

Milton COx, writing in Teaching Excellence of Mansfield University (PA), notes that communication paths between teacher and student have undergone dramatic changes, most notably in the number of pathways available for such interaction.

He sees technology leading the way, particularly in the access afforded students through networked computers and student-teacher email interaction.

Cox cautions teachers and administrators that such new paths are not suitable for everyone. Care must be taken to match emerging trends in instructional delivery with the discipline, style and context of each course and instructor.

Marilla Sviniski, in Teaching at UNL of University of Nebraska-Lincoln, suggests that teachers should understand and appreciate the role prior knowledge plays in the learning process.

Prior knowledge refers to that which the student brings to the learning table from previous education and life experiences. She sees three ways these can impact learning:

1) It impacts how students perceive new information. Such information will be measured against the student's storehouse, comparing the unknown with the known.

2) It impacts how students organize information. The student will attempt to fit new information into the "map of reality" he or she has created.

3) It impacts the speed of assimilation. If a student has a wealth of diverse experiences, he or she can assimilate faster than the student with a limited experience base.

Sviniski proposes that teachers learn early what students bring in terms of prior knowledge, and attempt to adapt accordingly.

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I chose to teach to repay a debt, to honor the legacy of my teachers who brought passion to a form of communication which transcends all language and culture and makes our lives a bit more melodious. I feel compelled to pass this passion on to my students.

- Joe Meeks

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