

Seward Staff Development



Dr. Fields...unFenced

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pictures from National Geographic

“Most people don’t aim too high and miss; they aim too low and hit.”- Old adage

In teaching we often are in search of the “magic bullet” if we would only do this instructional strategy or used this program then maybe the students would have done



better. I remember as a teacher that a lesson that I taught to one group of students may have worked wonderfully one year and the following year

with a different group of students the lesson flopped. When you break things down to its simplest terms we must be willing to base our instruction on how well the students are learning. John Hattie states this idea best “We spend far too much time talking about particular methods of teaching. The debate seems so often to centre on this or that method: we have had battles about direct instruction, constructivism, cooperative versus individualistic teaching, and so on. Our attention, instead, should be on the effect we have on student learning-and sometimes we need multiple strategies and, more often some students need different teaching strategies from those they have been getting.” (2012, p.83) So the debate begins...what is the best way to teach? The easiest answer is that you need a combination of all the strategies. Like anything, balance is the key when utilizing instructional

strategies. If you were to teach only using direct instruction it would become boring for students and students would not be using the other skills of collaboration, and critical thinking skills. On the other side if you use inquiry based learning to teach everything you would not be able to get through the curriculum and in some cases you don’t need an elephant to teach the color gray. Looking through the eyes of students is one of the most powerful tools to really gauge how you are doing. A simple survey of students at the end of a course or year can provide insight of how you are doing as a teacher. Dialogue after a lesson asking students, what did you think of this lesson? Why did you like it? What



could I have done to improve? Giving students the opportunity to be honest in a non-threatening manner can really be eye opening and help you as a

teacher to improve. We use assessments as one form of determining student learning, but it is also the projects, labs, and writings that students do that can also show student learning. Teachers at Seward are growth and improvement minded and are willing to adjust our instruction to meet the needs of students.