Teaching Tips

A group of faculty members attended the State Assessment Conference in Vancouver, WA. This conference allows educators from Community, Technical, and Four-year colleges around the state to gather and discuss issues around teaching and learning. There were many interesting sessions during this two-day conference. One highlight was the keynote speaker. Philosophy Instructor, Jeff Clausen, who attended the conference, has the following to share about this keynote address. The Learning Outcomes Committee hopes you can use some of this information as you work with students at Green River Community College.

Keynote Address by Dylan William: *The Role of Formative Assessment in Raising Student Achievement*

This was just a lot of fun and very informative as well. An overview of his lecture, which was published in the conference program, reports, “Dylan William will outline the research evidence that shows that effective use of formative assessment raises the achievement of students, across all subjects and ages . . . [and will] provide a framework for critically evaluating assessment practices in schools . . . [and will] conclude with suggestions on how teachers can begin the process of developing and implementing these strategies in colleges.”

I will add to this by writing down some of his comments that I found particularly interesting and important for us as educators:

*Though there are general principles, we need to be very sensitive to the context or situation—the best teachers are constantly making decisions based on contingency.*

*Administrators, other instructors, and staff need to recognize that teaching can take on a variety of modes. It isn’t necessarily lecturing. Often teaching is comprised of student discussions with very little if any lecturing by the instructor.*

*We need a shift from assessment of to assessment for learning.*

*We need to look at teaching as engineering learning environments.*

*Everything your students do is intelligent-intelligent within their frame of reference.*

*Your students know where they are; they don’t need to be told over and over. The best thing for their improvement is feedback that tells them what they need to do and tells them how to go about doing it.*

*IQ provides a fixed view of ability, while success is determined by unstable internal causes. For example, the SAT is a bad predictor of college grades. In any meaningful sense, all abilities improve with age. Consider the following story told by someone’s son: “When I was 15, it*
surprised me how dumb my dad was, but when I was 25, I was amazed how much he had learned in 10 years.