

Creating Effective Guidance

Guidance is the most substantive group communication that the instructor provides to the class. Guidance is the appropriate location for the instructor to supplement the instructional material with clarification, personal experience, and real-world examples. In summation, guidance is where the instructor personally translates the boiler-plate instructional material to a personal, interactive learning environment.

I first must assess my audience to ensure that I tailor my guidance appropriately. Online students (Adult Learners) are non-traditional students; they are students with careers and families. Adult Learners have different learning needs than 'traditional' (child) learners. Adult Learners require self-directed study and information that is succinctly delivered whereas 'child' learners require more direction and accountability.

There have been several major theories on Adult Learning such as andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998), self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1995), and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1997). The most influential contributor to Adult Learning theories is Malcolm Knowles. Knowles developed a theoretical model that focused on the teaching and learning of adults (andragogy) as being distinctly separate from the model traditionally used to teach child learners, pedagogy (Snyder, 2009). Knowles (1998) proposed andragogy as a learning-centered environment that fostered learner-centered approaches, mutual trust, and respect among learners and instructors.

My students are Adult Learners and I will incorporate their learning needs into how I compose my guidance. I will provide enough guidance to succinctly explain or exemplify my point and be mindful not to be too thorough; I could 'lose' my student to boredom. I will provide personal examples of the theory in action. I will review the

student introductions and seek to provide real-world examples by marrying the instructional theory to examples in their respective careers. Finally, and most importantly, I will always treat each student respect and thereby gain trust (by my example).

I believe my approach to guidance will greatly enhance the student's learning experience because my intentions will translate through the internet. I care and strive to do my best; this, in turn, will garner their trust and my effort will be reciprocated. This ultimately results in a comprehensive learning experience due to the rigorous interaction with me, the other students, and the instructional material.

Announcements

Announcements are the most effective group communication tool when quick information needs to be passed to the students. I can readily post announcements and they appear to the student as they walk into the classroom.

I will use discretion in my announcement posting tempo. If I post too frequently, the students will likely not read everything I post. If I post only important information as it arises, I will gain trust from the students and they will read what I post.

I can use announcements to provide 'umbrella' feedback for assignments and assessments, remind the students of important due dates, and provide sporadic tidbits of history and humor (appropriately). I believe announcements are an effective tool to communicate my continued presence in the classroom; the student will readily know that I have recently attended class and am passing along important information that benefits them. Essentially, I can communicate, 'I am here and I care', with the effective use of announcements.

On a personal note, I once heard, "Eighty-percent of being a father is simply being there". That resounds daily in my mind. I know that I am not the patriarch of my classroom, yet I do believe that the adage translates to my teaching philosophy.

References:

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Snyder, M. (2009). Instructional-design theory to guide the creation of online learning communities for adults. *TechTrends*, 53(1), 48-56.