

Influential Topics for Helping Students be Successful

Every student is different; they have varying majors, a variety of previous studying habits and prior knowledge, and different learning styles. As an academic coach it is important to be able to individualize the strategies to each student. In our office we often talk about how we cannot put people in a box, meaning that we are not able to have one set of study strategies that we can give to every student and expect the strategies to work. The most influential topics in my CRLA training have been the learning styles theory and metacomprehension, including discussions about how students learn and think.

The learning styles theory is able to provide more of a variety of ways to think about study strategies and helping students. I have been able to give my students more personalized study strategies. Instead of just giving them strategies that work for me, I can think about how they learn best and give them strategies that align with that. An example of the learning style theory helping a student in our office occurred this past semester. She was very unsure of how to study for a test in a class that was difficult for her. After talking with her about how she felt she learns best, I noticed that she was able to learn more through movement and kinesthetic principles, such as having to physically write things out or explaining to me, through models, what she had learned. Kinesthetic learners tend to learn better in groups and with adding more movement. Because I knew this from working with the learning styles theory, I was able to suggest the idea of writing her notes onto large white boards with her friends. With these study tips I have seen improvement in her grades, confidence, and enjoyment of her learning in both of the classes she was concerned about when she came to the center. By listening to the student and figuring out what worked best for her specific learning styles, I was able to help her successfully study for this class and relate it to her other classes as well.

Metacomprehension, defined as thinking about your thinking, has been an influential tool in learning about how to push students to think about why they are doing something or why their methods of studying work or do not work. This is a topic that I have been able to bring into every appointment whether it is about the Praxis CORE test or note-taking strategies for during lectures. When I can push students to think about what they truly know versus what they think they have retained from a lecture or textbook, it opens their mind to try and find more effective ways to study and understand the material. With the ideas of metacomprehension, I have been able to revise the questions I ask my students when I am trying to find a study strategy that will be effective for them. When I can get them to think about whether they are truly understanding the material or if they are falling into the “illusion of knowing” idea, the students are able to begin seeing why their current study habits are inefficient. This allows students to independently assess their study habits and be successful in their studying.

These two training topics allow me to better understand the students with whom I work. They allow me to personalize sessions and strategies to my students. Because I have a better understanding of how students learn and think, I am better able to give my students the confidence and independence so that they can be successful.