

## Why Should We Consider Alternative Pedagogy?

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For years, formal education in the United States has been delivered in the same format. Traditionally, information has been dispersed from the instructor through lecture or demonstration, the learners are expected to take notes, and as a close to the learning, the instructor gives an exam which measures the learner's mastery of a topic.

Increasingly, faculty express frustration about today's learner. Much of the frustrations stem from the fact that learners are not taking notes during lecture, they are not completing outside assignments, or they are not preparing for tests in a way that will make them successful. Other frustrations focus on the fact that technology, such as cell phones, acts as a distraction to the educational process.

As educators, we know that the world has changed. Technology has made a mark on the world and forever shifted it. Continuous updates to technology continue to create sweeping changes. This, in turn, affects how people experience the world. Cumulatively, these experiences are creating a new type of learner in the classroom.

I often refer to these "new" learners as Gen Z learners. In addition to them, we have Gen X, Y, and Millennials, which creates a multigenerational learning community. When we add other groups such as displaced workers to the mix, we can start to realize the true diversity of learner we have in the classroom.

All these changes in the classroom present us with a unique challenge. How can we make the educational process relevant and meaningful to all these learners? When we add in the distraction of technology and the varying level of college readiness our learners possess, it can feel daunting.

As you think about the variety of learners in the classroom, consider the following:

For many years, our ancestors used manually operated tools in building and constructing cabinets. From the cutting down of the timber, to finishing the project, all the work was done by hand. Fast forward to today: a modern woodworker has a shop full of electrical tools from saws to sanders. While the outcome is still the same — to handcraft a useful piece furniture — the process has changed drastically. This woodworker may use some of the hand tools from the past to create the cabinet; however, it is likely that this woodworker will be using a variety of power tools to make the job easier and faster. The tools of the past are most likely used to supplement the work completed by the modern tools.

Perhaps we need to think about our classrooms the same way. We are still educating learners, but the way to go about that process might be improved by changing the way we disseminate information. We have many tools to use in the classroom and we have access to robust resources to help us create this challenging, relevant learning environment. Additionally, technology affords us the opportunity to engage learners outside of the classroom in a variety of ways.

Just as today's woodworker's still have many of the hand tools from the past in their shops, we need to realize, that as educators, we may still need to use the lecture-based classroom for some things. There is a time and a place for all types of teaching techniques and teaching styles. Lecture-based lessons have their place, and as an educator, it is important to make sure that you are using the best teaching "tool" to allow your learners to get the most from your classroom. Just like the woodworker selects the best tool from their inventory for each part of the building process, so we must consider what the best tool may be for our learners for each lesson that we teach.