



# DISTRICT 11 NEW AGENT NEWSLETTER

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## Teaching and Learning- Key component to Program Implementation

Dr. Chad S. Davis, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Education and Communications-Texas Tech University, and Education Specialist- Texas Cooperative Extension

Teaching and learning is a key component to program implementation. As Cooperative Extension professionals, we are directly involved in the teaching and learning process.

Some Extension professionals fear teaching in a classroom setting. Some fear they are not effective teachers, and they believe you must be a natural-born teacher to be an effective teacher.

It is true that some people have natural characteristics that help make them an effective teacher; however, anyone can develop effective-teacher characteristics. A teaching mentor of ours, Dr. Paul Vaughn, now associate dean for academic programs at the University of Missouri, was the first to introduce these characteristics to us as young professionals.

In 1971, Rosenshine and Furst conducted a meta-analysis, or summary, of several studies examining relationships between teacher characteristics and student success. Although the Rosenshine and Furst (1971) study is outdated, teachers and researchers continue to use the results.

Rosenshine and Furst (1971) found many characteristics of effective teachers; however, we would like to identify a few of the most important characteristics, characteristics that can be learned and practiced.

Clarity. Clarity is the most important characteristic of quality teaching. Clarity is the ability to present information in an understandable manner. Clarity can be enhanced by teachers through preparation, outlining, and note making. It is also beneficial if teachers clearly outline what they want the students to learn or accomplish. This task is known as objective or goal writing. These objectives and goals can direct your class preparation, delivery, and assessment.

Remember, we usually know much more about the material we are teaching than the student does. One of biggest mistakes novice teachers make is not teaching to the level of the student. Make sure the ma-

terial is clear to the student, not you.

Variability. Variability can be accomplished through adequate preparation and the use of creativity. Variability is the process of using numerous delivery methods to teach the material. Remember, all students learn differently, and a combination of delivery strategies is best for all learners.

Lecture, small-group discussion, role playing, case studies, demonstrations – these are only a few delivery strategies. Be creative in your delivery strategies and develop something new. Some of our most successful delivery strategies include playing Jeopardy and using clothes or costumes to prove a point. Yes, some say using these methods is embarrassing or immature, but they are very effective.

Enthusiasm. Some say enthusiasm is the most difficult to learn, but teacher enthusiasm is important. It is difficult for students to get excited about what they are learning if the teacher seems uninterested in the material. It is easy for students to become excited about what they are learning if the teacher seems interested in the material.

Teachers can enhance enthusiasm by speaking expressively, moving around the room, showing facial expression, and by not reading directly from notes.

When planning presentations, teaching lessons, or developing programs, we often find ourselves having to reflect upon Rosenshine and Furst's (1971) characteristics of effective teaching. Remembering and practicing clarity, variability, and enthusiasm in all stages of the teaching process will improve your teaching effectiveness.

#### **Reference:**

Rosenshine, B., & Furst, N. (1971). Research on teacher performance criteria. In B. O. Smith (Ed.), *Research in teacher education* (pp. 27-72). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

### **Are you using technology as a crutch?**

Dr. Chad S. Davis, Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Education and Communications-Texas Tech University ,and Education Specialist- Texas Cooperative Extension

It is no longer surprising to see Extension professionals using technology-based presentation software to help create, facilitate, and deliver programs for their clientele. Software, such as PowerPoint and Corel Presentation, and the affordability of portable computers and peripherals, has allowed even the smallest budgets the opportunity to afford instructional technology.

Abuse comes with wide-spread use, and instructional technology is no different from other types of technological advancements. Over the past few years, I have observed presenters becoming more comfortable using PowerPoint and Corel Presentation. Unfortunately, I have also observed them becoming more comfortable using it as a crutch. I admit, I have been guilty of using the crutch myself.

Technology, when allowed, can separate the presenter from the audience. It is important to analyze your audience and instructional objectives to determine the best method for delivering your material. Remember, using a variety of delivery methods is powerful.

Establishing objectives, conducting an audience analysis, and careful planning is essential for effective presentations. If you are using technology-based software to add variability to your program, the following tips may be useful:

1. Always plan for the worst. When dealing with technology, it is important to have a backup plan. Create handouts, and bring printed copies of all material in your presentation.
2. Bullet your information. Instructional technologists suggest several tips for remembering the appropriate amount of information to include in technology-based presentations. I suggest using the rule of seven and seven. Never use more than seven bullets per slide, and never use more than seven words per bullet. Text-heavy material should be provided in handout form and never included in a PowerPoint or Corel Presentation.
3. Use appropriate fonts and colors. Audiences prefer Sans Serif fonts, such as Helvetica, Arial, and Geneva. These fonts are easier to read in bulleted format. Care should also be taken when selecting font colors and background colors. Audiences prefer a combination of dark backgrounds and light-colored fonts, or light backgrounds and dark-colored fonts.
4. Use technology to bring the classroom to life. It is said a picture is worth a thousand words. Be creative, consider the best ways to accomplish your educational objectives, and take advantage of the opportunities provided by instructional-based technology. Incorporate photos, graphs, charts, tables, and other forms of multi-media to enhance your PowerPoint and Corel Presentations.

Darrell A. Dromgoole  
District Extension Administrator  
Elaine Fries  
Regional Program Director, Family  
and Consumer Sciences  
Terry Lockamy  
Regional Program Director,  
Agriculture and Natural  
Resources  
Luis H. Saldana  
Regional Program Director,  
4-H and Youth Development  
District 11 and South Region Specialists  
10345 Agnes  
Corpus Christi, TX 78406-1412

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