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Short Article

Consistency: Start Now, Build Solid Habits During the Summer when Stress Levels are Low

Get your act together and develop a consistent teaching strategy. What better time to start than now? When students attend your classes, you must provide a way for those students to learn. The term for this is, "instruction."

But, creating a learning environment is difficult until you learn the nuances and subtle techniques that are required for you to motivate students and deliver instruction.

You can not expect to walk into class, parrot the methods that you were taught with when you were of school age; and hope to succeed. And it is folly to expect that the latest and greatest Instructional Fads will pay off by launching student into accelerated learning…acquiring concepts and skills in minutes, hours, or even overnight.

You will succeed by improving your teaching a little each day, testing the results of that work (not by testing students for content learning), and repeating the instructional strategies and processes that result in increased, positive student outcomes.

You will succeed further by testing what you try, then quitting the use of strategies and techniques that do not pay off in student achievement.

Consistency is the key to your ultimate teaching success.

Consistency is required for almost any self-improvement and instructional endeavor that you wish to turn into a pay off with positive results.

For example, if you want to lose weight, you must keep your diet on track, you must lay off the high calorie foods, you must stop drinking super-high calorie alcohol, and you must keep exercising. Failing to stay on the diet or slacking off on the exercise program will result in wasted time, needless hunger pangs, ridicule from your friends; and a static (resistant to change) overweight condition,

Another example: Learning something new, or becoming an expert in a new field requires consistent study. Expecting to learn while you sleep, while you eat and watch television, or by casual association with experts; is fraught with failure. And, you cannot learn by an initial burst of effort, and dwindling attention to review and practice. The failure to integrate new material into your short and long-term memories results in learning failure, application failure and failed performance.

So, consistency is required if you are to enjoy positive results from your teaching efforts.

However, the problem with consistency is that a huge goal (such as teaching students for a school year) requires a multitude of tasks that must be completed. This huge list of known activities…and all the surprise, unexpected tasks that pop up like mushrooms after a rain; seem overwhelming. Then too, we have a tendency to put off overwhelming tasks in favor of the "easy to do, easy to see results" kind of tasks.

But, if you break these huge goals into daily tasks that are limited in scope, then nothing about the daily items will seem difficult. This is the secret of successive small steps ending at the finish line of a long journey. (You take tasks, one doable item at a time, highest priority tasks first, and get busy.)>

To be successful in teaching, you must approach instruction and self-improvement in the same manner.

It is fantasy to believe that all you have to do is purchase the latest book on educational theory, purchase a magic black line master booklet, and put your teaching and self-improvement efforts on "AutoPilot."

Here is the fiction: That activity creates learning, and that you just create some…Homework

Student Projects

Internet Assignments

Reward Systems

Data-Driven Instruction Software

Student Online Portfolios

Parent Communication Blogs

Technology Integration Plans

…to ensure exponential increases in observable student outcomes.

You would never fall for such an outrageous proposition, would you?

But if you want to real instructional success, the "real secret to education," you must…Listen to your Students Every DayAnd, to pull this off, you must:Avoid Projecting your Ideas, Motivations, Beliefs, Ideals upon your Students Believe that your Students Possess an Innate Wisdom about their personal learning

Find Areas of Student Motivation that Attract them to the Curriculum Content

Provide Emotional and Personal Support for Students' Demonstrations of Creative Thinking, Problem-Solving and Decision-MakingSuccess ToolsTeaching success tools are not high-priced software (or even the free Open Source software products. Teaching success tools are not the latest launched super fad books and repackaged educational

theories. The secret teaching success tools are a calendar and checklist.

And, the Office Productivity software that you already use has this capacity, built in to the E-mail and task-tracking program, Microsoft's Outlook. But, some printed paper forms placed in a notebook will serve just as well. Even an online service such as Google's Calendar could be useful.

The secret is not in the software or the forms, but in following-through with the tasks that you identify.

What helps you track your strategies is sufficient. This could be a daily planner, Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) [such as a Palm Pilot] or a basic stenographer's notebook.

All you need is something that tells you at a glance 1.) what you completed, and 2.) what needs to be worked on next.

Consistent use of a calendar, schedule book and checklist system can mean a the difference between a a highly successful school year...or a static, lackluster school year...or a year with nothing at all to show for it. So, learn to use these tools to keep your teaching focus consistent and outcome-oriented. And summer is the best time for you to get a head start on the upcoming school year.

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