Strategies for Student Success
ACTIVATING LEARNING FOR ALL DISCIPLINES
HANDBOOK
Acknowledgements

The AFT recognizes the importance of utilizing research-based, proven practices in schools and classrooms to improve the quality of instruction and raise achievement levels of all students in our nation’s schools. The Strategies for Student Success modules contain proven research-based concepts to assist with scaffolding student learning. These sessions are delivered in no more than three hours or less.

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AFT Series Developer
Rosalind LaRocque

SSS Editors/National Trainers

David Banks  Jerelle Hendon  Patricia Randall
Matt Burns  Sandy Joseph  Tina Steele
Susie Chow  Rosalind LaRocque  Catherine Tabor
Shanisse Conway  Darcy Michener  Deanna Woods
Lois Doniver  Vanessa Parnell
Karen Gant  Nicole Phillips

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Activating learning in All Disciplines

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- Introduce Topic

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- **Reading:** Fostering Ownership
- **Activity Two:** Supporting Ownership in the Learning Process
- Reflective Discussion

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Part D: Culture and Learning
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Closure
Activating Learning for All Disciplines

Session Focus
Betty Garner maintains that for students to be motivated, productive learners, teachers must ensure certain learning opportunities. First, students must be allowed to process information aided by strategies that allow them to connect new and old learning experiences. Second, students must be allowed to restate or reconfigure information, being mindful of the cultural norms that make each student unique. Third, students must be guided to make observations, generalizations and create new information.

This session will focus on how intentional use of cognitive strategies can facilitate student ownership of learning, raise awareness of how cultural norms influence learning and determine the engagement levels of the lesson.

All of the activities in this session can be done at various points (beginning, middle, and end) of a lesson. Some may lend themselves more to one point or the other, but all foster deep interaction with the content.

Objectives:
At the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Utilize strategies that foster ownership of information;
- Structure lessons that connect with cultural norms; and
- Implement engaging activities that foster thinking and then the creation of new information.

Researchers:
T. Angelo
P. Freire
B. Garner
R. Givens
M. Haman
B. McCarthy
L. Vygotsky
Part A
Presenter, Trainer and Facilitator

In any efficient learning setting, instructors move seamlessly between three roles: presenter, trainer and facilitator. There are distinct behaviors for each of these three roles that help to characterize the learning environment. Presenters impart knowledge; trainers provide opportunities to become skillful and proficient in the new learning; and facilitators ensure deep understanding through questioning and reflection.

Activity One: Presenter, Trainer, Facilitator
There are three posters (presenter, trainer, and facilitator) in the room. Move to the poster that best represents your instructional style. At the poster, discuss with your peers the attributes of that instructional style. Take notes, and at the session leader’s signal, return to your seat.

Notes on Attributes
Part B
The Presentation

In his research, Vygotsky stressed the need to scaffold novice learners as they grow into experts. Novice learners are best supported by well-constructed activities and assignments, and as these learning experiences and scaffolds are gradually removed, the expert learner can do less-constructed assignments.

Each student begins with a different level of understanding of an issue or concept. As a result, how they think about, integrate, process, apply and transfer new knowledge will differ. Therefore, it is important to assess the level of knowledge and skill a student possesses. The results of that assessment will provide guidance for the degree of “presenting” the information and the type of instructional activities that speak to the student’s level of proficiency and strengths, thereby supporting learning and addressing areas of weakness.

Schools and teachers provide lots of instructional support and sometimes interventions to help failing students. Many times the journey may result in one failed attempt after the other. Some may speculate that these interventions were done “to” the child without the creation of “ownership” on his or her part; hence, the disinterest. So what does ownership look like?

Ownership in the educational setting, means teaching the concept to the strengths of the students. For example, if a child is interested in music, it can be used as an entry point to scaffold learning for the student who is struggling with the concept of fractions in math or rhythm in poetry. This way the student is connecting prior knowledge to the new material. Ownership fosters the ability to tap schema and background knowledge and to make connections with past and present experiences.

If we don’t ignite the prior knowledge of our students when we teach, we may fall prey to what the late Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire referred to as “the banking concept” in pedagogy: treating students as if they are empty vessels waiting to be filled with the knowledge of the teacher. Basically, this means taking on a view that the students have very little to offer to the classroom learning and discussions. No matter what, we must guide students so that they take ownership of their own learning.
Activity Two: Supporting Ownership in the Learning Process
Review the information in Part A and Part B. Select one strategy from the Strategy List. Then try to convince the person sitting on your right that your selected strategy (see list below) would or would not foster ownership. Be prepared to share with the whole group.

Strategy List

A. What I Know
The student organizes the information using a graphic organizer best suited for the content.

B. The “Rs” Have It
Students do the following:
R- State and restate the concept.
R- Review one of the class activities.
R- State one area of an assignment they would consider redoing.

C. All of You
Chairs are placed in an open space. The session leader is called “It” and says something like “All of you who love the color green.” At that point, everyone who loves the color green moves to another chair. They cannot come back to the chair they just vacated; everyone who loves the color green must scramble for a chair. The last man standing becomes “It”. This is used to review or explore content.

D. Dictate It
At the end of the lesson, the teacher dictates notes on the lesson that all students must record in their notebooks.

E. Roll the Die
Students roll a die, and based on the number that shows up, they share the number of concepts, facts, or ideas learned thus far.

F. Tell a Story
Turn the information in the text into a story. Pretend that you have to tell this story to a colleague or a child.

Reflective Discussion:
Document what you have learned up to this point and discuss its implications for what happens in the classroom.
Part C
The Training

For students to truly understand the lesson, they must be trained in the use of the content. A sound presentation by the teacher, usually in the form of lecture, still requires practice on the part of the student. This is where several activities and learning opportunities become critical. According to Lave & Wenger (1991), novices learn how to be tailors or Xerox repair technicians not because they are told explicitly how to participate, but because they are provided with opportunities in the context of practice to see, imitate, and try out increasingly complex skills under the guidance of experts.

Not surprisingly, research studies demonstrate that learning is more likely to transfer if students have the opportunity to practice with a variety of applications while learning (Bransford, 1979), and if they are encouraged to generalize knowledge in a way that can be used in similar situations (Brown & Kane, 1988). Learning the rules of transfer is, of course, an example of a metacognitive skill that can be supported instructionally.

However, the environment of the traditional classroom and testing practices does not motivate students to take risks, to try hard, or to demonstrate their intellectual competence. Stipex (1996) maintains that if errors and mistakes are treated as a normal part of learning, and if substantive, mastery-based feedback is used rather than normative evaluation, students will be motivated. As presenters, educators expose students to the material, but it is the activities in the training phase that allow them to interact with the content and the facilitation of learning that fosters a deep understanding of that content.

“Active learning is more effective than passive learning. But activity, in and of itself, doesn’t result in higher learning. Active learning occurs when students invest physical and mental energies in activities that help them make what they are learning meaningful, and when they are aware of that meaning-making” (Angelo, 1993). But the goal of learning is not simply to understand content, but to spur the learner to create something new with the information, a philosophy subscribed to by Bernice McCarthy (1987) in the 4MAT system.

Activity Three: Engaging Students (Group work)
In assigned researcher groups, do the following: Identify a life skill; develop an activity using your assigned strategy (see p. 6) to teach the life skill. Be prepared to describe your activity to the group.
Reflective Discussion

- Why would these strategies motivate students? Can you cite one other strategy or protocol?

- Document what you have learned up to this point and discuss its implications for classroom use.

Part D
The Facilitation

It is important during the learning process to scaffold learning. That can be done through intermittent activities that build on skills and concepts to be learned. For example, writing a persuasive essay to recommend a book will not be satisfactorily completed if students have not been taught to write such an essay.

Bruner’s notion of “scaffolding” included supports for engaging interest, streamlining the task, sustaining direction, highlighting critical features, reducing challenges that lead to frustration, and demonstrating (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

However, simply scaffolding without data will not yield set or envisioned expectations if there is no formative data informing explicit teaching. Formative assessments play a critical role in helping teachers determine depth of understanding and identifying areas of misconceptions, if any, that need to be addressed.

Facilitators work from the known to the unknown. Through the use of questions in an environment where the goal is to find the “truth” and come to consensus, facilitators remain neutral. They may push the group to explore their own thoughts, sometimes challenge their own thoughts, without taking a position. Bens (2000) describes a facilitator as "One who contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function..."
effectively and make high-quality decisions. A facilitator is a helper and enabler, whose goal is to support others as they achieve exceptional performance.”

The International Association of Facilitators was founded in 1993 to promote facilitation as a profession. To be effective, facilitators must possess some basic skills. They may not always be experts on the topic being discussed; instead, they use the existing knowledge of participants to guide them to a common understanding. The facilitator knows the outcome but, through guided inquiry, nudges the participants to make their own self-discovery. This approach differs from that of a trainer who must possess knowledge on the subject.

Additional skills needed by the facilitator include observing effective meeting/classroom practices, timekeeping, creating agendas, and having explicit records. To ensure that the meeting goes smoothly, facilitators need to have a keen eye for group dynamics; be able to display excellent listening skills; paraphrase; stack a conversation; incite folks to participate; ensure equal participation; and be able to handle the more reticent members of the group (Kaner, et al., 1996). These skills are critical to the learning environment.

It is important to note that while the facilitator’s role during the meeting is important, preparation for the meeting/classroom instruction is just as critical. Prior to the meeting/instruction, the facilitator identifies the purpose for the meeting/lesson and develops an agenda/lesson plan that he or she thinks will achieve the purpose. However, before the meeting/instruction, the facilitator should shares the agenda/lesson outline with the potential attendees/students for review and make changes, if necessary. The facilitator is also responsible for setting norms. Despite all of these activities, facilitators know that at no time do they own the meeting or learning process.

**Activity Four: Assessing Understanding**
In your recreation groups, describe two activities that an instructor can use to determine if:

- Students are making the right connections in the lesson. (Choose your lesson.)
- Students can deduce generalities. (You may give a scenario.)
- Students’ depth of understanding. (Choose your lesson.)
- A struggling student is experiencing academic growth. (Choose your lesson.)
- Students have the ability to use critical thinking skills. (Choose your lesson.)

**Reflective Discussion:** What implications for classroom use does the information on facilitation pose for classroom use, especially Bruner’s notion of scaffolding?
Part E
The Role of Culture in Learning

Educators cannot discount that a child, the learner, is more than just a brain to be educated. Students are not just empty vessels. They come with feelings and expectations, based on life experiences that generate a value system and a set of beliefs. If students cannot see connections between the content and these attributes, then nothing will make sense and teachers will be faced with a reluctant, unmotivated learner, who may engage in disruptive behavior.

In addition, if teachers do not establish a classroom climate conducive to the emotional safety and personal relevancy for students, they will not learn and they may reject education altogether. "The emotional system is key!" (Givens, 2001). When we ignore students’ emotional knowledge in a frantic attempt to improve standardized test scores with excessive drills and practice, we deny students the full experience of engaging with learning as interesting and meaningful problem solving.

Some researchers maintain that culture plays such an integral part in the learning process that bricklayers, for example, may be a group of sequential learners and may have a difficult time with generalities, relationships and classifications. The research also states that prior knowledge and cultural perspectives manipulate new learning. According to Vygotsky and many other researchers, teaching and learning occur in a social context, which contains two parts. First the learner assimilates the information within him- or herself, and then between him- or herself and others.

Native Alaskan educator Lisa Delpit (1995, p. 183) states, “In order to teach you, I must know you. I pray for all of us the strength to teach our children what they must learn, and the humility and wisdom to learn from them so that we might better teach.” So at the core of this discussion are two questions: What role does culture play in learning and how can teachers develop culturally responsive teaching practices?

The research literature tells us that culturally responsive teaching involves three practices. First, teachers need to genuinely respect students and believe that all students can learn. Second, classroom environments must be culturally responsive and exude caring. Third, teachers need to ensure that the school culture is not foreign to the student’s culture; Joel Spring (1997) cautions that these practices are very important to student success.
Banks (1993) suggests five additional ways to generate a culturally responsive classroom. Banks suggests the use of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowerment of school culture. Taken together, these form an integrated whole.

In addition, Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1994) suggest that the following elements are central to culturally responsive teaching:

- Respect for students and belief in their potential as learners;
- Caring environments and personal connections with students and families;
- Cultural congruity between home and school; and
- Active teaching and a wide range of authentic assessments that tap into students’ learning.

Narez (2002) believes that teaching a culturally relevant curriculum does not consist merely of throwing a few good “ethnic books” into my Spanish classes; it is also the cultivation of culturally relevant ideas, conversations, and critical thinking about the way we live and experience culture in our communities (p. 139). As Nieto (2002) observes, “When students feel connected to school, they identify as learners and they have a far greater chance of becoming successful students.” (p. 299)

Students develop a wide range of coping mechanisms in response to institutional pressures that send them signals that they do not belong. Culture is such an everyday experience for us that we often do not notice it—just as a fish does not notice the water in which it lives. Similarly, the relationship between culture and thinking is so close that it is often impossible to disentangle one from the other. Culture includes not only tangibles, such as foods, holidays, dress, and artistic expression, but also less tangible manifestations, such as communication style, attitudes, values, and family relationships. These features of culture are often more difficult to pinpoint, but doing so is necessary if we want to understand how student learning may be affected (Nieto, 2000, pp. 139-140).

**Activity Five: Culture and Learning**

With your table group, outline activities that reflect culturally responsive practices.

**Reflective Discussion**

What implication for classroom use does the information on cultural responsiveness pose?
Activity Six: I Got It

Get into your Sports groups. Individually select six strategies from the listing and state which would address the following: Ownership, Scaffolding, Assessment, Culture and Thinking.

Discuss how the strategies would address these areas and indicate where in the lesson (start, middle, and end) they could be used. Then, together, add three new activities to this list and explain how they foster engagement.

### Strategies Listing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Bingo</td>
<td>Statements on a paper that resemble a bingo card that has characteristics of people or content. Facilitator reads the clue and participants race to find answers and shout Bingo usually when all squares on the paper are filled. There is a free square in the middle of the card.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interview</td>
<td>Students interview two other students who are not in their group and reconvene with their original group and compare interview responses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s Needed?</td>
<td>Depending on the subject develop a problem and have students solve it. The question they should ask every step of the way is, “what information do I need?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carousel</td>
<td>Students scribe on one sheet what they know-class reviews the lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a Metaphor</td>
<td>Have students create a metaphor using the concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KWL</td>
<td>A graphic organizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Me</td>
<td>Students are placed in groups of three. Each member gets a turn to explain a concept/lesson, for example, the circulatory system. A rubric is helpful for this activity. Listening members give feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sheltered Instruction Supporting ELLs | • Conferences  
• Take-home reflections  
• Oral retell  
• Learning logs  
• Graphic organizers  
• Content inventory  
• Cloze exercises  
• Dictations |
| Voting Questions  | Teachers ask questions and students must take a position and vote                                                                         |
| Clarifying Questions | Teacher and students ask questions seeking clarity                                                                       |
| Draw and tell me  | Students create an abstract representation of the concept and explain to the class.                                                    |
| Writing Genres    | Decision-making  
Reliable Resources  
Summarizing  
Expository  
Paraphrasing  
Compare/Contrast  
Persuasive Writing  
Inference |
| ?                 |                                                                                                                                            |
| ?                 |                                                                                                                                            |
| ?                 |                                                                                                                                            |
Directions: Participant tables will be assigned one of the following.

Activity Seven: Your Turn!
(a): Concept Diagram
Diagram information from the content of this module, to reflect the inter-relatedness of the concepts presented in this unit.

Activity Seven (b): Reasons
Give ten (10) reasons for using the information in this session. Your group will share reasons using the popcorn format.

Closure: Ingredients of Effective Teaching
(See slide 18)

Notes
Bibliography


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Accessed January 10, 2012


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The American Federation of Teachers:

1. **Supports you in the classroom.** Effective learning only takes place when high-quality teachers, with the support of other competent professionals, have the materials and assistance needed to accomplish the task. Your union is a strong advocate for quality classroom materials that are aligned to the standards of achievement we expect our students to meet. We also insist that state and district assessments for measuring student progress are aligned with these standards and that the assessments be used appropriately to support student learning.

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Strategies for Students Success

Activating Learning For All Disciplines

Objectives

At the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Utilize strategies that foster ownership of information;
- Structure lessons that connect to cultural norms; and
- Implement engaging activities that foster thinking and the creation of new information.

Activity One

Presenter, Trainer, Facilitator
The Presentation

Activity Two
Supporting Ownership in the Learning Process

- Review the information in Part A and Part B.
- Select one strategy from the list in the handbook.
- Convince the person sitting next to you that this strategy does or does not foster ownership.
- At the session leader's signal, be prepared to share with the whole group.

Reflective Discussion

Document what you have learned up to this point and discuss its implications for the classroom.
Activity Three  
Engaging Students

In assigned researcher groups, do the following: **Identify** a life skill, **develop** an activity using one of the strategies below to teach the life skill and then **create** a 60-second commercial to promote the use of the strategy to teach the life skill.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simulation</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Drawing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pantomime</td>
<td>Song</td>
<td>Drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game</td>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflective Discussion

- Why would these protocols motivate students? Can you **cite** one other protocol or strategy?
- **Document** what you have learned up to this point and discuss its implications for classroom use.
Activity Four
Assessing Understanding

- In your recreational groups, describe two activities that an instructor can use to determine your assigned level of students’ learning progression.
- Consider these assessments as being done at the middle and end of the lesson.

What implications for classroom use does the information on facilitation pose?
Activity Five
Culture’s Role in Learning

In your groups, outline activities that reflect culturally responsive practices.

Reflective Discussion

What implications for classroom use does the information on cultural responsiveness pose?
Activity Six
I Got It!

- Get into your Sports groups.
- Individually select six strategies that would each address Ownership, Scaffolding, Assessment, Addressing Culture and Fostering Thinking.
- Discuss how the strategies would address these areas and indicate where in the lesson (start, middle, and end) they could be used.
- Then, together, add three new activities to this list and explain how they foster engagement.

Activity Seven
Your Turn

(a): Concept Diagram
Diagram information from the content of this module, to reflect the inter-relatedness of the concepts presented in this unit.

(b): Reasons
Give ten(10) reasons for using the information in this session. Share reasons using the popcorn format.

Closure

- Presenter/Trainer/Facilitator
- Engaging Students through Activities
- Ownership
- Culture and Learning
- Assessing Understanding
- Appropriate Strategies
- Formative Assessment*
Group Formation Instructions

Artistic Partner

Directions: Place your name in the “Your Name” square. Place the name of your “Artistic Partner” in the “Partner Name” square. Your name should appear in the reverse on your partner’s page. See sample below.

Sample: Artistic Partner

Kim’s Paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name</th>
<th>Partner’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kim Short</td>
<td>Donald Beaver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Donald’s Paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name</th>
<th>Partner’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donald Beaver</td>
<td>Kim Short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sport Groups

Trainer will give a packet to your table. Five members will pull. Those without a card will team up with someone who has. The groups will then move to the appropriate table.
Artistic Partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name</th>
<th>Partner’s Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Sport Groups

Sport Title: ____________
Assessment Form

What do you think the research means when it says students must have “ownership” in their learning?

What do you know about “activating learning”?

What role do you think culture plays in the learning process?

Would you consider your style and/or role in running professional development sessions as one of a (check one or more, if applicable):

___ Trainer
___ Presenter
___ Facilitator
Using a Feature Analysis graphic organizer, let us examine the different attributes between a presenter, trainer and a facilitator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
<th>Trainer</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Presents information</td>
<td>Provides opportunities to train others in a skill or acquire knowledge</td>
<td>Guides areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>Outline the structure in which the info will be presented.</td>
<td>Provides a roadmap for participant understanding.</td>
<td>Drives the efficacy of the session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Responds to questions asked.</td>
<td>Asks questions to stimulate learning.</td>
<td>Uses questions and various methods to cultivate personalized participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Presenter is the authority.</td>
<td>Presenter shares accountability for content knowledge with attendees.</td>
<td>Facilitator builds content responsibility for attendees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Aids</td>
<td>Enhances the presentation. Portrays content information.</td>
<td>Used to augment learning.</td>
<td>Used to record the thoughts and contributions of attendees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Tools</td>
<td>Used to support message.</td>
<td>Used to supplement learning, clarify.</td>
<td>Used to boost learners skills (problem-solving); for example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution</td>
<td>Presenter to audience</td>
<td>Trainer to audience but audience is given an opportunity to experience learning.</td>
<td>Facilitator guides audience input through questions and problems to be solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Attendees</td>
<td>Can be very large-Ballroom sitting.</td>
<td>Varies, but smaller than Ballroom sitting.</td>
<td>Very small, no less than 12.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>