Details:

Amazon rank: #235,538
bound: 165 pages
Publisher: Peter Lang Inc., International Academic Publishers; Reprint edition (January 5, 2016)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1433130327
ISBN-13: 978-1433130328
Weight: 8 ounces

Existential Philosophy and the Promise of Education: Learning from Myths and Metaphors

by **Mordechai Gordon**

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Learning Styles
Questions, Activities, and Assessments

Mastery
Literal

Mastery learners want to learn practical information and procedures. They like drills, lectures, demonstrations and practice. They may experience difficulty when learning becomes too abstract or when faced with open-ended questions. They learn best when instruction is focused on modeling new skills, practicing, and feedback sessions.

Questions focus on small facts and skills.
- Recall: Who, What, When, Where?
- Describe or use a procedure: How?
- Summarize: Retell or restate.

Activities focus on organizing and managing information; repetitive exercises that provide practice.

Assessments are made on the basis of clarity and correctness. Tasks include listing, describing, sequencing, following the procedure, recalling, and restating.

Interpersonal
Collaborative and personal

Interpersonal learners want to learn about things that affect people's lives. They like group experiences, discussions, cooperative learning activities, role playing, and personal attention. They may experience difficulty when instruction focuses on independent seat work or when learning lacks real world application. They learn best when their teacher pays attention to their successes and struggles.

Questions focus on students' relationships to the content they study.
- Describe feelings: How would you…? How do you…? How did you feel or think…?
- Empathize: If you were___, how would you feel and think about…?
- Evaluate: Which is best? How do you rate? What are strengths and weaknesses of…?

Activities focus on helping students identify and make use of their feelings, empathizing, examining beliefs and values, decision making, coaching, peer practice, cooperative learning, and personal evaluations.

Assessments are made on the basis of honesty, vividness, expressiveness, and ability to participate and work cooperatively.

Understanding
Conceptual and logical

Understanding learners want to use logic, debate, and inquiry to investigate ideas. They like reading, debates, research projects, independent study, making cases or arguments, and asking "why?" They may experience difficulty when there is a focus on the social environment of the classroom (e.g. cooperative learning.) They learn best when they are challenged to think and explain their ideas.

Questions focus on big ideas, concepts, and generalizations.
- Compare and/or contrast: How are they similar and/or how are they different?
- Prove or disprove: Evidence and/or support and refute
- Explain how or why: Cause and/or effect

Activities focus on explaining, defining concepts, determining criteria, explaining the relationships between concepts, determining causes and effects, citing evidence, explaining why and how, testing theories, solving mysteries, and conducting research.

Assessments are judged on comprehensiveness, quality of reasoning, and use of evidence.

Self-Expressive
Imaginative and creative

Self-expressive learners want to use their imaginations to explore ideas. They like creative and artistic activities, open-ended and non-routine problems, generating possibilities and alternatives, and asking "what if?" They may experience difficulty when instruction focuses on drill and practice and rote problem solving. They learn best when they are invited to express themselves in unique and original ways.

Questions focus on stimulating students' imaginations.
- Imagine or suppose: What if?
- Design or create: How would you…?
- Metaphor: How is a ___ like a ___?

Activities focus on creating unique, original products and solving non-routine problems, using art, dance, song, and poetry to express ideas, hypothesizing/speculating about the past and the future, and designing or creating a solution to a problem using metaphors to see things in new and different ways.

Assessments are judged on originality, creativity, and relevance to the purpose being addressed.

Daniel R. Moirao 2008

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