

## Thinking and Rethinking Teaching and Learning

How do we learn? How do we teach? How do learners and teachers differ in the way they prefer to learn or teach? How can strengths for one become a barrier to the other?

These are just a few of the questions that greet thoughtful and reflective teachers. Metacognition involves our thinking about thinking and, when it comes to our work as faculty, much of this thinking can and should revolve around the processes associated with learning and teaching. Whether you've done this recently or never before, a good place to start is by taking inventories that have been designed to prompt deep thought and reflection on your preferred styles and preferences with respect to teaching and learning. Completing learning and teaching styles/preferences inventories not only clue you in to your own preferences they highlight the range of student styles and preferences you may need to address as you teach and ideas for approaches to teaching that may be new to you and represent your next instructional horizon. Many inventories of this kind exist, but the following are some free online instruments to begin your reflections.

### Learning Styles and Preference Inventories

- VARK Learning Preferences Inventory at: <http://www.vark-learn.com/> - VARK is a questionnaire that provides users with a profile of their learning preferences. These preferences are about the ways that they want to take-in and give-out information.
- Memletics Learning Styles Inventory at: <http://www.learning-styles-online.com/inventory/> - The Memletics learning styles inventory provides you with a guide to your own personal learning styles. By asking a series of questions, and then scoring the results, it indicates which are your dominant and secondary styles. The Memletics learning styles inventory (quiz, questionnaire, test) is free and available on this site. You can do the test online, or download the test in Microsoft Excel or Adobe PDF format.
- Paragon Learning Style Inventory at: <http://www.oswego.edu/plsi/index.html> - is a self-administered survey that provides an indication of learning style and cognitive preference using the four Jungian dimensions (i.e, introversion/ extroversion, intuition/sensation, thinking/feeling, and judging/perceiving) that are also used by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Murphy Meisgeir Type Indicator, and the Keirsey-Bates Temperament Sorter - but this instrument can be self-scored (and works with ages 9-adult).
- Index of Learning Styles at: [http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning\\_Styles.html](http://www.ncsu.edu/felder-public/Learning_Styles.html) is an on-line instrument used to assess preferences on four dimensions (active/reflective, sensing/intuitive, visual/verbal, and sequential/global) of a learning style model.

### Teaching Styles and Preference Inventories

- Teaching Perspective Inventory at: <http://teachingperspectives.com/> - A short online questionnaire to help you summarize your views and perceptions about teaching with links to information about related teaching approaches to support reflection.
- Teaching Styles Inventory at: <http://www.texascollaborative.org/TSl.htm> - a downloadable self-assessment instrument that provides feedback on your preferred teaching style (comprised of your affective learning goals for students and teaching methods used to support those goals). It addresses characteristic ranges for learning, concept representation, cognitive processing and interaction.

After you complete one of more of the above inventories, consider the following:

- What did you discover about yourself? Do your preferences influence your teaching? Might they create barriers for different types of learners? What changes might you make in your teaching as a result?
- Are there any of the learning inventories that you would like your students to complete? What would you do to help them become increasingly aware of their learning preferences and strengths, understanding how to both build on these and how to expand beyond them?

- Who might you share your reflections/results with? Do you have a colleague, mentor or mentee that you like to talk about teaching with? Are you part of a Faculty Learning Community? Someone in your Center for Teaching & Learning? Sharing these inventories, completing them together and comparing/contrasting and discussing how they relate to your practice can make for some interesting conversations. Your own reflections might form the basis for a section in a Teaching Portfolio or Tenure & Promotion dossier. Or... what else?

Above all, remember that these inventories (and others like them) generally work best when you approach them as reflective guides (rather than prescriptive, value-laden guides to the “right/best way to be”). Use them to increase metacognition and awareness of teaching processes, continue growth of learners and promote conversations and new directions in your thinking about learning and teaching that promotes learning.

#### Selected References and Resources:

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