LEARNING IN THE REMOTE CONTEXT

This is one of seven Teacher Guides in the series *'Teaching in Remote Australian Schools: Enhancing Pre-Service Teacher Education – A Resource Package'.*

STANDARD

1.0 Know students and how they learn

FOCUS AREA

1.2 Understanding how students learn

GRADUATE DESCRIPTOR

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of research into how students learn and the implications for teaching.

PARTNER UNIVERSITIES

Curtin University

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SPERA SOCIETY FOR THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA

INTRODUCTION

Throughout your initial education to become a teacher you have learnt about the various theories related to how people learn. Broadly, learning theories can be categorised as behavioural, cognitive and constructivist. Advances in neuroscience and the nature and function of the brain will play an important role in advancing learning theories into the future. In addition to the broad learning theories mentioned above, there are various theories about and characteristics of *learning styles*, for example, Myers-Brigg (Myers et al. 1998) and Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1999).

In his book *Becoming an Effective Teacher*, Fetherston (2006) asks this question: *Why do teachers need to have an understanding of various properties and views about learning?* He answers his own question thus:

My answer is that if they understand various theoretical bases of learning then they are better able to construct a personally viable approach to teaching that can lead to better outcomes in the classroom. For this to occur teachers need to be able to draw upon a wide range of concepts so that their approaches in the classroom can be richer and more varied. They need to be able to understand how people learn in order to be able to successfully support classroom learning. If teachers have a well of rich theory to draw upon then they are better able to adapt to change and to make reasoned decisions about what to use and how to use different instructional approaches in their classrooms (p. 105).

All teachers need to have a good understanding of well-established bodies of knowledge about how students learn. In regional and remote locations, where teaching and learning challenges are significant and access to experience on-site and a range of resources may be difficult, teachers need to have an exceptional understanding of how students learn.

As was identified in Teacher Guide 1, there are a number of factors impacting on the physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students in remote locations. Quality teachers are able to understand these factors, and rather than see them as impediments to learning, use their knowledge, skills and abilities, especially in relation to their understanding of how students learn, to ensure that the teaching program they are providing is enabling every student in their class to learn.

The purpose of this Teacher Guide is to encourage pre-service teachers to build on their understanding of how students learn and apply that understanding to teaching in the remote context.
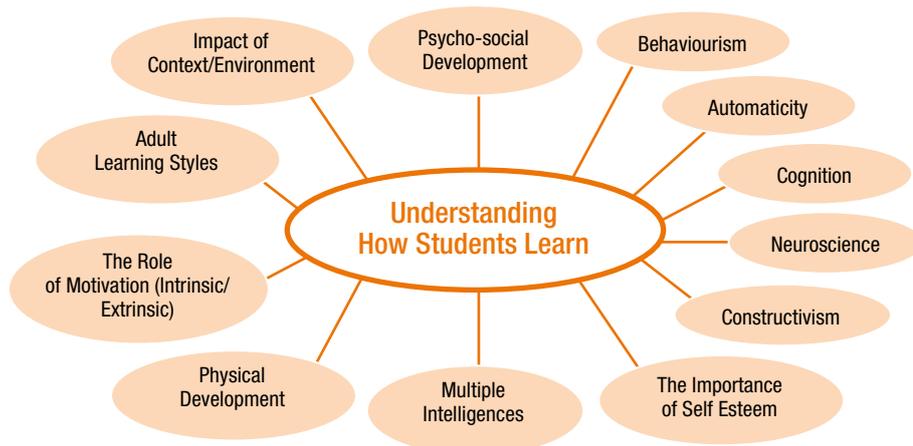
OUTCOMES

• Graduates have a comprehensive understanding of well-established bodies of knowledge related to how students learn.

• Graduates are able to apply their understanding of how students learn to design a teaching sequence for a remote classroom context.

• Graduates realise and pursue opportunities through employing innovative strategies, based on well-established bodies of knowledge of how students learn, to enhance the learning of students in the remote context.

• Graduates apply their interpersonal skills to interact with colleagues, on site and at a distance, to identify how others use their knowledge about students to structure learning sequences/lessons in the remote context.

Examples of well-established bodies of knowledge about how students learn.

Impact of Context/Environment

Psycho-social Development

Behaviourism

Automaticity

Adult Learning Styles

Cognition

Understanding How Students Learn

Neuroscience

The Role of Motivation (Intrinsic/ Extrinsic)

Constructivism

Physical Development

Multiple Intelligences

The Importance of Self Esteem

TOPICS

What other ideas about learning can you add to this diagram?

TASKS

1. Debate: Metropolitan versus Remote Learning. Should teachers implement different teaching strategies to foster learning in different contexts?

2. Advancements in neuroscience are impacting on our understanding of how students learn and strategies that can be employed to support student learning (e.g. building neural pathways).

Undertake an Internet search on:

- The emerging role of neuroscience on the understanding of learning.

- The work of the National Centre of Science Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia (SiMERR) with the mathematics and literacy *QuickSmart* program. Much of the success of SiMERR and *QuickSmart* is in rural and remote schools (http://www.une.edu.au/simmer/ pages/index.phg).

3. Comment on this statement. For effective learning to take place the curriculum must be relevant to the student. How would you ensure the curriculum is relevant to students if you were teaching at a remote school? Give examples of the resources you would use.

4. Motivation plays a major role in student learning.

- What motivations can you draw on for remote students? E.g. links to the natural and local environment.

- Based on a practicum, list activities that you employed to motivate students? Why did you use those strategies?

- Based on your experience and understanding of how students learn, how would you modify or build on these strategies for a remote context? Include intrinsic and extrinsic examples.

Identifying How Others Use Knowledge About How Students Learn

5. How would you develop a buddy school/ professional colleague relationship/partnership with the aim of designing and implementing a two-way professional learning /enrichment program? What would be the focus areas of this relationship/partnership (this will vary from situation to situation, person to person, and should involve building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. The National Professional Standards for Teachers would be a good starting point. http://www.aitsl.edu.au/).

6. What resources and/or professional colleagues are available to teachers in remote schools to assist with how students learn, e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officers (AIEO), councillors, colleagues, other professionals and support staff?

RESOURCES

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