

Foreword

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Mark Hopkins (1802-1887) graduated from Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in 1824. He later taught philosophy at his alma mater and served as its president for 36 years. A skillful, popular, and respected teacher, Hopkins used the Socratic method as his principal pedagogical technique. One of his former students and a future President of the United States, James A. Garfield, is said to have remarked that the ideal college is Mark Hopkins on one end of a log and a student on the other. This approbation may well be the ultimate accolade for engaged learning.

Throughout the history of education in the United States many experts have stressed the importance of engaged learning. As editor Richard L. Miller points out in the informative Introduction to this e-book, John Dewey and William James were early advocates. During the last 20 years, engaged learning has become an even more prominent facet of education in psychology, especially in undergraduate programs. Engaged learning is an essential component of recommendations from the national conference sponsored by the American Psychological Association (APA) and held in 2008 at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington (see Halpern, 2010). A significant outcome of this conference is a document titled “Principles for Quality Undergraduate Education in Psychology” that was approved by conference participants. One of the principles specifically mentions “active engagement.” These principles became official APA policy in 2010: (<http://apa.org/education/undergrad/principles.aspx>).

This latest e-book in the impressive series published by The Society for the Teaching of Psychology (Division 2 of the APA) provides compelling evidence for increasing emphasis on engaged learning. It is a valuable resource for teachers who seek creative and successful techniques to foster engaged learning inside and outside the classroom. It contains a plethora of specific activities, exercises, demonstrations, and additional resources for doing so in almost all psychology courses.

Although there is some understandable overlap in coverage, the five major sections are: (a) social and developmental; (b) cognitive processes; (c) biological processes, research, and the history of psychology; (d) abnormal psychology and

personality; and (e) activities that can be used in more than one course.

Not all the information concerns substantive content of the discipline as reflected in course titles. For example, there are suggestions for teaching ethics, APA-style writing, happiness, diversity, peace and war, nonverbal communication, service learning, and critical thinking. In addition to a description of how authors use and assess their methods and techniques, each chapter contains numerous related references.

An unusual feature of this book is that each chapter includes an annotated bibliography that provides many additional resources. If teachers read a chapter in this book, the annotated bibliography, and the list of references at the end of it, they will have more information about a particular activity, exercise, or demonstration than they will probably ever want or need.

The editor as well as several section editors and chapter authors are teachers of recognized excellence. Many of them have received local, state, regional, or national teaching awards. Their reputations alone will prompt me to try some of their suggestions for engaging students more actively and effectively in the learning process. Most of their suggestions will galvanize teachers to encourage more students to learn for the sake of knowing rather than merely memorizing isolated facts to ensure a good grade on the next examination.

In short, neophytes and experienced teachers will find in this book numerous ways to improve their teaching by engaging their students. My advice is clear and concise: Choose it and use it.

Reference

Halpern, D. F. (Ed.). (2010). *Undergraduate education in psychology: A blueprint for the future of the discipline*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.