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The Importance of Learning Styles

In today's society, education is important for individuals to succeed in life. Most people start going to college but end up quitting. College requires students do intense study using skills that they have learned and developed. However, student's do not all learn the same way. This comes down to an individual's learning style. Learning styles are ways that a particular student learns best: "The basic theory of learning styles is straightforward. The central principle is that children learn in different ways" (Hastings 11). College professors must understand how their students learn. The college professors should know about learning styles and implement techniques in their classroom so that students can learn. Yet, some learners are well balanced like myself. I am an active, sensing, visual, and global learner.

According to a test that I took on line from North Carolina State University, I am a well balanced learner. Learning styles get divided into sections to show how a particular person learns best. The first category deals with active and reflective learners: "Active learners tend to retain and understand information best by doing something active with it--discussing or applying it or explaining it to others. Reflective learners prefer to think about it quietly first." The test shows that I am at a one on the active side, which means that I am very balanced between these two categories.

In the second category, the test revealed that I am more of a sensing learner than an intuitive learner: "Sensing learners tend to like learning facts, intuitive learners often prefer discovering possibilities and relationships" (Felder). I like learning more about reality than fantasy. When I learn something, I do relate it with something else that is real. I learn better

from real life situations and events, but not in a fantasy world. I have trouble with creativity, making it hard for me to imagine something that's not real. I do bad in English classes that study literature that is not real. For example, I did not learn a single thing in my high school English IV class. In that particular course, I studied imaginative literature. I was forced to understand a language I did not know. I struggled with passing this course with an A average. I had to adapt and read over and over again so that I would pass the test. This course was extremely difficult to me.

The category that surprised me the most was between visual and verbal learners. I felt that I learned best by someone explaining it to me, but the test proved that I was wrong. The test proved me more of a visual learner than a verbal learner. After doing some research, I was able to recognize that studying graphics and charts will help me retain more information. After recalling back on all the classes I have taken, I was able to remember a lot of information from classes we watched videos in. Seeing what the professor or teachers was lecturing about makes the material stick: "Videos play an important and vital role in instruction. From addressing diverse learning styles to meeting state standards, videos have the potential to be a significant teaching tool" (Stephens 55). Videos help reinforce the material for visual learners. In the videos, I visualize material and retain it much easier: "The visual learner needs to see what is going on in order to understand what you are trying to teach" (Baribeau 75.7). I can also retain verbal information quite easy. Yet, I don't get the correct idea of the meaning. My brain works really fast, so before the instructor gets done lecturing; my mind is already processing the material that was just stated. This hurts me a lot because I am not able to hear everything the instructor lectures on. So the meaning of what the instructor advises gets lost mainly due to vocabulary differences: "Because of our unique learning styles and the individual ways we

process the meanings of words, a seemingly positive-sounding phrase can have a detrimental effect on your game” (Flick 57.3). The game of learning is hard enough the extra misunderstanding does not help out.

The last category of the test deals with sequential vs. global learners. I received a one on the global side of this category, which shows that I am well- balanced in this section. I think that I learn to find the big picture first, then all the smaller parts fit into the puzzle: “Sequential learners tend to gain understanding in linear steps, with each step following logically from the previous one. Global learners tend to learn in large jumps, absorbing material almost randomly without seeing connections, and then suddenly ‘getting it’” (Felder). My brain absorbs all the information then when it’s done, it processes the material. This causes me to get the main idea first then think back and let the little details fall into place.

In one case that I learned best was in EMT school. During the summer, I went to EMT school at the University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio. The course was only two months long since it was during a summer semester. In this class the professors lectured off of power-point presentations. On the slides were pictures and charts that went along with what they were talking about. I took notes off of their presentations. We also put that material we had just learned into real life. We ran scenarios where we as EMT’s had to treat a patient based on what we learned. When the time came for me to take my certification exam, I was scared. I did not know what I was getting myself into. At the test site, I sat next to a man that had failed the exam two times already. I took my test and left, but I was very nervous. Time passed and came to find out that I passed the test on my first try. I became a certified EMT. Currently, I can still recall more of the information from that class thanks to the power-point lectures.

The class where I struggled and did not learn as much as I wanted to was my college algebra course. The class was not as hard as I expected it to be the problem was lack of examples shown on specific problems. I had a professor who rushed through the material only showing one example for each set of problems. The part that I struggled with was learning the concept only from seeing one problem worked out. The professor that I had talked a lot more that he wrote on the board. I had trouble understanding the terminology he used since math's a foreign language. I tried to do my homework from seeing only one example which turned out to be difficult. I struggled through completing my homework from following one example. I did not use my textbook because my professor stated to follow example done in class not in the book. I am also a global learner, so on the test I skipped some steps to get to the conclusion. Well in math you are suppose to show all steps, so points were deducted from my final score. I could not help it. I told myself to write down all the steps but my brain did not listen. This gave me a low test average forcing me to drop the class.

I fit well into most of my current classes. In my chemistry class, my professor writes all the notes on the board and uses objects to give examples. The instructor takes his time explaining the material by writing notes on the board. Then the instructor uses models, videos or examples to show what he is trying to say. In his examples he ask us questions so that he could complete the problems. This helps me think about the material and then relate it to the problem. This has helped me a lot learn one of the hardest subjects at San Antonio College. I feel that this is the reason why I am passing with a high B. I can retain a lot of information from seeing something and hearing it. If a particular professor would just stand in front of the class and lecture, I will not do so good. I know for a fact that I would have a lot of trouble recalling the information that is presented. I also have learned a great deal in my English class. The teacher

use technology to our benefit. He uses a LCD projector to show material and then teach it. He also ask the students questions, which in fact helps the active learners a lot.

As a professor, it's extremely important for you to know and understand the different learning styles out there. A good professor is one that implements certain techniques to teach his subject to students. Granted not all students are the same making it is difficult teaching to some students then others. As a professor, you need to understand learning styles when dealing with students. This will help you teach and give advice to your students on how to help themselves when they are struggling in your class. The students are the future of this country, that's why it is important for them to succeed and progress in their education.

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