

Components of the HPL Model Describing an Effective Learning Environment

Notes from EDC G460/660 class on 9/20/06

Characteristics of a knowledge-centered environment

- Can be teacher-centered (teacher is content resource), traditional pedagogy at times
- Students might be working individually
- Assessments are comprehensive, requiring students to bring prior learning to bear
- Students are asked to explain in their own words what they have just learned
- Materials on walls serve as review of content that has been learned
- Students are engaging in “practicing” the discipline (active learning) as if they were professionals in that discipline
- Students are using discipline-specific terminology accurately

Characteristics of a learner-centered environment

- Students’ interests, attitudes, beliefs are addressed and valued (and the teacher sets a model for the students about how they should value others’)
- Teacher tries to help students see how their interests, attitudes and beliefs can be transformed into more formal ways of thinking about the subject matter
- Students are trying to make sense of discipline-specific terminology
- Teacher is asking questions to try to tap into students’ prior knowledge
- Students have some decision-making power about what they will learn and explore, and maybe even about how they will be assessed

Characteristics of an assessment-centered environment

- Students receive feedback so they can move toward what they should achieve
- Summative assessment (formal testing) – comes at the end, is often final
- Formative assessment (can be informal, observational) – assessment that occurs along the way, feedback gives students the opportunity to respond and improve, shows progress
- Self-assessment and peer assessment
- Assessment occurs frequently, feedback is provided to students constantly
- Teacher is careful in phrasing feedback to help students advance
- Teacher helps students learn how to monitor their own thinking (metacognition)
- Breaking down procedures into small steps and then scaffolding students toward being able to do all the steps by themselves
- There may be portfolios of students’ work

Characteristics of a community-centered environment

- Ways of having students take some responsibility for each other
- Kids feel comfortable taking risks and possibly giving incorrect answers because they know that mistakes are opportunities for learning (danger: can be humiliating for students)
- Students engage in critiquing each others’ work
- Teachers collaborate
- Overlapping technology to create richer learning experiences, group projects
- Possibly working on projects/issues that are of value or concern to the community outside the classroom (e.g., the town), like creating murals or letters to the editor of the local newspaper, volunteering, effecting change/doing something positive for the community
- It is obvious that parents are involved and included somehow