

CTL Bulletin

No. 30 – October 15, 2006

A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

Teaching Your Students Learning Skills

Please reserve your seat by contacting the CTL for a two-part workshop with Dr. Terrence Doyle on Thursday, October 19.

Dr. Terrence Doyle from Ferris State University's Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning has many years of experience helping faculty and other academic personnel devise effective ways of improving students' study skills. His workshops and presentations have been very well received across the country. If you have ever wondered how you could possibly integrate study strategies into your content course, you could not wish for a more competent and eloquent introduction to the topic (see also the FCTL's website at:

http://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/center/Teaching_and_Learning_Tips/T_LHome.htm).

How Current Research on Learning can Enhance Study Skills

1:40 – 2:55 PM, CTL, LIB-310

This workshop will focus on how to use the most current research about how college students learn to design the best tools and strategies for assisting them with their course learning. It will begin with a discussion of what is learning and how does learning occur in college students, continue with a discussion of how tutoring activities can be enhanced by developing strategies that mirror the current research on learning and conclude with a discussion of specific tutoring strategies in the areas of reading textbooks, test preparation and study and organization of information into familiar patterns.

Integrating Learning How to Learn Strategies into Content Teaching

3:00 – 4:15 PM, CTL, LIB-310

This presentation will focus on the how to learn skills that are needed by all college students if they are to be successful learners, especially in content areas that are new to them. Six areas where faculty can help students learn how to learn their content will be discussed. They include: ways to organize and pattern information into familiar structures that aid students' learning, strategies for helping students better comprehend lectures and readings, ways to assist students in development of long term memories of course content, tools for helping students to locate the important information in lectures and readings, strategies for helping students learn how to think about the content area subject matter and finally, helping students to monitor their learning to know if they have successfully learned.

To reserve a seat, please register for any of these events that you are interested in at your earliest convenience by calling ex. 4467 or e-mailing e-hansen@neiu.edu!

All CTL Bulletins are available on our website at: www.neiu.edu/~ctl/

Please turn the page for a related topic and workshop that the CTL will provide on November 1!

Helping Students to Interact with Assigned Readings

A common frustration among faculty is the difficulty in getting students to complete the assigned readings at the assigned time and to gain a basic understanding of this material to enrich classroom discussion or other activities. There are many reasons why students fail to successfully complete reading assignments. Below is a brief synopsis of some problems students may be having, strategies that faculty can employ, and sample assignments for helping students to read. Many of the ideas presented below are adapted from John Bean's book, *Engaging Ideas* which is available in the CTL library. You can also learn more about this topic in the upcoming CTL workshop Helping Students to Interact with Assigned Readings. See the bottom of this page for details.

Why don't students read?

Students fail to complete reading assignments for many different reasons. Some of the reasons are related to reading and language proficiencies. For example, students may lack the vocabulary necessary to handle academic readings. Students may not have experience with the complex grammatical and rhetorical structures of college-level reading. Many students have difficulty uncovering the argument while they read. Students also might not complete readings if they feel that they will not be held accountable for the material or if it will not greatly impact their course grade.

What strategies can I use to help my students do the readings?

Like with other assignments, students benefit from good models. Show your students the note-taking process you employ when you read by providing them with a copy of your marked-up version of an assignment that they are to read. Create reading guides for texts that are significant to the course or may be particularly difficult to read and distribute them to introduce a reading assignment. Help students to see how authors of texts are trying to get them to change their view of something by having students answer simple questions about what the author wanted the reader to believe after completing the reading and how successful or unsuccessful the author was and why. Develop ways to make students responsible for material that is provided in the readings but not specifically covered in class.

How can I implement these strategies in my courses?

Different assignments can be created and employed to focus on specific reading issues your students may have. For example, if students have difficulty with the reading process for most assignments, training students on the marginal notes approach can help. When using this approach, students stop themselves before highlighting any text in a passage and ask themselves "why is this important?" Students then make notes in the margin concerning why they wished to highlight something. This approach can help train students to read for important content and not just add color to the pages. If students have difficulty discovering the argument in readings, writing simple "what it says" and "what it does" statements can help. For each paragraph, students write a brief "what it says" statement that summarizes the main point of the paragraph and a brief "what it does" statement that indicates the paragraph's purpose. For example, the "what it says" statement might be a paraphrase of the topic sentence of the paragraph and the "what it does" statement might include information such as "provides data to support point," "gives an example," or "provides an opposing view." Through this analysis students will be forced to carefully read the assignment and construct an outline of the assignment's structure.

Interested in learning more? Come to our workshops!

Are you interested in learning more strategies for helping students with reading assignments? Register for the CTL's workshop with Kate Hahn, Helping Students to Interact with Assigned Readings, held on Wednesday, November 1 from 1:30 to 4:30pm. You can find more information about this and other CTL workshops on the CTL website at <http://www.neiu.edu/~ctl>. Please sign up for workshops on the CTL website or by contacting our office assistant, Diane Gritton, at 442-4467.