



Prepared by Kathy Klein for Week of Teaching Session – November 6, 2019

We all appreciate that teaching students in higher education is complex and some faculty report it is becoming more difficult and challenging. Now consider what is like to be a student in our classroom. What can we learn from the student behaviors we observe? What does it mean when students are spending our entire class on a cell phone or engaged in other tasks? Students will be engaged in something during our course time. We are effective teachers when we engage students in learning. If a student is engaged in texting on a cell phone, is it fully the student's problem or might I be missing opportunities as the faculty teaching the course to keep my students engaged?

We're all learners and everyone benefits from being fully engaged in the learning process. Think about sitting as a participant through an all-day conference or workshop, would you honestly say you focus and absorb all the information presented in that format? Are you pulling out a phone or tablet to check your email? Why are you not fully engaged in the topic being presented? For those of us of a certain generation, our school experience largely involved sitting in our desk, listening to the teacher, taking notes, studying and trying to get good grades. We claim we learned, but what did we retain? How did we retain what we truly learned?

Have you had an opportunity to experience a conference, workshop or course based on active learning with lots of opportunities for movement, activities, discussion, solving problems, questioning and information processing? Research indicates increased effectiveness and retention of learning with this kind of active teaching approach. Students benefit from talking and engaging with one another, with course content, and with the faculty. Students need time to process a response after a question is asked, they benefit from explaining information, sharing thoughts and providing opinions. Students learn more when they discuss concepts with each other and will remember more of what they learn. This is an important feature of the adult learner. Learning is most effective when the "student" is engaged. Is my class promoting student engagement through active learning strategies or is my teaching a little more "traditional"?

Educational research is clear in demonstrating that the more time students spend engaged with learning during instruction, the more they learn and retain. What levels of student engagement are observed in our classrooms? How is this impacted by the course design we've selected and implemented as faculty? Schlechty (2002) defines five levels of student engagement. Think about students in your class. What levels are observed?

1. —students are immersed in work/activities with personal meaning and value (discussing a topic of personal interest)

