

### Enhancing Instruction to Connect with Diverse Audiences



How we think and behave are deeply influenced by such factors as race/ethnicity, social class, language and other cultural factors. Further, the way in which information is delivered is also tied closely to cultural factors that have influenced our lives. A person learning style in most cases is culturally influenced by these factors. The degree to which a person's learning style is influenced by culture depends on the individual's ethnicity, which is influenced by environment, and other social factors. As extension educators it is critical that we identify the preferred learning style and preferences of the diverse clientele we teach. Before we can be effective instructional communicators it is imperative that we first understand and gain an awareness of our own learning style while gaining respect for the way different cultural groups prefer to receive, give and process information. Most of us tend to teach as we have been taught. If you are a visual learner, most likely you will teach with visual aids and visual clues about your topic of instruction.

**Ask: What techniques might we employ in learning about how diverse individuals prefer to learn?**

**Listen for: Consult the literature on preferred learning styles; use a cultural broker or trusted cultural advisor to share preferred ways of learning by a particular ethnic group; personally ask those you instruct what they prefer to enhance their personal learning. [See handouts on Asian, Native American, Hispanic and African American learning styles and discuss the learning preferences among different groups]**

---



Developing culturally appropriate instruction or culturally responsive instruction is critical to success in working with culturally diverse audiences. As we learn to integrate various cultural learning styles into the learning process our audiences will become more responsive to the information provided.

**Ask: What are some of the benefits of culturally appropriate instruction?**

**Listen for: Increases participation in the program; Increases interest in the topic; enhances learning of the subject taught; shows respect for their culture; demonstrates a true commitment to education and respect for the individual's culture; and shows commitment to planning programs for a diverse audience.**

*USU Adapted from*

Enhancing Instruction to Connect with Diverse Audiences – L.A. Guion and D.C. Diehl



There are some key components that are necessary to enhance instruction in order to connect with diverse audiences. Consider the following as you prepare instructional communications. (1) Developing a clear sense of your own cultural identity; (2) learning about the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of individuals you work with or desire to work with; (3) learning how to be a competent and effective cross-cultural communicator; (4) becoming cognizant of the divergent styles of thinking and learning styles of diverse populations; (5) Recognizing the needs, preferences, strengths and experiences of individuals from diverse cultures; (6) incorporating culturally relevant curriculum materials and instructional aides; (7) using multiple modes of teaching to accommodate different learning styles; (8) having a positive expectation of all learners; and (9) encouraging community involvement as well as parental involvement in Extension programs.

**Ask: As professionals and faculty how might we accomplish enhanced instruction in the diverse audiences we teach? What factors may impede doing so?**

**Ask: What strategies might you employ to learn more about the culture of targeted clientele so that your instruction is more culturally appropriate?**

**Listen for: Engage families in programming from the conception to implementation; get involved in activities and events that are important in the community; get assistance and support from opinion leaders, gatekeepers, and informal leaders; assemble a focus group of individuals from the target audience to gain insight into their learning styles; pilot test a lesson using various learning approaches, then assess which approach is most effective; make sure educational materials are culturally relevant and inclusive; remember one-size-fits-all may not be an effective strategy when working with diverse audiences.**



Extension educators must transition from teaching all groups using the same methods and educational materials. Certain teaching styles and learning aids that are appropriate for one group may not be appropriate for a group with different cultural backgrounds. The application of principles discussed today may be difficult given time constraints, responsibility for multiple programs and understaffing; however, small steps can and should be taken to build instructional communication experiences in which all participants have the optimum chance of learning the valuable information shared in extension workshops, classrooms and conferences.

*USU Adapted from*

Enhancing Instruction to Connect with Diverse Audiences – L.A. Guion and D.C. Diehl