Maximizing Learning Potential in Testing Events
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Relevant Research

--an amazing free resource with chapter summarizing much of the current research on learning with many chapters written by those doing the research and writing about it with accessible language and suggestions for implementing what the research has established

--Identifies six benefits that accrue when student “test” themselves on course materials. It’s an evidence-based study strategy that teacher can use to encourage better performance on exams

--a review of 103 studies done since 1990 identifies five characteristics of feedback that promote learning from and acting on teacher provided feedback

--“Of the 9,713 assessment items [test questions] submitted to this study...93% were rated Bloom’s level 1 or 2—knowledge comprehension. Of the remaining items 6.7% rated level 3 with less than 1% rated level 4 or above.” (p. 437)

Review Sessions

--review session activities that have students reviewing the material, not the teacher
Innovative Exam Alternatives


--students write and answer their own test questions, and are graded on the content and difficulty of their questions.


--after answering each multiple-choice question, student provide a short written rationale for their answer which is graded along with the answer.


--students complete exams in two stages; first, they do a typical closed-book exam on their own and then, they do an open-book or take-home exam, alone or in collaboration with others, depending on how the teacher designs this testing strategy. Usually the first stage score counts more than the second stage.

Group exams – see handout

Ways to reduce test anxiety


--found that letting students determine the weight of two major course grades reduced exam anxiety

Crib sheets – see the Teaching Professor Blog, February 27, 2013 (www.facultyfocus.com)

Innovative Grading Options


--students take a short answer quiz, submit with a number identification. Completed quizzes are passed out with a grading rubric. Each student grades two quizzes. If the quiz grades are the same, the grade counts, unless the student who took the quiz disagrees with the grade. If the grades are different or the student objects to the grade, the teacher grades the quiz.


--students take their math final, turn in their pencil, receive a key and red pencil. They grade their final, marking correct and in correct answers and awarding partial credit. The teacher reviews and adjusts student grades, as necessary.