

The ToolBox

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A Teaching and Learning Resource for the Faculty of Indiana Wesleyan University

The Five Voices of Teaching



In this issue of *The ToolBox*, we will explore the “The Five Voices of Teaching.” In the book *Make Presentations That Teach and Transform*, Garmston and Wellman (1992), encourage teachers to consider several important questions that will guide and direct the nature of our presentations:



- **Who are you?** (What is the role that you wish to assume and convey when you engage in teaching?)
- **About what do you care?** (Do your message and your values come through in your presentations?)
- **How much do you dare?** (Are you willing to stretch the limits of your presentations to make the point and communicate the message?)
- **What are your intended outcomes?** (Can you and do you articulate the goals that you have for each lesson?)

Garmston and Wellman continue on and cite the work of Margaret Bedrosian (*Speak Like a Pro*, 1987) who proposes that anytime we step in front of a group we naturally assume one or more of the “five voices” of teaching. Effective teachers will make use of these varied voices to communicate, to inspire, to challenge, and to motivate the learners with whom they are connecting during the instructional process.

A Boss

This is a voice that is based upon the authority of your position. You communicate your ideas with the power that comes from the mission, vision, and history of the organization. Audience members responding to the boss voice often listen more to the position than the presentation.

An Expert

The expert shares information from the position of one who knows about current issues and developments in the field of discussion. The expert brings direct experiences to the teaching experience. To maintain credibility, the expert must remain abreast of recent discoveries and innovations.

A Colleague

In the role of a colleague, the distance between the learner and the teacher is dramatically reduced as they work and make new discoveries alongside one another.

A Sister/Brother

The sister/brother voice communicates caring, concern, and warmth. From this position, the teacher can serve as a coach and encourager to his or her students.

A Novice

In the novice voice, the teacher communicates authentic enthusiasm and a sense of wonder about the field of investigation; this communicates a willingness to be the teacher while also savoring new discoveries and insights.

According to Garmston and Wellman, “Elegant presenters have conscious access to ... personal values and deliver presentations that are unusually powerful because of the congruence of both their message and meta-messages.” (1992, p. 3)

Giving Students a Voice in Their Own Learning

It is critically important to give students opportunities to express their opinions about the activities, assignments, and content that are part of their learning experience. These strategies provide a way to incorporate student input into the learning process.

Survivor

How do you assess the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and assignments that you use each semester. One way of gathering data in this area is incredibly obvious and useful—ask your students! As the semester comes to a close, provide your students with an opportunity to process their learning and provide feedback on the course by using open-ended questions such as:

- What is something that I have learned about myself?
- What is something that I want to know more about?
- What activity or assignment helped me learn?
- What activity or assignment really didn't contribute to my learning?

Ask students to reflect on these questions individually and then discuss their responses in a small group. Collect the responses anonymously at the end of the class. Consider the themes and trends that you observe as you plan for next semester.

The Final Answer

Students are invited to develop a summary statement or final evaluative statement for the concepts and ideas discussed during that day's class. The directions for this activity can include an acrostic related to the topic of discussion, a rhyme or rap, a song using the melody of a popular song, a pantomime or a "wax museum" using the group members. Have fun with this one (and so will your students)!

Build a Syllabus

Each semester we distribute a syllabus to our students. This document presumably contains a thorough description of the assignments, expectations, and schedule of events for the semester. This document provides the students with our best thinking about how they can most effectively accomplish the goals and outcomes that have been identified for the semester.

Why not consider the possibility of allowing students to build their own syllabus for the course? Provided with the necessary outcomes and a basic framework for discussion lead by the faculty member, a syllabus for the semester is collaboratively developed by the students as they guide their own learning.

Four Corners

Millennial students are sometimes unwilling to verbally express their opinions on the issues and topics in front of the larger group. As a result, it is common for a small number of students to be the primary spokespersons for the entire group. The "Four Corners" strategy provides a means for students to share their opinions in a non-threatening manner. Corners of the room are designated as "A", "B", "C", and "D". The teacher reads a series of multiple choice opinion/position questions. Students move to the corner of the room that best expresses their opinions. At the conclusion, students are encouraged to process their responses in dyads or small groups. Cited in a variety of forms and formats, this strategy is a hybrid of the cooperative learning approaches developed by Spencer Kagan in *Cooperative Learning* (Kagan Publishing, 1994).



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