

Podcast – July 15, 2006

Resources cited

A Brief Summary of the Best Practices in Teaching

<http://northonline.sccd.ctc.edu/eceprog/bstprac.htm>

Online Course Development Checklist

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/BlackboardTraining/Documents/OnlineCourseDevelChecklist.PDF>

“Why Johnny Won’t Post” by Tim Dotson I found at the Center for Digital Education web site. The article was not available the last time I checked however.

Dotson addressed the issue of “Why do some students resist participating in course discussion boards when they know their grade will suffer?” While acknowledging he doesn’t have all the answers, Dotson suggests four types of reasons that may account for this phenomenon.

1. Logistical. Time constraints may limit participation. Expectations play a large role – students often think online classes will require less time.
2. Personal. Some students may be intimidated at having their comments publicly available for scrutiny. Some may be insecure and feel they have nothing to say. Even motivated students may lose interest over time.
3. Educational. Online discussions follow a different model than a traditional discussion and students have little experience with it. As Dotson puts it “Students are accustomed to sharing space and time, not ideas, whereas online learning is exactly the opposite.” Dotson makes the point that online writing is a different skill than students have been taught.
4. Instructor-Related. Instructors must provide a good role model – lack of instructor involvement may signal to students that online discussions are unimportant. Dotson makes the interesting point that instructors are, typically, very reluctant to criticize student postings but this is a good opportunity to provide helpful feedback to all students.

Finally, Dotson makes the point that instructors should evaluate whether or not a discussion board with required postings really does promote student learning. For some online classes a discussion board may not contribute much value to the course. For those of us who feel that posting to a discussion board is a valuable part of our class, we should

- a) Be clear about the posting requirements
- b) Carefully design the discussion board and be sure it is pedagogically sound
- c) Be sure that we are actively involved in the discussion board

From Drummond's A Brief Summary article:

Drummond argues that while doctors and lawyers are recognized as professionals, teachers are not. He believes this is so because don't have a consensus regarding what constitutes best practices in teaching. He thinks it is possible for us to develop agreement about what good teaching really means. His 10-page compilation of best practices is an attempt to promote discussion in this area.

A sampling of Drummond's best practices.

Lecture.

- Talk in 7-10 minute segments (about the average student's attention span) and then pause, ask questions and have students record their answers
- Talk frequent surveys – e.g. “Raise your hand if you agree” “Turn to your partner and.”
- Have students listen for 15 minutes without taking any notes, then they spend 5 minutes recording all they can remember, then small groups compare notes, reconstructing the lecture, have a representative of each group summarize
- Have a mastery quiz/test during the last few minutes of the period – Drummond states that learners retain twice as much with this strategy

Some other areas of best practices include

- Group discussion triggers
- Thoughtful questions
- Reflective responses to learner contributions
- Rewarding learner participation
- Active learning strategies
- Cooperative group assignments
- Goals to grades connections
- Modeling
- Fostering learner responsibility