

*Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning Into Practice*

Terry Doyle

Sterling, Virginia, 2011.

In his introduction to *Learner-Centered Teaching: Putting the Research on Learning Into Practice*, Terry Doyle states that he wrote the book to provide educators with the skills needed to improve their teaching. Doyle says these skills could move an educator towards "... a more learner-centered practice." He defines "learner-centered teaching (LCT)" as deciding how and what students will learn so that they will become as actively engaged as possible in the content of the course, maximizing how much college students learn.

In his introduction Doyle comments on how each of the twelve chapters is meant to stand alone as a lesson in "learner-centered practice." He also outlines each chapter and includes a link, where, for certain concepts, the reader can watch a video. Video lessons accompany chapters one, four, eight and nine. Each chapter is divided into sections that separate the background and practical information.

Chapter one, "Follow the Research," presents information about the neuroscience behind education, focusing on the psychological fact that when our brain uses new information new connections are made between neurons. Doyle defines "learning," then, as a change in the neuron-networks of the brain. In order for students to learn and for these new networks to be created students must be "actively engaged."

The second chapter, "Getting Students To Do The Work," in a "student-centered classroom." Introduces such strategies as "cumulative testing," creating a wiki site, retesting and the option to rewrite papers. Special emphasis is put on the "...ability to use information after periods of disuse." These strategies work to help students remember the material through cumulative testing. Doyle states

that rewrites are a “powerful learning tool” because they help the students realize their mistakes on papers.

In the third chapter, “The Power of Authentic Learning,” Doyle defines “authentic learning” as using real world applications and methods to teach students a process, such as collaboration or technology. The support for this form of learning is based on the finding in neuroscience that the brain learns better when the student is engaged and interested. Doyle continues in the fourth chapter with the benefits of engaging students by turning the traditional lecturer into a classroom “facilitator.” He defines a “facilitator” as the person who is “...supporting students in learning their course material by providing an environment for engagement....”

In the fifth chapter, Doyle seeks to understand how the teacher can build relationships with students that help enhance their learning in the classroom. Doyle includes several standards to follow to build such relationships like “establishing a safe classroom” and “provid[ing] evidence for student success.” The sixth chapter, “Sharing Control and Giving Choices,” continues the ideas of relationships between faculty and students. Doyle stresses that many faculty are the most uncomfortable with this aspect of teaching. The author furthers the idea of putting more control into students’ hands in chapter seven, “How Teachers Can Facilitate Student Discussions by Not Talking.” Here Doyle presents strategies to incorporate more discussion into the classroom, including step-by-step instructions on how to design discussion in classrooms and what to do as a facilitator of discussion.

Doyle’s eighth chapter, “Teaching to All the Senses,” explores how our senses affect learning, stressing the importance of appealing to the visual sense to help students learn more effectively. According to Doyle, one of the newest tools for “multisensory learning” are games. Doyle provides a small section on the rise of using handheld games in classrooms. His ninth chapter focuses on patterns in the brain, and how the brain constantly seeks to connect items through patterns to learn. The tenth

chapter focuses on the necessity for “Repetition and Elaboration.” Doyle expands on research that says learning and recalling are more effective if information is repeated and elaborated on when introduced to students.

Doyle concludes with two chapters, the eleventh reflecting the ideas that learning is meant to happen with students physically involved and moving around even in the college classroom. The twelfth chapter provides arguments for faculty to use in support of LCT based teaching. Doyle includes an appendix, which contains each set of his guidelines for the major points brought up in his book.