

# Characteristics of the Best Learning Designs

*(based on surveys of K-16 faculty throughout the nation)*

## **Expectations**      *the best learning designs...*

- provide clear learning goals and performance expectations.
- cast learning goals in terms of genuine/meaningful performance.
- frame the work around genuine questions & meaningful challenges.
- show models/exemplars of expected performance.

## **Instruction**      *in the best learning designs...*

- the teacher serves as a facilitator/coach to support the learner.
- targeted instruction and relevant resources are provided to “equip” students for expected performance.
- the textbook serves as one resource among many (i.e., text is resource, not syllabus).
- the teacher “uncovers” important ideas/processes by exploring essential questions and genuine applications of knowledge and skills.

## **Learning Activities**      *in the best learning designs...*

- individual differences (e.g., learning styles, skill levels, interests) are accommodated through a variety of activities/methods.
- there is variety in work, methods and students have some choice (e.g., opportunities for both group and individual work).
- learning is active/experiential to help students “construct meaning”.
- cycles of model-try-feedback-refine anchor the learning

## **Assessment**      *in the best learning designs...*

- there is no mystery as to performance goals or standards.
- diagnostic assessments check for prior knowledge, skill level, and misconceptions.
- students demonstrate their understanding through “real world” applications (i.e., genuine use of knowledge and skills, tangible product, target audience).
- assessment methods are matched to achievement targets.
- on-going, timely feedback is provided.
- learners have opportunities for trial and error, reflection and revision.
- self-assessment is expected.

## **Sequence & Coherence**      *the best learning designs...*

- start with a “hook”, immerse the learner in a genuine problem/issue/challenge.
- move back and forth from whole to part, with increasing complexity.
- scaffold learning in “do-able” increments.
- teach as needed; don’t over-teach all of the “basics” first.
- revisit ideas – have learners rethink and revise earlier ideas/work.
- are flexible (e.g., respond to student needs; revise plan to achieve goals).