"Guiding" Students to Learning
From The Teaching Professor, October, 2000. The interest in learning and more learner-centered teaching means faculty must move closer to facilitative teaching roles. Most faculty understand the importance of these roles when the focus is on students and learning, but from all accounts, instruction remains pretty teacher-centered. Why is that? Could the difficulty be something as simple as us not knowing functionally how to execute these alternative roles? Consider these Seven Principles of Facilitative Instruction.

Principle One: Teachers Do Fewer Learning Tasks
The guide and the trekkers do the same things: they rappel, make fires, clean camp, and enjoy the views. Teachers and students are both in class, but typically teachers are doing a disproportionate number of learning tasks. Who provides the summary of content at the end of the period? Reviews at the beginning? Asks questions about the material? Offers the examples? Solves the problems? Makes the graphs? If the teacher is always doing these tasks, when and how do the students learn to do them for themselves?

Principle Two: Teachers Do Less Telling
We have this terrible propensity to tell students everything. We tell students when and how to study, to do the reading and what parts of it are important, and to come to class and what dreadful things will happen if they don't. We tell them how to write their papers and how many homework problems to do. Part of the telling is our job, but we're doing more than we need to do. Don't stop telling, but do it less and let students discover more for themselves. You do indeed need to focus, guide, and otherwise direct that discovery process.

Principle Three: Teachers Do More Design Work
When students are doing the work and the focus is on learning, then the learning experiences, the assignments, and classroom activities become the vehicles through which the learning occurs. Learning activities need to offer the right amount of challenge; they can't be too hard or too easy. They motivate student participation and involvement -- no small task given students' propensity toward passivity. Students must do the legitimate, bona fide work of the discipline -- at their level, of course. These are not fake, artificial, and otherwise contrived activities, or activity for the sake of activity.

Principle Four: Faculty Do More Modeling
They take the role of master learner, and demonstrate how experienced guides prepare for new parts of the trail or how they respond to unexpected difficulties. The best way to do this is by doing some legitimate learning. We need to regularly experience the learning process if we expect to fully appreciate and understand our students' first encounters with content now so familiar we cannot remember not knowing it.

Principle Five: Get Students Working With Each Other
Despite the current popularity of group work, there are still many faculty who underestimate the value of students working together. Research continues to accumulate; students can and do learn from and with each other. The skills developed in constructive group encounters will be used in professional contexts. Like us, there are large numbers of students unconvinced that group
collaboration has value. Part of that is our fault. We haven't always used well-designed group tasks and structures; we haven't always been mindful of relevant group process issues. Most groups are going to do more and do it better than most individuals working alone.

**Principle Six: Faculty Work to Create Climates for Learning**
The environment in which learning takes place strongly influences motivations and attitudes toward learning. It's about creating a climate, a place that positively impacts students' desires to learn and their willingness to begin assuming more of the responsibility for learning. All our rules, regulations, stipulations, and requirements try to force learning. Far better that we focus our attention on the conditions conducive to learning and work to create classrooms where those conditions "force" students' compliance but in a very different and much more constructive manner.

**Principle Seven: Faculty Focus Less on Grading and Do More With Feedback**
Note the principle does not say faculty do less grading -- it proposes that they focus on it less. In learner-centered environments, faculty use evaluation events in ways that maximize their learning potential. We still use assignments and exams to generate grades and certify mastery of material, but we also use them developmentally so that students get more out of the experience than just a grade.

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