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All about the Visual Learner

The purpose for writing this paper is to give you as professors a little guidance when it comes to classroom learning. I realize now that most of you teach in the way that you learn best. While this may work for some, it does not really work for me. I am a visual learner and a picky one too. What this means is that I need to see things demonstrated to “get it”. I like to have pictures, charts and graphs incorporated in the classroom. While researching for this assignment, I have discovered some interesting things about learning styles. I have, however, chosen to focus on visual learning styles since I am particularly biased towards it. I have found a plethora of information on the visual learners’ tendencies. Let me share with you what “learning visually” actually means.

A visual learner is someone who learns best with hands on experiences, rather than just listening. Pat Burke Guild stated that, “Educators do not believe that all learners are the same. Yet visits to schools throughout the world might convince us otherwise. Too often, educators continue to treat all learners alike while paying lip service to the principal of diversity.” This is very disturbing because if all schools are teaching in a uniformed way, it will create a challenge to learn. Howard Gardner said that “Visual learners prefer seeing what they are learning. Pictures and images help them understand ideas and information better

than explanations.” We have many tendencies and are often accused of daydreaming. Steven Haas, a gifted education communicator, says that, “VSLs can also be active doodlers, not concept mappers as we would wish, but just doodlers whose curly-queues ebb and flow with the lesson.” This is something that I have gotten in trouble with ever since grade school. If we were learning about the solar system, my paper would be covered in planets and stars so heavily that you could barely make out a single written word. We may doodle simply because, “Visual-spatial learners are individuals who think in pictures rather than words” (Silverman). Visual learners are apparently very creative as well. Pam Wynn Fellers, of the Coloradoan states that, “Visual learners need and like to learn through images; enjoy art and drawing; and read maps, charts and diagrams well.” Finding out that a class is taught this way is a dream come true.

The good news is that Visual learners can help themselves. According to Dr. James A. Bell, “Visual learners will benefit by managing their learning more effectively through: (a) changing writing instruments; (b) putting emphasis on pictures, graphs, and charts; (c) visualizing new knowledge; (d) reading the assignment before class; (e) reading the directions carefully.” While I can try to do my part in helping myself learn, you may be interested to learn that Phyllis a. Newcomer said, “Most, regardless of modality preferences, appear to benefit from instruction with visual materials, possibly because they supply their own auditory associations.” If this statement is true, then maybe the majority of courses should be visually oriented. I realize that not everyone is a visual learner,

but I don't see the harm in incorporating a visual aid or two into classroom lectures.

I have known most of my life that I was a visual learner. I didn't know that there was a name for it, but I knew that seeing things done was easier to pick up on than just listening. One instance where I learned visually happened when I first met my husband. I was instantly smitten, but there was one problem. His mom was an excellent cook and I knew that if I wanted to stand a chance I would have to learn. I started watching the food network religiously, watching all of the different chefs to see who I like the best. I settled on Rachel Ray. I would watch her make these wonderful meals and diligently take my notes. Since I had already seen how it was done, I had a clearer vision of what the end product was supposed to look like. Before Rachel Ray, I knew what everything looked like raw (vegetables, meat etc.), but I had no idea about what it was supposed to look like cooked. I didn't know a cooked chicken from a raw one. I also thought that fresh vegetables came in a can. I was a true beginner when I learned, and I don't think that there was any better way for me to learn than how I did. Reading a cookbook to begin probably would not have done a thing for me.

I can remember another learning experience in my life. The time I learned to drive, boy was that scary! My mom still will not get into a car with me. I tried to learn at first by just jumping in and doing it, but that didn't work out too well -- it resulted in the end of my brother's dog as I sharply turned the corner into the driveway running over poor "Derby". My mom's face turned as pale as a china doll's. It was after that I decided that I would try watching before just doing from

now on. I watched my mom and dad drive every day to and from school. I paid attention to their every move. When I felt that I had seen enough of their driving skills, I attempted to drive again, with my dad in the car of course; my mom would have no part in it. I had in fact observed enough to do a decent job. I had to be able to see it done before I went and did it. This is how I have always been and it hasn't failed me yet.

I have had good and bad teachers and professors throughout my educational career. My professor for Child Development this semester is wonderful. She talks about real life experiences and has a ton of energy. Her stories are so interesting because you can tell that they are real life. She also uses the chalkboard often and makes brainstorming clusters on the board of the different topics that we discuss. For instance, we were talking about pre-school children last month, so she immediately made a cluster on the board with the words "pre-school children" in the middle. We then as a group listed all of their qualities out loud as the professor listed them on the board. We were set to begin talking about them. She also always uses the overhead projector and transparencies. Last week she had us partner up to make charts. We were all assigned a different section in the book, and we needed to summarize it and draw pictures with it. We could use markers and colors, it was so fun, but I can really remember our section. I can actually recall most of everyone's section just because I saw all of it broken down. I have been lucky this semester with all of my professors catering pretty well to a visual learner's needs.

In conclusion, I say again that I realize that not everyone is a visual learner and will benefit from the same type of education materials. It would be nice, though, if you could give us some options. When you are giving a lecture, pass out some handouts, use the chalkboard, or at the very least, have some emotion in your voice. If I can't see what you are talking about, at least sound exciting. It is extremely difficult for a visual learner to pay attention without visual aid and their mind begins to wander off (visual learners are accused of daydreaming, remember?), so we will take all the help we can get. I know that visual learners are not the center of the universe, so I urge you to do some research on all types of learning styles -- it couldn't hurt. Even though you have probably learned about different styles, how about a refresher course? I think that in the long run it will benefit you and your students.

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