Office of Adjunct Faculty Support Programs

in the Loop

September, 28, 2010

Count the candy corn

The Office of Adjunct Faculty Support Programs is pleased to announce the 4th Annual Count the Candy Corn in the Head Contest. This year we've changed things up a little bit by adding a variety of candy to the glass head, located on top of the Adjunct Faculty mail boxes. There are traditional light and dark candy corns as well as pumpkins. It's our attempt to trick you so you don't guess the same number as previous years!

Anyone is eligible to guess, whether you are a member of the Adjunct Faculty, a student, or just a friend who stops by Science East 201 to visit. You may guess as many times as you like. Prizes will be given for first, second, and third place. The contest ends October 28th and the winners will be announced October 29th, the last day before National Candy Corn Day, which is October 30th.

Library database expands

Wilson OmniFile Full Text, Select Edition, has replaced the FirstSearch Wilson Select Plus database. Wilson Select Plus was first offered to library users in 1997, covering multi-subject journal literature. Over the years, Wilson Select Plus has been a favorite among students, as well as faculty, for its ease of use and mostly full-text content. The new Wilson OminFile Full Text, Select Edition expands the content of Wilson Select Plus to include 100 % full-text journal articles in the areas of art, applied science and technology, biology and agriculture, education, science, humanities, law, social sciences, business, and more. The coverage dates include indexing and abstracting, with full text to more than 1,600 publications from 1994 to the present. Faculty wishing to include persistent links to article from Wilson OmniFile Full-Text, Select Edition in V-Space courses can locate them in the detailed record of the article. Contact the Reference desk at (989) 964-4242 for more information about Wilson OmniFile Full-Text, Select Edition.

To register for workshops offered by the University, visit www.svsu.edu/workshops

Workshops

VSpace Introduction
Friday, October 1, 2-3:30, Z302
Friday, October, 29, 2-3:30, Z302

VSpace Advance Course Development
Thursday, October 7, Noon-1:30, Z302
Friday, October 8, 10-11:30, Z302

VSpace Gradebook 2
Monday, October 18, 4-5, Z302
Friday, October 22, 10-11, Z302

VSpace Test Center
Tuesday, October 19, 2-3, Z302

VSpace Wikis and Blogs
Saturday, October 2, 10-Noon, Macomb

Audience Response System (aka Clickers)
Tuesday, October 26, 2-3, C154

Coffee with the Library Director
Thursday, October 14, 4-5, 3rd floor library

Brain-Based Learning
Presenter: Ann Coburn-Collins
Friday, October 8th in Science East221 at Noon
A workshop designed to be an introduction to brain-based learning and to those classroom strategies that employ "teaching to the brain."
Snacks will be provided.

Infusing Sustainability into Your Courses
Friday, November 12 in Science East 221, Noon-1:30
An exploration into how instructors can meaningfully integrate nature, environmental literacy, and sustainability into classes. Snacks will be provided.

Course Design: From Course Description to Assessment
Saturday, November 20, 9-3, Emeriti Room
Learn best practices for designing and assessing your course to enhance student success.
A light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

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The basic elements of brain-based learning

When designing a course, faculty seldom consider how material affects each student's brain. However, if faculty ignore how the student brain works, student success is at risk (Jensen, 2009 & 2008, Willis, 2006, Caine and Caine, 1991). Therefore, it is in students' best interests for faculty to learn how the brain works in order to create meaningful and significant learning experiences for students.

According to Jensen (2009), the process of learning occurs when the brain forms new synaptic connections. Each cell body or neuron has spindly branches called dendrites and a single longer projection called an axon. The axon of one cell chemically connects with the dendrites of another. If these connections occur, learning will occur and the brain will be changed. New content works to create these connections. If content is familiar, the lesson serves to strengthen the connections. Learning acquisition only occurs when neurons communicate with each other. In the end, if learning is to occur, the ways in which content are delivered must energize the brain to create these important connections.

Three things must happen to ensure changes in the brain. The first is to consider the neural history of each student. Daily, each student should brings to class a unique neural history. This uniqueness makes a strong case for creating classes that teach to various learning styles.

The second process involves the learning environment. Learning occurs in specific environments, and students might be smarter in one environment than another. If each learning environment is one where the student feels safe and relatively stress free, more learning will occur.

The final process involves acquisition, elaboration, and encoding. The ability of students to acquire knowledge is dependent on their ability to attend to the lesson. Therefore, attention to the amount of time spent doing any one exercise is important. Adults typically can only attend for 25 minutes. After that amount of time their brain tends to shut down. Elaboration means building enough steps so that learning will happen. If, after a 25 minute lecture, students are allowed to elaborate on their new knowledge by engaging in activities like mind-mapping, pair share, journaling, or discussion, greater connections in the brain will develop. Therefore, it is important for instructors to create layers for learning. They can do this by orchestrating lessons that allow for a variety of activities. Elaboration, the third element in this process, is important because new lessons must be practiced so that the synaptic connections strengthen. Jensen (2009) says that it is "a bit like allowing the glue to set. Time is part of the learning equation: learn, process, and rest; learn, process and rest." For elaboration to occur students must be taught to build associations by grouping, clustering, and regrouping the content.

As faculty we have a solid background in our disciplines, but it is important that we also consider how students learn and how their brains work. The experiences we provide for our students, if varied, layered, and delivered in a safe environment, will allow for more neural connectivity; thereby creating greater student success, which is a primary goal. If you want to learn more about brain-based learning, you may register for a workshop scheduled for Friday, October 8 at Noon in Science East 221 by going to www.svsu.edu/workshops.

Technology Widget: Clickers

A new innovation has hit classrooms this semester, thanks to the help of the Instructional Technology Center. Clickers are remote personal response systems that allow students to answer questions posed by instructors with the simple click of a button. They are anonymous by default, which enables instructors to receive general feedback about course material and student progress. At this point, only a few classrooms have the systems pre-installed, but some are also available to check out through ITC. Clicker receivers are already installed in C100, H278, and Ott Auditorium. Clickers are available at the bookstore for students to purchase and may be utilized as supplements to textbooks and required by instructors. For more information on utilizing clickers for your classroom, contact the ITC at (989) 964-7475.