Psychology 101

Lecture on Constructive Theory of Learning

Constructive learning emphasizes the importance of active involvement of the student in his or her education. Merely listening to a teacher or reading a textbook does not make for understanding, just as looking at a car does not get one to Dallas from Houston.

Existing knowledge is necessary to build new knowledge. Schemas, or existing understanding, must be present in order to build new understanding, much like in constructing a building. If the foundation is not there, or it is shaky, the building cannot progress. That is why students take the Compass to see if the foundation is good to go.

Knowledge is stored in the brain in the hippocampus (memory). The units of knowledge, or nodes, form the basis for process knowledge that is carried on in the cortex. The brain receives inputs through the senses. People are different: some receive inputs better by hearing, some by seeing, and some by touching.

Knowledge comes in two categories: generals and particulars. All of the details form the particulars. The “generals” are the big ideas or concepts. Inductive reasoning arrives at the big ideas through putting together the particulars. Deductive reasoning starts from the “aha” moment of insight, and then interprets the particulars accordingly.

The key to successful learning in college is to integrate both categories and have a vigorous interplay in constructing your own knowledge from what college is offering. The stronger the impression and the ease with which your own learning style can input, process and retrieve information can make school a better experience.