

Teaching For Success Faculty Success Center

Success Insights

Two Easy But Powerful Outcome Clarifiers

Teaching success requires thinking logically about learning outcomes and how they can be developed and sequenced for optimum results. Two simple, yet powerful questions exist to help you create a related ladder of outcome statements with relative ease.

To move upward toward outcome generality, ask, Why? To move a rung downward toward more specificity, ask, How? Using these two powerful questions allows you to start anywhere on an outcome chain and write outcomes up or down this chain as far as necessary.

Let's say that you are preparing to teach a faculty development workshop with the general learning goal of improving teaching. To demonstrate the use of these outcome clarifiers, let's pick, at random, a starting point from which to organize the learning.

Learning necessitates retention. Retention happens as learner's transfer learning from short- to long-term memory. So let's choose this outcome as our starting-point outcome statement: Ensure long-term memory transfer. The next logical question is, How?

The answer might be to add more in- and out-of-class rehearsal activities. Do you need to add more detail? If so, again ask, How? Your answers provide you with ideas describing exactly how you will add the needed rehearsal activities. Each time you ask, How? more specificity is created.

In contrast asking, Why? produces more generality. For example, Why do we need to help learners transfer learning? You might answer that the information processing model of the brain indicates new information, and it must be integrated into the brain's memory network for it to stick and be retrievable when needed.

Again asking, Why? Why do we need learning to be retrievable? The answer moves toward the generality of improving teaching and learning, the overall learning outcome of the workshop.

Teaching for Success means using these powerful "placement clarifiers" to more easily develop and sequence learning outcomes.

*~John H. (Jack) Shrawder, Exec. Director,
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