

Conclusion

A Community of Educators

The conclusion asks you to think about yourself in a larger community of professionals—teachers, researchers, school administrators, and teacher trainers. Everyone brings something to this partnership to improve the learning experiences for our children. Researchers bring insight into brain function; educators bring knowledge of students functioning in actual classrooms. Creating working relationships within this community is the key to improving our schools.

Assignment 1: Write about and discuss what the impact of this course has had on your ideas about learning.

Recall Martha in Unit 6. Her reading about regression reinforced her almost forgotten animosity to grades and motivated her to change her approach to grading students. Write down the answers to the following questions:

1. Did any of the concepts in this course reinforce ideas you had already developed based on your experience in the classroom?
2. Look at these specifically by identifying the research idea and talking about the actual experiences that led you to the same conclusion about learning.
3. How has the scientific corroboration of your own discoveries about learning affected you?

Assignment 2: Identify areas of research.

Write down the answer to the following question: As a result of your work and thinking during this course, what questions emerge as important for researchers to explore?

Assignment 3: Identify obstacles to change.

Write down the answers to the following questions:

1. What are some of the obstacles to making the sorts of changes to schools that you would like to make?
2. How might you work with other professionals in order to deal with these?

Final assignments

This is an opportunity for you to bring together the strands of this course by applying the ideas to the problem you identified as you began the course, and by reflecting about yourself—what you have learned and your openness to learning.

Assignment 1: Develop a presentation of a solution to your problem. For possible help, read “Depth of Field/Depth of Understanding: Finding the Emotional Connection,” by Eric Baylin (see Resources: <http://www.learner.org/courses/neuroscience/resources/resources.html>). Ideally, this will be a formal presentation to your group.

Present the problem you described as you started the course:

1. Briefly state the problem.
2. Explain your original understanding or analysis of the problem (the lens provided by your conceptual framework or beliefs about learning). Connect the original specific belief about learning or teaching with your original understanding or analysis of the problem.
3. Explain your new insight into or understanding of the problem (in relation to ideas from the course, changes to your beliefs, and your new lens). Specifically connect the course ideas with your new analysis, making the relationship between them clear. How do you understand the nature of the problem differently now?
4. Present some specific strategies you might now try in order to resolve the problem; connect these to specific ideas from the course.

Assignment 2: Explore changes in your understanding about learning.

Revisit your original statement about the connection between emotion and learning. If you found that you had to change (or are in the process of changing) some of your initial concepts about teaching and learning, examine the process of conceptual change.

Perhaps revisit the essay “Fostering Conceptual Change About Child Development in Prospective Teachers and Other College Students.”

Write down the answers to the following questions:

1. How resistant or open to new ideas were you?
2. Has your experience as a learner given you any new insights into your students, insights that will affect your teaching? Be specific.

Final note: For those who want to think about the classroom and school implications of the research, here are some additional articles (see Resources: <http://www.learner.org/courses/neuroscience/resources/resources.html>):

Ablin, J. "Learning as Problem Design Versus Problem Solving: Making the Connection Between Cognitive Neuroscience Research and Educational Practice." *Mind, Brain, and Education* Vol. 2, Issue 2 (May, 2008): 52-54.

Baylin, E. "Depth of Field/Depth of Understanding: Finding the Emotional Connection." *Schools: Studies in Education* Vol. 7, No. 1 (2010).

Blodget, A. "A More Perfect Union: Marrying Standardized and Formative Testing," *ASCD Express*, vol 5, 503.

Blodget, A. "Motivation: Making Room for the Self in School." *Independent School*, National Association of Independent Schools, Spring 2009 (online feature).

Blodget, A. "When School Makes Us Sick." *Independent School*, National Association of Independent Schools, Spring 2010.

Collins, K. "Beauty in the Beast: Falling 4 Math." *ASCD Express*.

Dweck, C.S. "Brainology: Transforming Students' Motivation to Learn." *Independent School*, National Association of Independent Schools, Winter 2008.

Keene, E.O. "New Horizons in Comprehension." *Educational Leadership* Vol. 67, No. 6 (2010): 69-73.

Moore, L.R. "On the Same Page: How to Teach Students to Love Reading—and Why It Matters." *Independent School*, Winter 2008.

Volkman, J. "Inspiration, action and peace," *Public School Montessorian*, Winter 2011, Issue 90.