

Remember to Consider Learning Space

Often when planning instruction we are asked to state our goal, intention or outcome. This focuses our instructional and assessment efforts, and when properly conveyed to learners, it enables them to understand where things are heading and what might count in terms of a mark or grade. The growing popularity of authentic, real-world assessment tasks reflects our attempts to focus student effort on learning how to do the sorts of things they will need to do in their chosen careers. But as time goes on and we gain more experience teaching, we come to understand that the skills required to produce those real-world products are often hidden. Those skills may include critical or creative thinking, sense-making, cross-cultural competency, social intelligence, cognitive load management and virtual collaboration - to name just a few. So we begin to realize that not all learning can be captured by our often narrowly stated intentions.

As we get experienced in the teaching business we realize that stated goals actually capture very little of what students actually learn. So here's my tip:

The next time you write some kind of outcome or goal or intention or objective, and an accompanying assessment task, write it and then answer this question:

What type of learning space will provide the best place for learners to practice developing the skills they will need to achieve success in this task?

This will focus your attention on process - how actually will students be able to go about their learning? What conditions are necessary for them to be able to flourish under your instruction? The answers will guide you at to what kind of learning space you will create that will accomplish your objective but will allow importantly some much more richer and more personal learning to occur.

In this sense a learning space extends far beyond the physical and into the whole learning environment that we as teachers are capable of creating for our students

Submitted by

Tony Fetherston

Centre for Learning and Development

Edith Cowan University

Perth, Australia

<http://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/centre-for-learning-and-development/overview>