacognition strategies are designed to direct learners into becoming consumers of knowledge who are able to self-regulate and monitor their own learning.**

Teaching children to be metacognitive learners requires them to reflect following learning and be able to give insight into what they know and what they don't as well as what was confusing and why. True reflection and thinking about one's own thinking often translate to statements such as "I learn best when..." that resemble awareness of what others might call learning styles. **See the next page for suggested practices in developing metacognitive learners.**

John Dewey asserted that we learn more from reflecting on our experiences than from the actual experiences themselves. The model to the right (Ambrose et al, 2010) is one way to look at self-directed learning. As students improve their own metacognition, the start (assess, evaluate, and plan) and conclusion (reflect) of a task may take more time and involve more learning than the task itself. Three ideas to increase reflection for our learners are:

1. Using “wrappers” in learning

Wrappers surround or “wrap” an activity and serve much like a learning target and post-assessment of learning. Marsha Lovett’s (2008) work on Teaching Metacognition is summarized [here](#). Lovett addresses use of lecture wrappers, homework wrappers, and exam wrappers (also developed through the [Carnegie Mellon Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence](#)).

Lecture wrappers require the instructor to present tips on active listening prior to the start of direct instruction and to have students write down three key ideas from the lecture immediately following. Students then self-check their key ideas against three key ideas provided by the instructor. Please see [this link](#) (you will also find a link to Lovett’s 2008 presentation on teaching metacognition embedded in the page linked above) for Lovett’s ideas on Homework Wrappers and Exam Wrappers to build metacognition.

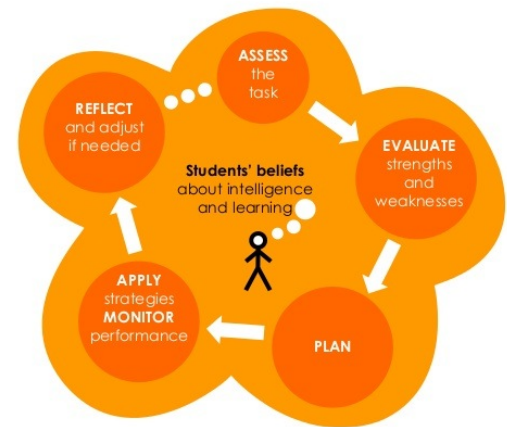
2. Having students share “the muddiest point” at the conclusion of a lesson (Tanner 2012)

Teachers request student response to the question, “What was most confusing to me about the material being explored in class today?” Students write a response on an index card or exit slip and either share aloud or submit to the teacher as formative assessment to be addressed when the lesson continues. **Requiring this as a class activity creates a community of learning where everyone is given permission to be confused and need clarification to work toward mastery.** Additionally, teachers are able to benefit from receiving feedback from the class about common misconceptions and where the learning needs to move next. Students should be encouraged to think about commonality over time in their confusions; this can drive their independent learning as well

3. Modeling “thinking aloud” as a teacher to help students develop their own thinking voice

In your process as a teacher, talk through how you work on a problem or make predictions when you read or conduct an experiment. If you are teaching writing, think aloud and model your writing process. Help students then to talk about theirs.

Resource: pp. 188-216 (Ambrose et al, 2010) Chapter 7 How do students become self-directed learners? Cycle of Self-Directed Learning



<https://www.dragbox.com/s/y6qg5z6agcu/07-Self-Directed-Learners.pdf>

Ambrose et al (2010) *How Learning Works* ([click here for link](#))

References:

Pashler, H., McDaniel, M., Rohrer, D., & Bjork, R. (2008). Learning styles: Concepts and evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. 9.3 103-119.

Rodgers, C. (2002). Definish Reflection: Another look at John Dewey and Reflective Thinking. *Teachers College Record*, 104 (4), 842 - 866.

Tanner, K.D. (2012) . Promoting Student Metacognition. *CBE*, 11, 113 - 120.

Important Dates

Non-academic Pre-reqs Due

Friday, May 1, 2015

Commencement

Saturday, May 9, 2015

Mandatory Orientation for Fall Field Experience

Thursday, August 20, 2015



Great Reads

[Edutopia - Kids Speak on Engagement](#)

[Edutopia - The 8 minutes That Matter Most](#)

[Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom](#)

[Some Active Learning Strategies](#)

[Active Learning to Promote Critical Thinking](#)

[Active Learning Techniques](#)

[Inquiry Based classroom](#)

[Metacognition through inquiry circle discussion](#)

[Metacognition: The Gift That Keeps Giving](#)

[Instruction that Sticks: The Boss of my Brain](#)

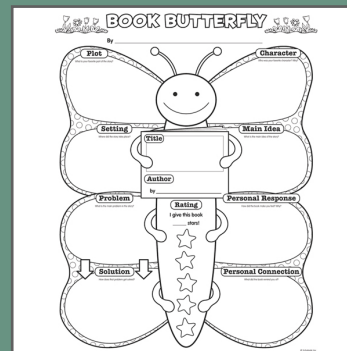
Activate Direct Instruction with Graphic Organizers and Guided Notes

Current brain research on student engagement during learning supports the **need for students to be actively involved in the learning process in order to move information from the short term memory into the long term memory**, thus turning it into knowledge. We know that a lesson plan is incomplete if it only includes procedures for the teacher and does not show learning tasks for the students that are aligned to the procedures of the teacher.

During direct instruction or in class reading of literature or informational text in any subject, students often need support to aid their organization of the information they are learning.

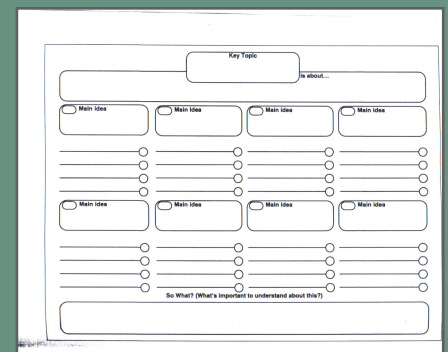
If you haven't already done so, perform a google search for [Graphic Organizers](#) and select "images." You should always have students recording information when you are delivering direct instruction. **There are endless formats that you can use. Just make sure to align what you select to the task at hand!**

Visit the National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials ([click here](#)) for more information on when to use what type of graphic organizer.



For Elementary use a fun graphic organizer to breakdown a difficult or multi-step task ([click here](#))

Here is an example of a generic graphic organizer to go along with note taking for third grade and above ([click here](#))



Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Choose two things that you will compare and contrast.

How _____ compares and contrasts with _____

What is different?	What is alike?	What is different?
• _____	• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____	• _____
• _____	• _____	• _____

This chart is another way to organize comparison and contrast; adapt it to meet the needs of your class. ([click here](#))

Because you can't call it a WORKSHEET when you are having a professional conversation about your lesson...

Graphic organizer - A series of visual charts and tools used to represent and organize a student's knowledge or ideas. Graphic organizers are also sometimes referred to as **knowledge maps, concept maps, story maps, cognitive organizers, advance organizers, or concept diagrams**. What is the difference between a graphic organizer and an advance organizer? ([aim.cast.org](#))

Advance organizer - An advance organizer is not a summary or review of a previous lesson. It also doesn't provide a structure for the current lesson. Instead, it provides a structure for student thinking. It acts as a conceptual bridge from the old information to the new information. ([study.com](#))

Pictured to the right, Cornell Notes are a great technique for note taking and teaching how to study from notes. ([Click Here for a description of this technique](#)).

Topic	Name: _____
QUESTION/Main Ideas/Thoughts	Hour: _____
	Date: _____
	Notes
SUMMARY	
Explains the meaning of the passage or article using students own words.	

Using Technology to Target Growth and Improve Learning

Technology in the classroom is only beneficial if it is used to positively impact learning. Kids are inundated with devices and apps; thus requiring educators to make strong pedagogical choices with the technology we use so that it is less about screen time and more about learning.

This page is jam-packed with ideas and apps to explore as you prepare for your next two weeks and for whatever Fall brings your way. Two pieces of advice to consider are as follows:

- 1) Remember that using technology is necessary for 21st century teaching and learning, but it is only valuable when it is used to positively impact learning.
- 2) Really know the ins and outs of any app, software, or tech tool before you add it into your plans or your classroom routine.

Bloom's Taxonomy for iPads



Silvia Rosenthal Tolisano-GloballyConnectedLearning.com - Adapted from Dave Hilehan

Use technology in a more engaging way by seeking resources that help you increase rigor and critical thought. Check out this version of Bloom's Taxonomy for iPads and search for others too! (click [here](#) for the above image and [here](#) for a google search of similar images).

Platforms for Online Teaching and Learning

Schoology - 4th and 5th grade special ed teacher Mary Lynch describes Schoology as, "Facebook for schools." However, it is closed and monitored, and students under 13 need permission to use this resource that functions much like Blackboard

Edmodo - Marcia Simmons from Cinco Ranch High School in Katy, Texas likes the social networking appeal of Edmodo. Their iPhone app and ease of use increases the relevance of the public school in the eyes of students

Moodle High School English teacher, Cynthia Bassani says Moodle is a great format for classroom organization, short quizzes, and journal writing. She stated, "Students who struggle with writing often increase their fluency through keyboard writing."

Google Drive Bassani said, "Google apps for education is fantastic! Students are using it now for their research papers. I have them create folders in Google Drive and share them with me. Each document they create is automatically shared with me." They use Google Drive for teacher feedback as well as peer editing.

ClassDojo A classroom management tool providing students and parents with customizable feedback that is delivered in real time. Class Dojo comes complete with free classroom resources and ample student choice.

Other Helpful Links

[Google Apps for Education](#)

[Blended Learning and Technology in the Classroom Blog](#)

[Blooms with technology](#)

[Apps to help students improve writing skills](#)

[Apps for struggling readers and writers](#)

[Prezi](#) "zooming" presentations for enhancing engagement in note delivery

[Glogster](#) - a social network of graphics blogs (glogs) - users can make interactive posters using videos and music.

[50 Great Apps for Teachers](#) - Washington Post article highlighting 50 Apps for teachers featured in Scholastic Instructor magazine. Like Scholastic's [Facebook page for teachers](#) for regular updates.

[Edutopia - 5 Fantastic, Fast, Formative Assessment Tools](#)

[What Can Technology Do for Tomorrow's Children - Secretary Arne Duncan](#)