

Transparent Teaching Methods

Transparent teaching methods enhance student comprehension and academic achievement by explicitly communicating the objectives, tasks, and assignment criteria. This clarity reduces confusion and apprehension, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Students from diverse backgrounds, including first-generation and non-traditional students, particularly benefit from these methods as they level the playing field by making expectations clear. By grasping the relevance and value of their work, students are more motivated and engaged, leading to enhanced critical thinking and improved performance. Transparent teaching also cultivates trust and respect, promotes metacognitive skill development, and establishes a clear framework for targeted feedback, thereby benefiting both students and instructors.

Transparent teaching methods facilitate students' comprehension of the learning process and the underlying reasons for their acquisition of course content. The following list of ideas draws inspiration from the work of Mary-Ann Winkelmes, the founder of Transparency in Learning & Teaching (TILT Higher Ed).

1. Discuss the learning goals and design rationale (i.e. why are we completing this assignment for this subject) prior to the start of each assignment or assignment sequence. Mapping out the competencies, skills, and concepts students will gain from the assignment(s) is an effective way to foster this discussion. Using this [transparent assignment template](#) on Blackboard is also an effective way of indicating assignment goals.
2. To enhance transparency in the classroom, instructors can encourage student participation in class planning when feasible. After reviewing assignment instructions, students and instructors can collaboratively develop a rubric. Similarly, students can assist instructors in structuring session agendas based on previously covered content. It is advisable for instructors to review class agendas with students at the beginning of the course and revisit them at the conclusion, highlighting the topics for the subsequent session.
3. Winkelmes recommends gauging students understanding during the class session by utilizing group work that requires students to apply the concepts that have been taught by the instructor. Students may teach back key concepts to their peers, build sample review questions, or even create formative and summative assessment questions based on course content.
4. Share theories of learning with students. Explain the key concepts of Bloom's Taxonomy and map your assessments and assignments to the taxonomy. It can also be beneficial for instructors to explain Carol Dweck's concepts of [growth and fixed mindsets](#), particularly before and after a challenging unit.

5. Review grading criteria with students before assignment submission. Design assignments that require students' engagement with rubrics and other evaluation methods, such as peer review projects. By utilizing the grading criteria to assist their peers, students not only gain insights into their work but also ensure that it aligns with the evaluation standards.
6. Debrief tests and other assignments in class. Instructors can lead the class through a discussion regarding any patterns or problem areas in the assessment/assignment.
7. Finally, instructors should maintain a running commentary about the class's progression through the content, continuing to indicate what modes of thought are being used or how content matches up with disciplinary standards, etc.

Additional Resources

[Bloom's Taxonomy Quick Guide](#)

[Self-guided Checklist for Designing a Transparent Assignment](#)

[Using Clickers in a Large Classroom](#)

[Winkelmes, M. A., Boye, A., & Tapp, S. \(Eds.\). \(2023\). *Transparent design in higher education teaching and leadership: A guide to implementing the transparency framework institution-wide to improve learning and retention*. Taylor & Francis.](#)

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