

The Teaching and Learning Process: More than a card game!

The challenge for all good teachers is to remember to think like a learner. Knowing a lot about Bridge is a good start but thinking you know a lot about teaching Bridge (or any subject for that matter) is the first sin. Of course you can always be a 'winner' without taking a four year degree which is the prerequisite for teaching our children.

Being prepared to forget the Bridge 'hat' for a time and taking on the teaching 'hat' will help you to improve as a teacher, and who knows, in the process spread your fame and fortune among your potential clientele. Here is a checklist from research on the characteristics of good teachers as perceived by learners. See how you do - but remember to take an honest look in the mirror.

Good teachers:

- love their subject with a passion
- care about people - learn their names and remember things they tell you!
- have a sense of humour
- are enthusiastic
- explain things well and speak slowly
- know what's expected
- listen
- help individuals
- give constructive feedback
- follow-up on issues
- are well organised!!

- aren't afraid to say 'I don't know'

Being reflective about your personal style and taking the time to find out what your learners' needs are (they won't all want to be state players) are central qualities of good teachers. A useful metaphor for teaching is to think of a Bridge (in the literal sense of the word - no pun intended). Just as success with the card game is dependent upon partnership understanding and demands a fair degree of 'give and take' so too does teaching. But, in teaching, the teacher is the Bridge Engineer - the person who provides the scaffolding for learners to achieve their aims (see Figure 1) . The whole world of the game of Bridge may be part of your agenda but your group of learners will have as many different goals, learning styles and prior knowledge as there are learners. How do you deal with so many variables????? How do you 'Bridge' the gap between the learner and the game that we all love and dare I say 'hate' to love - sometimes?

If this grabs you then the thrill of helping people to learn is ahead of you. There are 'wedges' of books with tips to help you become a more effective teacher. Over the coming issues I will try to provide suggestions to help you become the teacher all learners look for.

Tip 1: Start with self and look to your own style - why not ask a trusted colleague to give you feedback. Better still ask the clients!!

Figure 1: Teaching and Learning - A problem of how to 'bridge' the gap

