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Inquiries into the Cognitive and Affective Domains of Learning

Suzanne Porath ~ Editor

When we teach, we tend to focus on the concepts, body of knowledge, skills, and strategies that we want students to acquire. We assess these through quizzes, tests, performances, and portfolios. However, there is clear evidence that we need to be aware of not just academic or cognitive factors in learning, but we also need to attend to the affective factors of learning. Affective characteristics are the student qualities “that are primarily emotional in nature: attitudes, interests, values, preferences, self-esteem, focus of control, and anxiety are but a few” (Anderson & Anderson, 1982, p. 524). In this issue of *Networks*, we see educator-researchers inquire into the cognitive aspects of their students’ learning, but also explore the affective aspects of learning such as engagement, choice, courtesy, and personal response.

At the college level, **Boothe**, **Lohmann**, and **Owiny** considered the impact of using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles in a graduate-level education course to support students in understanding the UDL principles. Specifically, the instructor provided an abundance of choice for the students to demonstrate their understanding of the key standards in the course through a project of their own design. This followed the principle of having multiple means of action and expression to represent content knowledge. Students commented that the project was fun, engaging, and helped them envision using UDL in their own classrooms.

The environment of the classroom has an impact on learning and **Haslip** noticed that his second-grade students’ language mirrored their behaviors. To support the development of gentle and helpful behaviors, Haslip introduced courtesy scripts to model the language of courtesy for

his students. With role playing and practice, students were better able to express their needs and emotions to their peers.

At the middle school level, **Henry** investigated the use of multisensory phonics instruction to support reading accuracy and decoding skills with her sixth-grade students with reading difficulties. Henry's research focused on both the impact on reading words and using decoding strategies, but she was also interested in examining the students' response to the structured routine. She found that students' skills increased and they were also engaged in the work, often due to the peer interaction required.

The development and impact of a nature-based writing workshop is the focus of **Kinberg's** research with students ages 10-12. By providing choice and an authentic, real-life setting at a nature center for the writers to draw inspiration from, Kinberg found an increase in engagement in writing; accurate and descriptive word choice; and motivation to write beyond the workshop.

Recognizing the importance of an authentic and immersive experience to promote global awareness and deepen teaching practice, teacher candidates in **MacKinnon** and **Shields's** study spent four months in China teaching English as a Foreign Language to Chinese students in kindergarten to grade six. Acknowledging that teaching full-time in another country requires more than just pedagogical and technology knowledge, the authors investigated the significance of the preparation program to help teacher candidates navigate the cultural and ideological challenges they encounter when teaching in a completely different context. The authors' intent is to continually improve the preparation program.

Reading response notebooks aren't new, but Ted Kesler's book *The Reader Response Notebook: Teaching toward Agency, Autonomy, and Accountability*, provides a glimpse into how

a teacher investigates the practice of using these notebooks with students and how student responses can be deepened. **Kabuto** provides a thoughtful review of the book and highlights how inquiry into practice leads “to action to improve student learning through introspective and reflective thinking from classroom teachers and students.”

I’m sure many have heard the saying or seen the meme “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” The mind as a blank slate or empty vessel has long been rejected as a model for learning. As we consider effective teaching, we need to consider both the cognitive and affective factors of learning and select appropriate pedagogy to support the learning of the whole person, not just the student.

I hope you take the time to investigate how you are lighting the fires of the minds of your students and consider *Networks* a place to share your projects.

References

Anderson, L. W., & Anderson, J. C. (1982). Affective assessment is necessary and possible. *Educational Leadership*, 39(7), 524-25.