

**A Pedagogy for Today's Learners**  
Teaching and Learning with Generation NeXt  
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*This handout overviews Generation NeXt, current issues in college teaching, and approaches to learning and teaching especially appropriate with Generation NeXt students. This handout is intended as a supplemental resource to Dr. Taylor's program/ workshop, and **should not be distributed to non-attendees without permission**. Interested instructors are encouraged to visit the sources cited in the "References and Resources" section at the end of this handout, review Dr. Taylor's articles posed at [www.taylorprograms.com](http://www.taylorprograms.com), or to contact Dr. Taylor for more information.*

### **Generation NeXt**

Today's traditionally aged college students from Generation NeXt (up to around 26 years old in 2009) have characteristics and expectations that present unique challenges to those of us charged with teaching, serving and supporting them through their educational experience. They were raised in very different social environments and have had very different formative experiences than any previous generation. The data on Generation NeXt suggests that they might be expected to:

- **Expect entertainment** and be **easily bored** especially with traditional academic methods that do not **relate to their digital lives** and that **they may see as obsolete and irrelevant**
- **Not be into books**, reading, study or other behaviors traditional linked with academic success and have a **low motivation** or willingness to do "school work"
- **Not be impressed** with science, data or credentials
- Have a **consumer mentality** and want to negotiate
- Bring **poorly developed developmental goals** to campus and not understand the necessity of developing personal, developmental goals
- View education as a **commodity** to be **acquired through purchase** and **accumulated as a product** external from them, as opposed to seeing education as a personal, transformational process
- Believe they are **entitled to good grades**, often for minimal academic effort
- Bring **lower academic skills** to campus but frequently **overrate their academic skills**
- Have **limited ability to reason with abstractions** and tend to function at lower developmental/ cognitive levels
- Be the beneficiaries or victims of **high school grade inflation**, which they achieved with little study
- Tend to be **positive** and expect things to work out for them.
- **Tend to expect academic success in college with little effort.**

**State of College Teaching** Lion Gardiner, in his analysis of research on how students learn and what constitutes an effective educational experience, offers insight into the current state of teaching in most courses at most colleges. Though published in 1998, each campus is challenged to assess themselves against his criticism.

He states that "the college experience for most students comprises a

- loosely organized, **unfocused curriculum**, with
- **undefined outcomes**,
- classes that emphasize **passive listening**,
- lectures that **transmit low-level information**, and
- assessments of learning that demand only the **recall of memorized material** or low-level comprehension of concepts. (1998)

**State of College Outcomes** Gardiner and others (including Bok, Levine and Tagg) suggest that college graduates have

- Good reading comprehension
- Poor analysis or application skills
- Poor problem solving and reasoning skills
- Poor appreciation of scientific methods
- Poor historical memory and reasoning
- Poor language skills at work
- Poor social skills at work
- Focus on performance goals over learning goals
- Surface learning over deep learning
- Students are not learning even basic general knowledge, they are not developing higher-level cognitive skills, and they are not retaining their knowledge.
- In fact there is limited evidence of a significant difference between students who take courses and student who do not. (1998; Tagg 2004)

### **Dirty academic secrets**

- **Few faculty are taught to teach.** A terminal degree in the field is accepted as evidence of expertise. Most PhDs have not had training in instructional methods, so tend to teach as they were taught.
- Many faculty evidence the **typical “expert” dynamic**. They assume students are, or should be, as interested in and as highly valuing of their material as they are. They may assume students have a better basic understanding of the basic concepts in their field than the students actually have.
- Many faculty, especially those in the liberal arts and general education classes, may have both limited appreciation for the overriding **workplace preparation needs** and expectations of practically all students, and may be very **disconnected** from the specifics and realities world of work outside the academy.
- While **most faculty are comfortable with reflective learning** at high cognitive levels of abstraction, **most students today prefer active learning methodologies** with ideas with immediate and obvious application.
- Students’ reasons for attending college tend to be more **career and economically oriented** than personal and developmental, so meaningful learning for them must relate to their personal, earning, goals.
- Many faculty (the majority on many campuses) are of the **Baby Boom generation**. They were middle class, residential students and have difficulty relating to the non-traditional students of today.
- Many of our **academic systems are still based on the agricultural “old school” model** for full time residential students without other significant responsibilities, especially inappropriate at community colleges.
- Students basically **don’t like traditional academic processes and products**, and are less willing than other generational cohorts to simply comply with expectations they do not value. The incredible rise in the popularity of on-line classes, even by residential students, attests to their dissatisfaction with traditional classes and class structures and processes.
- Few traditional, content based academic processes help students develop a meaningful appreciation of the need to become **life-long learners**.
- For better or worse, **retention** has become a driving imperative on most, if not all, campuses.
- Practically all **instructors deeply care** about students and student success.
- Colleges must restructure themselves to effectively bring about the educational goals society and most academic professionals agree are important, including, **the ability to think critically**.

- Unfortunately, **lecture based classes transmitting low level information might actually reduce students' ability to think critically** and are the norm in most college classes.

### **A Pedagogy for Today's Learners**

A Pedagogy for Today's Learners (PTL) presents an academic model appropriate for today's students in postmodern times. It recognizes the fundamental differences in Generation NeXt from previous generations of students (as described in "Generation NeXt Comes to College; Meeting Today's Postmodern College Student"; resources available from Dr. Taylor), and the poor match between many traditional instructional practices and the needs, desires and tolerances of Generation NeXt.

While lecture based instruction from an expert instructor might never have been the most efficient way to bring about deep learning, it had a certain fit with earlier modern times and a congruence with the modern belief that there are universal truths that can be transmitted to willing students. Our current postmodern times require more student ownership of information and ideas, developed through the personal construction of knowledge, and so suggest the need to alter a number of fundamental "traditional" practices. Some changes will require the recognition of the consumer based realities of higher education in the third millennium; if school is not fun and does not have readily apparent meaning and/or benefit, young people will not participate, or participate in full and authentic ways.

Other changes reflect the absolutely necessary shift from a teaching to a learning centered environment, as outlined by Barr and Tagg, O'Banion, and others. The prime recognition is that our colleges do not exist to provide instruction; we exist to create learning. The traditional "teaching" practice of lecture to passive students has been long discredited as ineffective, though few schools have fully embraced the scope of change necessary to become "Learning Colleges" as described by O'Banion.

The following outlines some necessary changes and practices to make this paradigm shift, from an old school, modern, instructional based institution to a "consumer conscious", postmodern, PTL institutional appropriate and effective with Generation NeXt and other student cohorts.

#### **1. Changes in the dynamics of the student-instructor relationship**

Many higher education faculty still aspire to the old, traditional model of "expert to acolyte" where students looked to them for an agenda, content, and identification of what is and what is not important. Now, the faculty must become not only experts in their fields, but facilitators of student learning. In truth, the relationship of faculty to student in PTL is also provider to consumer with the expectations that the instructor please the student by providing meaningful learning opportunities in ways that are attractive to them. Ideally interaction through teaching and learning will be in a collaborative relationship toward shared goals where students are engaged as full partners (al la O'Banion), but students must be engaged on some level to attend, persist, learn and succeed. Faculty who fail to appreciate their provider role will be unsuccessful on many levels, and a poor fit for the PTL, student centered college.

#### **2. Changed responsibility for students and instructors**

Traditionally, instructors held all the cards. They determined the content, outcomes, procedures, and nature of their classes, often with little or no outside input. Instructors often lectured on what they personally found of interest without feeling significant responsibility to cover the entire content of the class. While instructors were responsible for input, students were responsible for outcomes; their success or the lack thereof. The successful student was one who could identify what was important and give it back to the instructor on tests and a paper. Teaching was the constant (every student got the same thing) and learning was the variable (some students learned more and some less). Responsibility for outcomes rested with the

student; they all had the same input so variances in output had to be up to them. In fact, an “appropriate” distribution of grades has been a measure of instructor success. In the learning model, learning must become the constant; all students need to demonstrate success in reaching learning outcomes. Teaching becomes the variable as instructor facilitate student success by whatever means necessary. If significant numbers of students do not reach success, that becomes the instructor’s responsibility, and the instructor’s problem. Ideally, as O’Banion says, the learning college engages learners as full partners who will assume primary responsibility for their choices. In the PTL it is incumbent on the faculty to make those choices and desired outcomes attractive, realistic, meaningful and possible.

**3. Focus on student change.** PTL requires clearly articulated goals that address how students will be meaningfully and demonstrably different on exit for all desired outcomes at the class, course, program and institutional level. What is the content the student must know? What application skills must they possess? What higher order thinking and abstraction capacities should the develop? What recognition of the value, meaning and worth of this discipline should the be evident? What professional or institutional citizenship and character development goals are addressed in this activity and how are they impacted? How do the assessments of these elements reflect an awareness of external goals? The ability to regurgitate knowledge based factoids is not sufficient student change, and evidence indicates that low level comprehension changes are not long lasting. The goal must be long lasting, fundamental, deep change which can only be produced by a pedagogy that actually addresses issues of “formation” (Shulman 2005). Recognizing that many Generation NeXt students see college as a commodity to be purchased and passively accumulated, the necessity of helping them appreciate the transformational mission of education becomes increasingly important.

#### **4. Changed instructor’s role**

So what does the instructor do to operationalize the learning paradigm in PTL? I identify six major activities.

- 1. Identifies external goals.** The course outcomes have to be bigger than the instructor’s ideas about appropriate academic expectations and outcomes and the student’s desires, and of a higher order than the knowledge level factoids Gardiner identified as common. Health care educators have known, and articulated, this forever. In a nursing program there is little argument about “why do we have to learn this?” There are external goals (licensing criteria and tests) that are non-negotiable, in addition to the basic and hopefully evident need for competent patient care. The liberal arts are being challenged to identify these external goals beyond “it is a core class”, or “I love it and you should, too” or the even worse circular “it is important because it is on the test for this class.” Institutional exams, like “rising junior” comprehensives, can be helpful, though a meaningful shared competency final for each course is better than no external goal at all. The expectations of employers must also be considered. Dynamically, students and instructors agree that the external goals make it “bigger than just us” so students might be less likely to try to negotiate down instructor expectations.
- 2. Helps students own and personalize goals.** If students don’t care, they will not care. A critical, and unfortunately new, responsibility for many instructors is helping students understand and decide that this subject, this material, this class matters to them personally. PTL recognizes the consumer realities of higher education today and the necessity of instructors, and others, to help students personalize program and institutional goals for student success, as well as institutional retention. In the learning domains, we have spent way too much time on the cognitive, little on the psychomotor (for kinesthetic learning) and have almost completely ignored this, the affective “why care?” element. Unfortunately, the passion of a Ph.D. in physics for the workings of the world is not sufficient to convince a student in a required introductory physical science

course of its elegance and worth. Active learning techniques can help instructors in assisting students in owning and personalizing goals, as can meaningful career counseling and guidance and developmental academic advising. Few postmodern students aspire to a renaissance understanding of the world. PTL recognizes that relating the class to their career, future graduate education or vocational success might be necessary.

3. **Offers learning options.** If students have an interest in learning, and reaching learning goals, they will seek out that learning. If a grade is tied to their success, all the better. How can students reach the learning goals? There are many options, and these options should be made available to students in PTL. There are many, many models of learning styles, from the traditional “visual, auditory, kinesthetic”, to Gardner’s models of multiple intelligences. Students can learn now or later, alone or in a group, here or there, live or on-line and through visually, auditory or kinesthetic channels. They can come to lecture or listen to lecture tapes, read the book or listen to a tape of the text, attend a study group or a tutor group, work in a project group, follow an on-line tutorial or lesson on disc, chat on-line or post to a message board, ask questions in class, on-line or in the instructor’s office, or chant core concepts in a drumming circle. The options are almost limitless and affected only by instructor and student creativity and skill, the subject, and the technology available. When instructors are freed from the tyranny of lecture, new worlds open and student learning blooms.
4. **Facilitates a variety of learning methods.** Once students own the outcomes and know their options, faculty cannot retire to the lounge to allow learning to take place in their absence. It is incumbent that faculty remain active and available to help students identify the learning methods best for them, to assist with each of the methods and activities and help students assess their progress.
5. **Acts as resource.** Fortunately, faculty are experts and will be sought out by learning active students. I once assisted in the instruction of a music appreciation class, not because I am music faculty (because I am not) but because there was a performance expectation for the class. As sponsor of the music club, I was known as a player. As students worked to learn their songs they knew I could help them isolate and identify dominant, major and minor chords, count out measures and, hopefully, help them learn their song (and avoid embarrassment on performance day). Being sought out by actively learning students is “the holy grail” for many faculty, and one they could experience with increasing frequency through the application of PTL concepts.
6. **Assess against the external criteria.** As long as higher education is structured around the “credit hours leading to a degree” paradigm, someone will have to assign a grade. Assessment and subsequent grading can be “gotcha” activities. Most Boomers and Xers can remember being surprised by a final grade. Traditionally, students never saw a real grading rubric, only the breakdown of what counted for how many points, often a midterm, final and paper. The midterm was the first, and possibly only, graded activity before the final, when the paper was also due. Some instructors tended toward the obscure to encourage (in their minds) a close reading of all course material. Some instructors might seek higher order thinking, but student conclusions had better be the same as theirs. In PTL, no student should ever be surprised by an assessment or by a grade. Ideally, every student would be successful and would inform you when they had reached mastery. Since you and students would have agreed on what is significant and the student has some ownership of the goals, assessment against the external criteria becomes yet another collaborative activity. The challenge for each instructor will be to develop these assessments, though some suggestions will be offered below. Self evaluations, peer evaluations and practice tests all help students better understand

course goals, objectives and outcomes, the grading rubric, and their relative progress and success (or lack thereof).

**5. Working up educational taxonomies.** Any instructor who is not familiar with Bloom's famous taxonomy of educational objectives should be hornswoggled. Readers are also referred to the work of L. Dee Fink who stresses the affective component of learning. Unfortunately, few graduate programs address instructional methods at all, much less learning and assessment hierarchies. According to Gardiner and others, college instruction continues to be primarily lecture based with assessments of low, knowledge based, material ("factoids"). This meets the needs of neither today's students or society. This PTL recognizes the need for a certain amount of foundational knowledge in every discipline, but suggests generating a need for this information through the application and stimulation of higher level educational activities and goals.

Briefly summarized, Bloom's taxonomy, first published in 1956 as a Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, identified a classification taxonomy of educational objectives, and related activities and assessments, from the lowest level of knowledge through comprehension, application, analysis and ultimately to the highest level of evaluation. As Gardiner points out, most faculty spend too much time on the lower levels of knowledge and comprehension and not enough time on higher levels. It is no coincidence that lecture tends to lead to memorization (at best) while active learning strategies are more effective at developing critical thinking and other higher forms of learning so we would expect lecture based classes to develop almost exclusively low level learning. The evaluation level includes appraisals and judgments about the worth and utility of information. This can be based on internal evidence like logical accuracy and consistency, and external evidence, including the relation to theory and to works of recognized quality. PTL recognizes that both theory and works of recognized quality are falling on hard times in the postmodern age of opinion and spin, but students' understanding and appreciation of both are goals for most educators. It is easily argued that assisting in the development of these higher levels of thinking and reasoning are important for the citizens of a democracy and are a fundamental mission of higher education. Educational methods and related evaluations, therefore, should aspire to higher levels of learning, and utilize active learning methodologies to achieve these ends.

The simple yet elegant taxonomy articulated by Lee Shulman of the Carnegie foundation as a pedagogy of formation for the professions includes three components of knowledge, skill, and meaning. Knowledge is basically the content level and include the basic informational material of most classes. Skill includes the notion of student centered utility; what is the student's use, or potential use, of this content? This utility is absolutely necessary for retention; content that cannot be used in an application important to the student is by definition "useless" and will be discarded. Utility can only be established by students relative to their personal goals. The third level is meaning or value. What is the worth of this application? If utility is established based on students' goals, this value may be naturally occurring, but faculty must consciously and purposively help students establish for themselves reasons to care about the content and its applications. If students don't care, they won't care. This model appreciates that students need content that has application of significance to them.

### **The Postmodern Pedagogy Teaching/ Learning Model**

Much of this model is based on the pioneering work of Dr. Lee Shulman, the 8th president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching who described

"Pedagogies of Formation"- how does education turn someone into a professional?, and  
"Pedagogies of Uncertainty"- how does education prepare a professional to act effectively in situations with new or limited information?

These **Pedagogies of Formation** involve more than knowing certain things or being able to do certain things. Students are expected to incorporate values and develop identities as a result of the instructional activities. They are inducted into membership in the profession.

This PTL attempts to incorporate these ideas and techniques into instruction for all students for whom deep, lasting and functional learning and change is the goal. The taxonomy at its simplest involves the domains of Information, Skills and Values. The following briefly describes these elements, with questions for instructions to facilitate their application of the model.

### **Information**

Knowledge base/ cognitive level/ "factoids"/ processes (when not yet related to student personal experience)  
Information can be delivered in class, but can also found at other places and times, especially through media/ technology.  
Too much time in most classes is spent on transmission of information, which is either readily available from other sources, or can be made available through instructor created resources like MP3 and MP4 podcasts.  
How does this information relate to what student already knows?  
What is important/ critical for them to know?  
Where can they get it?  
How can it be made available  
Across learning styles?  
In modalities/ media they prefer (tech)?  
How can we get them to bring it to class (and assure that they have adequate content when they come to class) to allow class time to be used in identifying utility, developing skills and creating value/ meaning?  
How much information is needed to develop skills and meaning?  
How best to transmit information if you have to do it in class?  
Offer meaningful content  
Attempt to relate to, illustrate and connect to and through student's experience in the world  
Offer opportunities for students to develop meaning/ see value

### **Skills/ Utility/ Application**

Putting information to use  
Social/ behavioral aspect added to cognitive level of Information  
Utility- without utility, a clearly identified and valued "use", the information is "useless" and so will be discarded  
Interactive/ practical level  
What can be done with this information?  
What is the application of this information?  
Utility that relates to students' goals creates value/ meaning and helps develop future orientation  
Critical thinking from a particular "professional" perspective is an unmet goal of many classes that can be better reached by using active methods to develop utility.  
What/ where will this information get me? (moves into meaning)  
Market driven?  
Quality of life issues?  
Must be tried/ practiced "Use it or lose it"  
Can be talked about (necessary but probably not sufficient)  
Can be modeled/ illustrated  
Must relate to student's own needs/ goals.

### **Values/ Meaning/ Caring**

Human dimension/ valuing/ "willingness"  
Ethical standards

Affective and social implications

Helping students care and invest

Builds from personalization of application

“What can this do for me?”

“Which of my goals will this help me reach?”

“What do I want to get out of this class?”

“What are the ethical standards of my profession?”

What should they be?”

Instructor “passion”/ belief in the value of educational content and skills, is a necessary but not sufficient to develop valuing in students.

Values learning options

“Why is this important to me?”

Meaning can only be personally constructed

Have students articulate their construction to others

Explain, debate, convince

### **Model Summary Steps**

1. Establish shared class goals and desired outcomes.

2. Knowledge/ Information

-What is critical for them to know?

-How can we make it available in ways that are meaningful and relevant outside of the classroom?

-How can we ensure that they bring it to class?

“Door checks”, quizzes, homework, etc.

Bringing information to class must be the first domino in class success each day.

3. Application/ Skills/ Utility

-What is the use of this content and these skills to them personally?

-Past, present, future

-Meaningful applications, especially as they relate to the students’ personal goals, can facilitate the creation of meaning

4. Value/ Meaning/ Caring

-Value/ benefit of use

-Opportunities to articulate value to others.

**6. Increasing activity in learning.** Incorporating active learning methods is basically increasing the level of interaction and increasing the student activity level in classes and related learning activities. In a traditional lecture based class the instructor is very active and the students are generally inactive, if not somnambulant. There are many benefits, learning and others, to increasing student activity. PTL recognizes that as levels of activity increase, the connections between faculty and students increase, as do connections between students, which leads to increases in learning, the sense of membership with the school, satisfaction and subsequently retention. Increases in activity and interaction also increases our ability to reach citizenship and character development goals by actually allowing students to demonstrate and receive feedback on their citizenship and character via interaction, as opposed to showing their ability to sit quietly during a lecture.

Lectures can be better or worse, and there are effective techniques for improving lectures (Chilcoat 1989). As noted earlier, listening (the desired student behavior during a lecture) tends to lead to memorization, while active learning activities more likely lead to critical thinking and higher learning goals. Active learning methods can also be used to help students develop ownership of course goals and investment in course outcomes. Fundamentally, active behaviors like doing (self and peer evaluation, for example) and telling are more effective for most types of learning than listening, so most faculty might be encouraged to reduce the amount of this they spend lecturing and increasing time spent assisting students in active learning activities, especially peer teaching activities. PTL would stress that these methods are

especially important for Generation NeXt given their needs for engagement, and dissatisfaction with traditional lecture based classroom activities, which they tend to find boring, not entertaining, and not stimulating.

Some faculty will argue that their classes, while structured around a lecture, are lively environments of class discussion and debate. Unfortunately, most “class discussion” tends to be dominated by a few verbal and extroverted students and does not place a requirement on all students to actively participate. If the class is larger than about six students there is just not enough time in one discussion forum for everyone to meaningfully deal with class material, and the dynamics do not lend themselves to truly deep learning.

Active learning techniques, of course, must be chosen and adapted to the objectives, content and structure of each class, course or activity. Some technical programs are, by their very nature, almost exclusively active learning laboratories. There is a range of active learning techniques from small groups and project groups, interactive dyads, small group and project groups, jig-saw and expert groups, brainstorming, peer teaching, peer grading, self grading, simulations, immediate mastery and imbedded assessments and quizzes, and practice assessments in various formats that faculty can use to work toward higher learning goals. The references at the end of this handout would be a good starting place for finding and developing resources appropriate to each instructional area.

There is, of course, a vocabulary and knowledge base necessary for every discipline, and many introductory classes must present this material. Making the terms meaningful enhance their applicability and student ownership. A brief example especially appropriate for the social sciences might serve to illustrate how an active learning method can be used to help students reach the highest, evaluative, level of learning. The class is organized in dyads with an A and B in each dyad. The instructor presents a concept and asks “A, paraphrase this definition to B” which represents active learning at the knowledge level. Following a brief sharing of some of the paraphrases the instructor asks “B, offer A an example of this concept from the world.” Again, following a brief sharing of the examples, the instructor might ask “A, offer B an example of this concept that you have personally observed.” As you can see, we are moving the concept to higher cognitive and application/ utility levels. After people have talked about these personal observations, the instructor might direct, “B, tell A why understanding this may or may not matter or how it might be or might not be applied to your life, then A, respond to the same items” and students will, on cue, raise their learning to the evaluation and meaning level. They will each have heard another student, and themselves, make an evaluative statement about the relative worth of this information. In fairly short order they have each processed a basic concept from knowledge, through comprehension and personal application, to evaluation and meaning, and come to recognize and appreciate that “in this class we are going to be looking at information that matters.”

**5. Meaningful assessments.** The ultimate communication to students about what is and what is not important in the course is final examination. You pay the bill you are sent.; students try to learn what they will be tested on, and the level they will be tested. The literature suggests that most tests are low level; they assess knowledge level content only. If the factoids are on the test, students will know that the instructor cares primarily about low level facts to be memorized and regurgitated. If tests are on application, comparison and evaluation, students understand instructors care about deep learning.

As long as grades will need to be assigned, student learning will need to be assessed. There is much literature on developing course objectives and assessments. Let it be summarized here as the need for less content and more application, less quantity and more quality, less scantron and more essay and encouragement to assess at higher levels on the learning taxonomy. Traditional objective question forms favored by many instructors like matching, listing, multiple choice and “fill in the blanks” tend to focus on knowledge level learning, and perpetuate for students the idea that these surface level factoids are what is important, as opposed to deeper learning higher up the learning taxonomy (especially well articulated recently by Tagg).

Instructors are admonished to never surprise a student with any evaluation. All scoring rubrics should be well know and students should be familiar enough with the grading rubrics to be able to grade their own, or others, work. The first evaluation of any assignment should not be for a grade, but for feedback. Test forms should be well know to students before the test is administered. One measure of the quality of an in-class test might be the level of concern an instructor has about cheating. The more concern for cheating, generally the lower level information assessed, so the lower quality test. Tests that seek to tap into higher levels of understanding are rarely susceptible to traditional cheating (copying and sharing answers) and questions can be constructed to require students to demonstrate their understanding at the knowledge and comprehension levels for them to articulate and defend responses at a higher level. These can often be completed out of class.

Instructors are encouraged to reduce their dependence on traditional in-class tests to assess student learning, and the class paper to assign a grade (papers which can often only marginally be justified as assessing learning) and to explore other assessments and demonstrations of learning. While the traditional research paper may be difficult to defend as a learning or assessment activity, class projects can be valuable. PTL would also stress that the availability of web based information has fundamentally altered the learning processes involved in writing a research paper, especially given the availability of pre-written papers for sale and trade. However, projects that are long term, are viewed as meaningful by students and those that include a “sharing with others” or peer teaching component are especially valuable. Portfolio development, and chat and message board postings might also be considered in the grading rubric.

**Overcoming obstacles to change.** The transition from the teaching model of higher education most Boomer and Gen X faculty and staff experienced as students, and perpetuate in daily practice, to the learning model of Postmodern Pedagogy appropriate to Generation NeXt students in these postmodern times is not and will not be easy. Though the benefits are many, these fundamental shifts require many different behaviors from instructors, and changes in the academic system. Several possible obstacles to change include:

- Instructor belief in the effectiveness of instructional activities. It can be very difficult for instructors to leave their comfortable “expert” roles and lecture based classes to facilitate more active student learning. The response of many instructors to the mismatch between Generation NeXt and their traditional instructional methods has been to keep doing what they have been doing, only more vigorously. As instructors experiment and experience success in facilitating active learning methods, they might be expected to develop more excitement about and faith in these activities.
- Instructor skills. Dealing with the consumer mentality of Generation NeXt and facilitating active learning requires a different skill set than providing lectures. Development activities and a sincere dedication to change will be required for campuses, and individual instructors.
- Teaching resources. Unless desks are bolted to the floor, many active learning techniques can be operationalized with existing resources. Some new technology may be needed for on-line discussion groups and computer assisted instructional techniques but most of what instructors and students need is already available.
- Student readiness. Students socialized for passive learning at low cognitive levels may have difficulty accepting that higher levels of activity from them will be tolerated and expected, and the higher learning is required. Just as active learning requires a new skill set from instructors, it requires new student behaviors they must also be trained to perform adequately. PTL initiatives across the campus from day one will help students

understand that these are institutional expectations and might increase compliance and resocialization.

- Administrative support. Most academic administrators have also been socialized in the teaching paradigm. If they visit a class and no one is “teaching” (lecturing) they may question the efficiency or propriety of that instructor’s methods. Administrators need to not only be supportive, but be prepared to facilitate PTL as their faculties operationalize student centered, learning oriented methods.
- Academic architecture. Imagine that an instructor at a community college currently teaches five sections of college algebra each semester. She is probably doing about the same thing around fifteen hours a week; teaching algebra classes. An active learning paradigm would suggest that she might “teach class” (work problems on the board) during one of her scheduled class sections, and could work problems for several hundred students as well as she could for ten. Once these demonstrations are archived to an audio/video file, she would not have to work them live again, nor would the class need to assemble. The AV files could be accessed from anywhere. This would free all of her class time, and whatever time she was spending working with students out of class, for facilitating other active learning techniques; dyads, small groups, on-line, distance contacts, tutorials, and the myriad of other learning activities demonstrated to be effective in students’ attainment of learning outcomes. This would require some major changes in class scheduling, resource distribution, performance appraisal rubrics, and the very nature of instructor time and activities not currently available under many school’s teaching paradigms. The most advanced parts of a truly student centered learning paradigm, like open entrance and open, mastery exit based exclusively on each student’s demonstration of success in learning, would require some fundamental changes in academic scheduling; both in daily instructor activities and the academic calendar.

## Conclusions

PTL provides an academic model appropriate for today’s students by recognizing the fundamental differences in Generation NeXt from previous generations of students and the poor match between many traditional instructional practices and the needs, desires and tolerances of Generation NeXt. Necessary changes will require the recognition of the consumer based realities of higher education and the absolutely necessity to shift from a teaching to a learning centered environment.

## Resources and References

A live-linked resource on Learning Resources is available on my web site [www.taylorprograms.com](http://www.taylorprograms.com) via the Learning Resources link. Additional/ significant resources are cited here.

Bain, Ken. **What the Best College Teachers Do.** Harvard University Press. 2004.

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June 18, 2009