TEACHING YOUR CLASS ABOUT THE LEARNING MODEL

PURPOSE
While heavy emphasis has been placed on instructors teaching in ways that are consistent with Learning Model principles, the Learning Model is not principally a model for instruction. Rather, it is first and foremost a model for good learning and only secondarily a guide to the instruction that leads to such learning.

Because of this, it is critical that students understand the Learning Model. They need to recognize your instructional efforts as pointing them toward, and supporting them in, the kind of learning promoted by the model. This tool discusses ways to help increase students’ levels of personal responsibility for their learning as they come to better understand the Learning Model.

description
President Clark states, “If faculty will take the time to teach the Learning Model in practice, their students will understand it and be able to use it, and faculty will be more effective in their teaching” (Kim B. Clark, Interview, June 12th, 20). A continual exposure to the model throughout a student’s university experience can be a powerful influence in producing active, engaged, life-long learners.

Start Early
Although a class culture develops and changes over the semester, the opportunity for you to influence that development decreases rapidly as the semester progresses. Take time early in your course to help students understand the principles and process of Learning Model. Show how the Learning Model will be applied in your course. Make it explicit in the syllabus and in your orientation to the course.

Show Application of the Learning Model
While it is helpful to understand the Learning Model on an abstract level, the principles will not be of significance until they are applied in your course. Discuss the specific ways in which students will be expected to exercise faith, to act for themselves, and to teach one another in your course. Discuss your understanding of the role of the Spirit and the scriptures in learning. Show how the process of Prepare, Teach One Another, and Ponder/Prove fit in the rhythm of the course.

Periodically Remind Students
Throughout the course, point out strategies that you are using to apply, and help students apply, the principles of the Learning Model. You may point out instances of students “acting” for themselves in their learning. Or you may reinforce situations in which students love and serve one another. You may invite students to share with you privately or with the class publicly, ways in which they seek the help of the Spirit in their learning. Consistently noting such examples helps make connections between the principles of the Learning Model and the process of learning.

Stay the Course
Some students will initially resist taking more responsibility for their learning or viewing their study of secular things as a spiritual undertaking. After many years of being able to compartmentalize their lives and passively absorb instruction, some will certainly complain about the higher expectations. They may beg for more traditional approaches where the responsibility for their learning is the instructor’s, and the difficult task of integrating secular and spiritual is postponed to another day. Be ready to help them through the transition.

While the benefits of the Learning Model are proven, they are not immediate, automatic or easily achieved. The change involves a learning curve for both faculty and students, and both students and instructors will struggle on occasion. Good lecturers may feel awkward when attempting to use collaborative activities or develop opportunities for student reflection. Gospel connections will not always be apparent.

Teaching students to be better learners is an ongoing process, as is learning to be ever-better teachers.
The actual methods for teaching the Learning Model are almost endless and will change from class to class and circumstance to circumstance. You may:

1) Ask your students to read and think about the foundational material on the Learning Model. Information and resources can be found at the Learning Model Website.

As students read the preparation material, consider questions that may set up your class discussion:

- How does teaching help us learn?
- Why is “acting” important to learning by faith?
- In what ways can the Spirit be the true teacher?

2) Or you may give a particular assignment:

- Find a scripture that relates to each of the Learning Model principles.
- Teach a principle from the Learning Model to two people before coming to class.
- Prepare to share a personal experience that relates to a Learning Model principle.

3) To increase student engagement while learning about the Learning Model, you might consider any number of Teach One Another activities:

- Pair share
- Jigsaw
- Mutual peer tutoring

4) Help students connect to what they have learned. Consider the following activities:

- Think of a personal experience that ties to a Learning Model principle.
- Ask how students might study differently in this and other courses.

You should develop activities that will relate specifically to your course learning outcomes. Find a way to help your students highlight what is most important to them in applying the Learning Model.

Below are more specific ways to go about teaching the Learning Model:

- Explain the Learning Model in your course using a podcast.
- Review your assessments to insure that they reflect what you’re trying to measure.
- Explain explicitly in your syllabus and give a syllabus quiz.
- Assign thought papers on the application of Learning Model principles to your discipline.
- Share testimonials from older students.

TIPS

- Move quickly to application. If students are well acquainted with the Learning Model, focus the discussion on how the principles will be applied in your course.
- Use the Language. Consistent use of Learning Model language across campus will help students rethink what it means to become educated.

PITFALLS

- Never mentioning again. Remind students throughout your course about the ways that they are using the Learning Model.
- Lecturing about the Learning Model. Use the Learning Model to teach the Learning Model.

CAMPUS PRACTITIONERS

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KEY ARTICLES


OTHER RESOURCES

- Learning Model Website
- Learning Model Video Information
- Learning Model: Learning for Life
- Learning Model Implementation Quotes
- Peer Facilitator Training on the Learning Model
- Ideas for use in the classroom