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Teaching for Success
The Journal of **Critical Success Factor** Teaching Improvement

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Teaching For Success Concept

The Six Critical Success Factors of Successful Teaching:

1. Leadership
2. Management
3. Instructional Design
    1. Prepare
    2. Input
    3. Explore
    4. Retain
    5. Reconfirm
    6. Reflect
4. Communication
5. Context and Content Analysis
6. Testing and Evaluation

In This Issue:

TFS 3.0: A New Teaching Improvement Adventure Begins

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The truth is that we all have a lot to learn about teaching and learning. But one thing is for sure, no matter how well or poorly you teach today you can improve what you are doing and how you are doing it. Improvement is not an option. Today results is the watchword in teaching, and accountability is its mantra. If being a better teacher and achieving learning outcomes is important to you (and your students are hoping it is), TFS 3.0 is for you. TFS 3.0 is about attaining greater teaching mastery and enjoyment, and that requires building on the basics, the success factors of teaching.

The key to improving a complex process, such as teaching, is to devise a practical model that depicts the fundamental underpinnings of good teaching so that you can hang practical improvement ideas on a structure that makes sense. The idea of using Critical Success Factors to identify major areas for improvement makes eminently good sense to us at TFS. In the light-yellow box to your left is an outline of the six critical success factors of teaching for success and the six steps of a simple, workable instructional design model, PIE-R3.

The critical success factor applicable to each article is indicated at the start of each major article to help you quickly choose particular teaching ideas in skill areas that interest you. For example, the following article describes a new lecture idea and thus has been labeled, "Instructional Design, CSF #3."

What is a TFS Critical Success Factor? It is a factor, component, or skill that is so important to master or have present in your teaching system that a lack of just one of these items will cause the teaching process to fail. With a knowledge of all six TFS Critical Success Factors, you gain the intellectual power to take charge of your own professional development. Using our CSF concept will give you a sense of structure and the ability to better understand what professional development for instructors is all about.

In addition to providing a usable structure, we will be explaining teaching for success in terms of: autonomy, mastery, and purpose (for creating higher levels of drive to learn), maintaining an adventurous teaching spirit, avoiding boring conformity, adding celebration, championing change, introducing focused creativity in learning, including freedom-to-choose opportunities, creating a high-impact mindset, feeding the hunger for inspiration, fueling student passion and shattering outcome expectations. Sound interesting? We hope you will become as impassioned as we are about finding and sharing better ways to achieve the learning outcomes you desire.

How to Supercharge Your Lectures with Issues-based Learning

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Experienced instructors are all too familiar with the continuous parade of "improved" teaching strategies guaranteed to enhance student learning. Unfortunately and too often, these techniques force faculty to put on blinders to time-proven pedagogical practices that supplement teaching.

Issues-based learning [IBL] is an underutilized teaching method successfully used to train attorneys, managers, physicians, and policy-makers. IBL uses current controversies to reinforce the comprehension and retention of subject-matter content.

It is typically used as a critical-thinking tool to clarify and simplify problem-solving situations. Issues-based learning instills life-long skills needed to be successful in every academic discipline area. Plus, it is also an important workforce skill recognized by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS). The SCANS was commissioned by the United States Secretary of Labor to determine the skills people need to succeed in the workforce.

What Makes a Good Teaching Issue?

Issues-based learning follows the principles of problem-based learning (PBL) theory. PBL uses a student-centered approach in which students collaboratively resolve a relevant contemporary problem and then reflect on their experiences of the process. The most important aspects of issues-based instruction are the pertinence of the issue to the course content and its relevancy to the students.

Pertinence is best determined by the compatibility of the issue to the curriculum component. For example, an issue in a political science course may involve the debate about the validity of using the Electoral College versus the popular vote as a means of determining the presidential race. Voting methodology is a fundamental principle of many political science courses and characteristically an abstract concept for students. Plus, it's a problem that has no obvious resolution and involves an understanding of each process to debate the issue rationally.

Relevancy is a moving target and may require student input of contemporary issues that concern them. For example, the Electoral College as a popular issue may only be relevant during presidential election years.

Therefore, it might be best to select an issue such as term limits for politicians or laws restricting lobbyist activities. However, these issues should be real cases pulled from recent blogs or news coverage.

A good issue for classroom use has no clearly-defined single outcome or answer. The issue should not be too simple to resolve. It should be presented in an unbiased way that promotes an environment in which students are expected to disagree on the origins, outcomes, or resolution of the issue. Students must be reminded to argue the issue with accurate facts and avoid fallacious debates that merely discredit or denigrate a particular view from an emotional perspective.

Some good sources of material to introduce issues [bulleted items are hot linked] are:

- Magazines and e-zines
- Newspapers and on-line news
- News videos
- Movie and video clips
- Podcasts
- Public radio transcripts [and shows such as "Science Friday"].
- Websites about issues
- [Blogs]

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Keep in mind, that it may be a good idea to survey students about where they learn about current issues. Their feedback can provide valueable resources for collecting issues that can be used in class.

How to Effectively Use Issues in Teaching

It is important to remember the following guidelines should be followed for successful issues-based learning:

- Students apply what they learned in class.
- The learning is driven by open-ended problems.
- Students work as a collaborative group.
- Instructors take on the role as "facilitators" of learning.
- Students are encouraged to respect other views.

What about Delivery?

There is no one established delivery method of issues-based learning. The typical scenario places students into small break-out groups after a topic is discussed. Time is left at the end of the period for the students to reflect upon their resolutions to the issue. This can also be done asynchronously in online courses or as take-home work for students. A very effective delivery method uses the case-study approach.

Students are briefly introduced to the issue at the beginning of lecture. The instructor then uses the lecture as a way of showing the students how particular facts are important to the issue. Subsequently, students are then given the role of resolving the issue. The resolution can either be conducted as small work groups or as an instructor-facilitated discussion for the whole class. Clicker technology can be used to share student feedback in whole-class discussions.

Student Debate Format Recommendations

Students should be asked to use the following format during their debate of the issue:

- Describe in your own words, what is the issue being debated.
- Explain the "yes" or "pro" position for each part of the issue.
- Explain the "no" or "con" position for each part of the issue.
- What are the pieces of evidence to support each "pro" and "con"?
- Is the evidence a credible fact or is it an opinion?
- What are at least two main areas of disagreement between the two sides?
- Is there any agreement between the two sides?
- What is your group's position and why?

Conclusion

Years of educational research confirms that active learning strategies such as issues-based instruction promote student success. All of these studies show that students learn better when they are invested in their own learning. Issues-based learning has added value for students over other types of active learning techniques. Students gain lifelong collaborative task completion skills as well as achieving better comprehension and retention of course content. In addition, instructors also become learners as they guide the class to a host of different and unexpected resolutions.

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The Five Pillars of Good Teaching

by Ted Rachofsky
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I just received a letter from a colleague in New York. "Ted, I just googled your name and to my surprise, I found you've written quite a few articles. How do you do it?" "It's easy" I wrote back, "Every time I make a mistake in class I have something to write about.

The list is almost infinite." Up until a year ago this was my inspiration for writing articles. The change came when our adult education department received a grant to educate high school dropouts without diplomas and without their GED's. Our job was to help the targeted students pass their GED's and pass one of the college placement exams (called the COMPASS or THEA). Because of great success, I was suddenly an expert and was called to lead workshops for other adult education teachers.

Kathy and Debbie, the adult education coordinators put it succinctly, "We're not interested in what you teach, we're interested in how you teach." Honestly, I haven't thought about this since those philosophy of education courses that I took as an undergraduate student. Over the next few days, I churned out a list of fundamentals that comprise an essential part of my teaching repertoire.

Patience

My first pillar of teaching is **patience**. I am now 65 years old and I have just figured out that when I stare at someone, there is some radar that turns on and this person knows exactly what I'm doing. I've got news for you, it's exactly the same with students. As soon as we teachers start to lose patience and think, "You're supposed to know this," or "This is so simple," the student's radar picks it up and as teachers, we're dead.

The response I often hear from complaining students is, "My teacher makes me feel stupid." I usually do not fall into this trap because of my first model and math teacher, my father. I remember high school algebra, dealing with trains leaving from different places, going different speeds and somehow trying to figure out where they met. Patiently working together we solved myriads of problems together until I could do them by myself. Voices were never raised, time was immaterial and patience was our watchword. It was like Holmes and Watson solving a mystery. It was fun.

Positive Bias, Encouragement, Recognition

My second pillar is to be **positive** and to generously give strokes. One of my favorite stories is about an inner-city class of low achievers. The class records were filled with teacher complaints. Before the semester began, the administrator took the new teacher aside and told her, "Sara, this is one of the best classes in the school. They have huge potential that nobody sees. I'm depending on you to bring out their talent and help them succeed," and she did. The lesson is clear, treat students as winners and they become winners.

My personal example of the success of the positive approach came with Christine, a student returning after being out of school for more than twenty years. She would grasp concepts, and then a day later forget them. This frustrating pattern kept repeating itself during the whole semester. Near the end of the semester she came up to me, "Ted, I don't think you know it, but almost every day from the beginning of the semester I've had a hard time coming to class. I'd lie in bed not wanting to get up and face another day of math. Then I'd think about you, day after day, smiling, telling jokes and making learning fun. Holding on to that image I'd get out of bed, and, here I am." I was speechless. All I could say was "Thank you."

Another way to be positive is to give "**strokes.**" Strokes are a positive reaction to someone's action. A compliment, a hug [Where physical contact is appropriate, of course. See the TFS Quick Course, "Harassment in the Academic Setting" to make sure you understand the mores in this area.], or just a smile and a nod are common examples of strokes.

The point is: Never be afraid to give honest encouragement, support, and inspiration. In classes, many times we're communicating with students who haven't received many compliments in their lives. It takes time, but I believe, positive, encouraging messages are essential for the maintenance of optimum emotional health.

Management—Critical Success Factor #2

Top 10 Class Time Wasters That Derail Outcome Achievement

1. Beginning class late because your waiting for late students to arrive.
2. Failing to prepare for your class.
3. Not knowing how to use an effective instructional design model such as the TFS PIE-R3 teaching sequence model.
4. Instructors who depend on technology systems to present class material and fail to arrive in time to check these systems out for proper operation.
5. Teaching a class with vague or valueless learning goals.
6. Handing out information sheets, homework papers and tests.
7. Taking attendance verbally.
8. Allowing one student to dominate a discussion or take charge of your class.
9. Permit disinterested students to annoy and distract those students who are trying to learn.
10. Presenting class content via long, poorly organized and boring lectures.

Foster a Sense of Community

My third pillar is: "**Establish a sense of community**." Strangely this pillar did not come out of the classroom experience, but rather when I was a community organizer for VISTA. My job was to get an extremely diverse community to form and run a cooperative grocery store.

According to Saul Alinsky, a community activist, when people realize they have a common goal, differences melt and unified action results. It worked with the co-op and it works in the classroom. Any of the numerous ice breakers that can be found in a group therapy book can be used to start things off.

I usually break the class into groups of two or three, and after 10 minutes of getting to know each other, have them present their new friends to the class.

After a student has presented their new friend, I always ask them to tell me something they like about themselves. I make sure that their response is followed by loud applause.

It takes a little time, but the results are magical. Students start to trust each other and lose their fear of asking questions and just as important, they start working together. Sometimes during the semester I'm able to step back and see everyone working on a problem, either individually or in small groups. It's so powerful that it brings tears to my eyes.

Smiles and Laughter

My penultimate pillar is **humor**. Inevitably, sometime during the semester, I'll be lecturing and somebody will ask "What page are you on?" I slowly put the text on the floor, adjust my feet so they're covering the two visible pages and proudly announce I am on page 222 and 223. It's not true that every teacher has to be funny, every teacher has their own style. What is true is that every teacher needs to be congruent, i.e. that the way we feel on the inside is the way we act on the outside. This powerful "way of being" brings trust and honesty into the classroom.

Respect

There is one final pillar that is both unbendable and all encompassing—**respect**. Every time there is an argument or disagreement I always think of my friend Jim who would get up and softly remind us, "We must observe the amenities. We're all human beings and need to treat each other humanely. It's just the golden rule."

New Adjunct Assistance Blog Comes Online

Paul Hummel, Ed.D.

Dozens of excellent and helpful books have been written about teaching, some specifically targeting adjuncts and new faculty. But even if instructors knew which books to read, few would have the time. This is where ajunctassistance.com comes into play. I draw on my experience as an adjunct, a student advisor, and a college administrator to present information of interest and importance to college instructors. Furthermore, my articles are written in an informal, personal style that makes reading them both enjoyable and entertaining.

Management—Critical Success Factor #2; Quick Tip

Classroom Zone Check

As defenseless pedestrians, we've all been trained to stop, look, and listen as a way to focus attention and assure our safe crossing of a busy road, intersection, or rail crossing.

But how many teachers make use of this SLL strategy to perform a "zone" or focus check in the midst of teaching? All you need is a cell phone or other timer that can be set to vibrate or beep at one or two random times during your class.

Why? When the timer beeps, stop, really stop, look, and listen to your class. Pinpoint who is totally engaged in learning and who is multitasking (half present), and who has totally checked out of the class scene.

Use this opportunity to do some in-class, impromptu research. Direct students to self-assign themselves to one of three groups: "engaged," "multitasking," or "checked out." Ask the "engaged" students to explain what got them into the learning zone. Ask the other two groups to comment on why they were only half participating or all the way out of class participation.

Chances are you will learn some useful things about teaching in the specific ways that help your students enter and stay in the learning zone. This exercise is also a perfect time to discuss what "being in the zone" means in any activity and how people get in the zone and stay in the zone for peak performance.

Instructional Design—Critical Success Factor #3

My Biggest Teaching Challenge? Helping Students Understand Critical Thinking Concepts

[For more discourse on this topic see: The TFS Linked In Group Discussion Question: ***Do you teach math, science or engineering classes in higher education? If so, would you please share your thoughts concerning the most important challenges you are facing as an instructor?***]

Steve Vaitl
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I teach general biology, human anatomy, anatomy and physiology and have taught general chemistry at Kansas City Kansas Community College for the past five-and-a-half years. Many of my students do not come straight from high school, and they're looking to change jobs to secure higher paying positions.

The biggest challenge I see is helping them to understand the concepts of critical thinking and the scientific process. Most of the students I see are headed into a health care related field. They have the advantage that they have "working world" experience, and have a dedication to learning and understanding that I have rarely seen in students, even those fresh from high school.

However, trying to get them to change their "established thinking habits" and move on to critically evaluating the information and data before them, seems nearly impossible at times. My strategy for teaching critical thinking skills involves a triple approach that I call: learning by example, analogy, and "advertisement."

This strategy came from an experience I had during my high school days. I dated a young lady whose mother was an advertising account representative. One evening her mother sat and chatted with me about her job. She told me something that has stuck with me ever since. She said, "There are three things that make an ad stick in people's heads; making it very risque, making it simply stupid, or making it stupidly simple." Hence, the "advertisement" portion of my trilogy. I try to reassure my students that they are already using critical thinking methods daily to one extent or another. Using the "keep it stupidly simple" analogy, I explain that I'm employing critical thinking when I observe a table's color, texture, weight, hardness, and acoustic properties and then deduce that it is made of wood (demonstrating along the way). I can make such an assertion using critical thinking skills with a great deal of confidence.

Going further, I state, "There is a sun up in the sky."

Most of them immediately get the obvious connection that the tree that provided the wood for the table needs sunlight to grow i.e the existence of an a priori sun, but they often miss knowing how they know that and knowing how else critical thinking can be helpful in learning and living. I then show students how they can apply previous knowledge to issues at hand and arrive at a determination of what else they now know (I do this using a Socratic style questioning). As another example, I give them certain 'facts' about one muscle and proceed to show them how they can combine this new knowledge with what they already know. Now they can significantly expand their understanding of the subject under study. Critical thinking exercises, such as these, effectively minimize the need for memorizing and excessive study time. The students are usually all about that!

Management—Critical Success Factor #2; TFS Quick Tip

Four Ways to Make Information Searches Faster and More Productive

TFS staff

1. Site restrictive searches are possible such as using [immigration site:foxnews.com]. This search turned up 31,600 pages that included the term "immigration" on them; all the pages were housed at foxnews.com. Or, for contrast, you could you might perform a search for [immigration site:npr.org].

2. If you don't know the right term or word to use in a search, insert an asterisk in the search phrase to represent the unknown word. And yes, you can use more than one asterisk for some interesting results. See and download this handy PowerPoint slide stack created by Robin Hartman, Associate Librarian, Darling Library, Hope International University. This stack is worth the download even though it was created in 2007. library.hiu.edu/guides/Google_Advanced_Features1.ppt

3. Google offers a page called, "Explore Google Search" that contains a visual index of search tips for: Public Data, Unit Conversion, Dictionary, and Calculator, to name a few, that are directly applicable to teaching. Go to: http://www.google.com/landing/searchtips/#helpcenter

4. Google maintains a handy page describing basic search techniques. This page is part of the Google website, and it's an excellent place to start to learn more about online searching. For students new to or with little experience in running Google searches, it serves as a perfect segue into "how-to-search" discussions and demonstrations.

Instructional Design—Critical Success Factor #3

Playing Fermi Games in Your Classroom

TFS staff

Named after Enrico Fermi, the Italian physicist, Fermi problems can be an effective teaching tool to challenge and engage your students in developing their thinking skills and ability to mentally process math problems on the fly.

It works like this, you or one of your students throw out to the class a seemingly impossible-to-calculate math problem. Thus challenged, students working alone or in groups set out to see who can be the first to arrive at the best estimate or educated guess and prepare to explain their thinking process. A handy example of a Fermi-type problem is "How many piano tuners are there in Chicago?" To see how this problem might be addressed, go to: http://mathforum.org/workshops/sum96/interdisc/classicfermi.html.

Fundamentally, the process is a string of best estimates and good guesses knitted together until you arrive at a reasonable answer. Using simple, rounded numbers is recommended. And limiting the use of pencil and paper, calculator or computer raises the level of cognitive difficulty substantially.

Developing mental estimation and calculation skills has many real benefits. Most importantly, it helps students succeed with tests, especially timed achievement tests, such as the SAT and other important entrance or exit tests.

The concept can be used in nonmath classroom settings by asking the class a policy, theory, procedural or other question open to debate. Request that a student answer the question and then quickly support the response with at least three statements proving that his or her answer is the correct one.

Favorite TFS "Class Starter" Success Quotes:

It's not enough to be busy, so are the ants. The question is, what are we busy about?
~Henry David Thoreau

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.
~Bessie Stanley

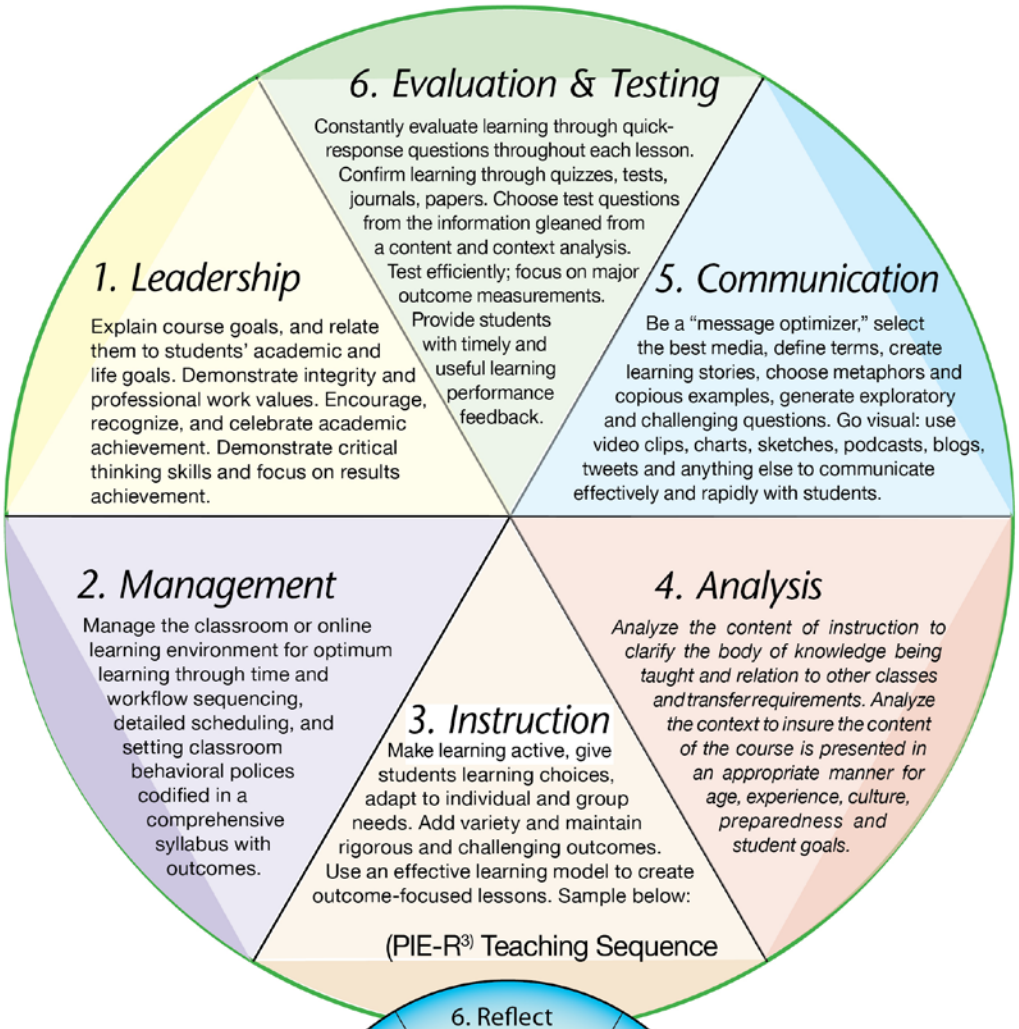
To follow without halt, one's aim; there is the secret of success.
~Anna Pavlova

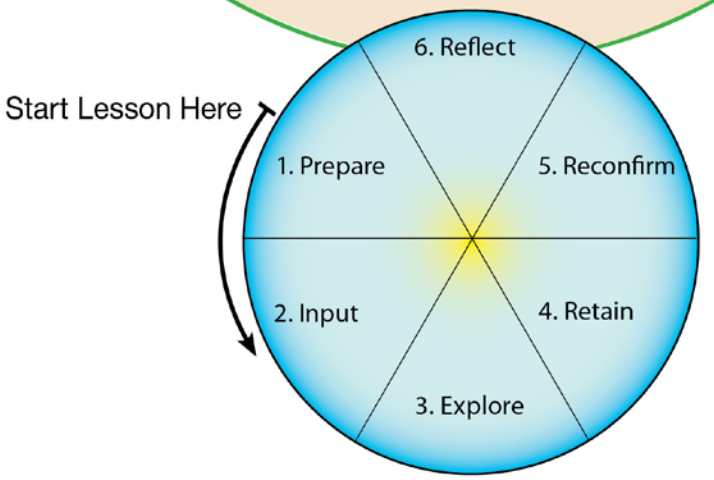
Everything I've ever done was out of fear of being mediocre.
~Chet Atkins

The secret of success is constancy to purpose.
~Benjamin Disraeli

The secret of joy in work is contained in one word—excellence.
~ Pearl S. Buck

The Six Critical Success Factors of Teaching For Success 3.0





The PIE-R3 Six-Step Instructional Sequence

The PIE-R3 Instructional Sequence is based on the work of Colin Rose

The Line up of Teaching For Success Member Resources for 2010

Ask your institution's chief instructional administrator, professional development office, or department chair how to access these teaching improvement resources. Or, you can email Jack Shrawder at Teaching For Success for access assistance and information.

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