This is the Weekly Reflection podcast from Saint Louis University’s Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning. Each week, we focus on a topic that fits with our theme for the 2012-2013 academic year, Engaging All Learners. Each reflection loosely follows the five-part Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation). The goal of this podcast is to provide an avenue into a space for thoughtful reflection on complex issues, rather than to provide answers to these issues.

Week 11: Fostering Students’ Self-Evaluation Skills

Context:
Students often amaze their instructors with their surprised looks, groans, and even cheers when a graded project is returned. While students react with genuine wonder as they examine their returned projects, instructors are often dumbfounded when students do not have a realistic understanding of the quality of their work. Even when we provide detailed directions and descriptions of the expectations and objectives of a project, including an equally detailed rubric, students consistently fail to evaluate their own academic work.

Experience:
What we see as a failure to follow-through or be realistic with self-evaluation practice in our students is more likely to be that students do not know how to evaluate their own work. As with any other academic skill, students need to learn which steps to take, and how to take them in order to fully evaluate the work they do. In order to assist students in learning self-evaluation skills, researchers find that formative feedback, using the language of the class learning objectives, and/or rubric, is very effective. Formative feedback provides students with questions to consider as well as possibilities for revision rather than summative feedback that tends to focus more on deficit. Whether we provide formative feedback during in-class activities, on early drafts of projects, or through peer-to-peer evaluation finding ways to model for students how to think about learning tasks before, during, and after they engage those tasks is key to beginning the process of self-evaluation.

Reflection:
(Take some time to consider the following prompts. You may find it helpful to write or sketch your thoughts.)

What kinds of feedback do you generally provide to students? Do students in your classes have scheduled opportunities to discuss work-in-progress with you or with their peers? In which ways do you discuss project and exam requirements? How do you know when students have internalized the information on rubrics you provide? Do they have scheduled opportunities to practice working with rubrics and/or project requirements?

Action:
Using one project assignment, build in multiple ways for students to internalize the meaning of expectations on a rubric and in the project assignment itself in order to evaluate their own work for the class. Depending on your learning objectives and course, these activities toward self-evaluation skills may be an intentional, specific discussion about the rubric, it may be having students build the rubric from the assignment expectations, or it may be small group practice evaluations on a sample project. There are many ways in which students can begin to hone the skill of self-evaluation, and the more of these you can incorporate into the work of your class, the more fully students will develop this skill.
**Evaluation:**
(The following questions are meant to be used at a later time after you have completed the Action, but may be used as a way to shape the action as well. It may be helpful to write or sketch your responses.)

With what intentions did you redesign or create the learning experience? How did those intentions present in the learning experience? Did the experience change the ways you see teaching, learning or the course?

How do you know if the change made a difference in student learning? For which students did the change make the most difference? Are there negatives for any students associated with the change you made?

What will you do next?

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Thank you for participating in this week’s reflection.

The next reflection will be posted on Friday, November 16th. All reflections are archived for future use. For more information on this week’s topic, CTTL services, programs, or events please consult the website at http://slu.edu/cttl.