5 MINUTE TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

Students in Our Classroom

Who are they?

The 'Millennials' - they are the students entering our classroom and recently have started to enter the workforce. They are more connected to their parents, have great expectations, have a need for speed, are collaborative and have a large social network. Based on their characteristics, they have different expectations and needs in the classroom and experiential learning environments.

What has impacted the generations?

	Silent	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Millennials
Birth Years	1925 – 1945	1946 – 1964	1965 – 1980	1981 – 2000
Historical Events	Crash of 1929; Great Depression; World War II	JFK assassination; Vietnam War; Civil / Women's Rights; Watergate	Assassinations of Robert 'Bobby' Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.; Challenger; AIDS; Three Mile Island	The fall of the Berlin wall; Columbine High School massacre; Oklahoma City bombing 9/11; Social Media
Perception of Feedback	"No news is good news"	"Once a year, with lots of documentation"	"Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?	"Whenever I want it (feedback), at the push of a button."

Why is it important?

In learning about the Millennial's seven generational characteristics (special, sheltered, confident, team-oriented, pressured, achieve*, conventional*), we need to shift from a teacher-centered ('sage on the stage') to learning-centered ('guide on the side') environment by making modifications in our didactic and experiential classrooms.

Special	A key factor that contributes to this feeling of specialness is the unusually strong relationship with their parents. They are part of the 'all are winners' -- just for participating.
Sheltered	They grew up with safety as a high priority and as a result expect rules and regulations along with the enforcement. They had little unstructured free time and decreased opportunities for independent creative thought and decision-making skills.
Confident	(and highly optimistic). This confidence seems to have developed from an easy attainment of success in high school and they become easily frustrated when they do not achieve an A or B in college courses.
Team-oriented	(and less comfortable with independent work). They prefer to work cooperatively as independent work has a higher risk of personal failure.
Pressured	They feel pressured to constantly perform for those who will be judging them. As a result, they want constant feedback and often can become paralyzed without feedback and direction.
Achieve	This relates to feeling of being 'special' as they have been told they are special and are expected to achieve great things.
Conventional	They respect cultural differences and accept a wide range of cultures; and are compromised of peacekeepers.

How do I do it?

As reflective educators, we need to think about what is working or not working in our didactic and experiential classrooms. Some ideas to explore and possibly adapt are:

(1) Create a learning-centered syllabus for classroom teaching as well as experiential training. It should provide direction for assignments, expectations of behavior and rules / regulations with ramifications if not followed. The student should be oriented to the syllabus so that they may decide how they want to engage in the course for their academic success.

(2) Remodel the learning environment, particularly the classroom. Explore team / collaborative learning with an independent learning element to keep students motivated to learn. Explore pre-reading assignments with review questions to allow for a more rich and in-depth discussion or application activities in the classroom. Consider 'real-life' situations for application of theory and evidence-based practices as well as the modeling of critical thinking and independent decision-making.

(3) Detail the purpose and process of feedback in the course or at the experiential site. This should be clear in the syllabus. Descriptors of the different evaluation tools should also be included. Feedback should be frequent, timely, include what the student has done as well as suggestions for improvement. Some examples of language that may be used when delivering feedback:

- The use of 'I' messages. Instead of "You didn't follow the protocol" to "I'm wondering why you didn't follow the protocol?"
- The use of descriptive language. Instead of "You had a great rapport with your patient" to "I saw you call the patient by name and look directly at them as you spoke."
- Avoid interpretation. Instead of "You didn't check for understanding" to "When you were explaining the medications, I noticed the patient's body language seemed they were confused."
- Collaborate on an action plan. Instead of "I want you to read up on the protocol" to "What actions will help you remember the protocol?"

Quick tips

- Be open-minded about the generations of our learners (soon enough we will have different learners in our classrooms). Look for opportunities to bridge the generations, not ways to label them.
- Engage in continual professional development related to didactic and experiential teaching; continuing to explore best practices for student learning. Are there ways you could modify your teaching to make it more learning-centered? Could you be more deliberative and move from knowledge shared to application or could you model critical thinking processes?
- Focus on educational methodology that has evidence in improving student learning / development rather than making specific curriculum modifications to meet the generation's characteristics.
- Lastly, be mindful of feedback and what it means to you versus what it may mean to the students you are educating.

More information

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