Part I: Describe

Workshop Title: Learning Styles and Strategies  
Date: 02/12/2009  
Location: Research Building 3 (2nd floor conference room)  
Attendance: 10 – 15 people  
Presenter: Dr. Barbi Honeycutt and Ms. Rachel Flye

Purpose Statement and General Overview:  
The goal of this workshop was to introduce the participants to the different learning styles that exist in the classroom. In total there were 8 different learning styles introduced, all of which were based on the research of Professor Richard M. Felder at NCSU.

Prior to attending the workshop participants completed a survey that was intended to identify their learning goals. This survey served as an icebreaker and helped introduce the concepts of learning styles to the participants. Following the icebreaker and another group activity the remainder of the workshop described the 8 learning styles, why those styles are important, and how to accommodate those styles in the classroom.

One of the primary elements of this workshop was to discuss and record how to incorporate each of the learning styles into a lesson in which the instructor was to teach the students how to bake a cake. After two learning styles were presented the participants came up with different ways to incorporate those two specific styles into the lesson plan for baking the cake. After addressing all 8 styles in the cake scenario the participants choose a topic in their discipline and repeated the process.

Part II: Analyze

Felder categorized his learning styles into 4 categories with each category containing two learning styles. The styles were presented by category (groups of 2) where one style of learning was contrasted with another. For example, visual learning was contrasted with verbal learning and active learning was contrasted with reflective learning.

By grouping the learning styles into categories it made it easier for me to understand that you need to have a balance within each category. This was further illustrated by the way the icebreaker and group activities were conducted within the workshop. Each of the activities was an example of active learning, but each instance of active learning was immediately followed with an exercise, which reflected on the activity.

The importance of having a balanced teaching style is incredibly important to effectively communicating the subject matter to the students. Reflecting on my past teaching experiences I can see now how I usually taught with a focus on one specific learning style while omitting the others. I can also see now, that when I unknowingly used multiple teaching styles I was able to engage more students and they seemed to understand the material more completely. Prior to this workshop, I didn’t know why some lectures
worked better than others. Now, I feel that I am better equipped and will be able to better understand my classroom needs.

The last lesson I learned was a simple one, not all people learn the way I do! As such, I need to be cognitive of other’s learning styles. This was illustrated during the icebreaker at the beginning of the workshop where we each had very different learning styles. Simply being aware of that difference effects how I plan my lessons and even interact with the students. Going forward, when creating new lesson plans I can attempt to incorporate different activities that promote different learning styles. Further, I can re-evaluate my existing material and rework certain areas that omit certain learning styles.