

The Insight

In addition to assessing student learning, assessing students' learning experiences can also yield important data.

Implications

Will you consider conducting a Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID) with your students? Now is a good time to plan one for the spring semester!

"Studies have found that SGIDs are tied to increased student motivation, improved communication with the professor, increased student satisfaction, and greater student preparation (Hurney et al., 2014)."

Assessing the Learning Experience

When the word "assessment" is heard, it is often assumed that the object of assessment is students' learning of course concepts and content. The *Learning Insights* articles to date have reflected this focus, and this purpose is, no doubt, extremely important. There are, however, many other potential questions that could be assessed. These include, for example:

- Do students see certain instructional strategies as especially beneficial to their learning?
- Are some course materials particularly engaging to students?
- Do all students feel included in the class community?

The answers to questions such as these can provide faculty with additional tools to help students attain course learning outcomes. One long-established, research-based practice for obtaining answers to these (and other) questions is the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID). SGIDs are formative assessments that take place at or near the middle of the semester and provide faculty and students with information that can improve the learning experience during that same semester. The process for engaging in an SGID here at Ferris is outlined below:

- Contact the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning at fctl@ferris.edu to request an SGID for any or all of your classes.
- FCTL staff will identify a facilitator for your SGID (typically myself or Todd Stanislav).
- Your SGID facilitator will contact you to determine the logistics and questions for your SGID.
- Your facilitator will conduct the SGID. Your students will be advised that you have thoughtfully and voluntarily chosen to seek feedback from them, and that their responses are anonymous.
- Your facilitator will provide you with feedback from the SGID – typically within one week. You have the option of meeting with your facilitator to debrief your feedback.
- After reflecting on your SGID feedback, you will use the feedback to engage in a discussion with your students. In this discussion, your students can clarify their feedback, you can offer explanations of your decisions, and both you and your students can identify some things to do differently.

It is worth noting that at Ferris, SGIDs are completely voluntary. Also, as part of the SGID process at Ferris, students are asked to identify what they as students could do differently to enhance their own learning. This adds an additional element of learner-centeredness to the SGID process (as described by Hurney et al., 2014). Additionally, the feedback for an SGID is surfaced, in part, by small groups of students. Several reports note that this has a smoothing effect on the data and helps prevent distracting, outlier comments.

Benefits of SGIDs have been documented in the literature (Herman & Langridge, 2012). Studies have found that SGIDs are tied to increased student motivation, improved communication with the professor, increased student satisfaction, and greater student preparation (Hurney et al., 2014). Some research (e.g., as noted by Herman & Langridge, 2012) has found that faculty members who debrief or consult with their SGID facilitator make more impactful changes in their courses.

Please consider engaging in an SGID. It can be a truly rich source for formative assessment of and qualitative feedback from your students. For more information on SGIDs at Ferris, including additional details about the SGID procedure, please visit: <http://ferris.edu/HTMLS/academics/center/services/sgid/index.html>.

References:

- Herman, J.H. & Langridge, M. (2012). Using Small Group Individual Diagnosis to improve online instruction. *To Improve the Academy*, 31, 229 – 243.
- Hurney, C.A., Harris, N.L., Bates Prins, S.C., & Kruck, S.E. (2014). The impact of a learner-centered, mid-semester course evaluation on students. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 28(3), 55 – 62.