

Transactional vs. Transformational Teaching and Learning

Transformational leadership is composed of four factors: charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Bringing transformational leadership to the classroom can inspire intrinsic motivation to learn and move students away from transactional learning.

Transactional Teaching	Transformational Teaching
Instructor uses rewards to encourage effort and punishments to deter undesirable behavior.	Instructor articulates the WHY and value of the work students do and generates excitement about learning and seek to inspire students.
The instructor transmits knowledge to the student and then tests how well the knowledge is retained.	The instructor acts as a coach – creating effective learning activities with desirable difficulty and guiding practice coupled with timely feedback.
The professor determines what information is valuable and the course grade is perceived and necessary to achieve other goals – often for an indefinite future award.	Students can explain why the information is valuable to them and value the learning for its sake, not to simply fulfill a requirement.
Student action is dictated by the instructor; students are receivers of information.	Instructors guide student self-assessment; students become designers of their own learning paths.
Initiates interventions when expectations are not met.	Makes time to conference with students to understand their needs.
Assumes not all students are capable of achieving high standards.	Takes responsibility to ensure all students learn.
All assignments are graded for accuracy to motivate students to complete work.	Both positive and constructive feedback centered on a growth mindset is provided; students can revise and resubmit work to demonstrate mastery.
Instructor views the classroom as a hierarchy with them in control.	Instructor teaches students to view difficulties as problems to be solved.
Course content is unrelated to students' lives or values.	Assignments are <i>grounded</i> in students' time, place, personal lives, or interdisciplinary experience; Assignments are real-world, authentic problems grounded in students' lives, values, and/or goals.
The course is perceived as a "hoop" one must simply jump through – a barrier to be overcome.	Students can exercise some measure of control over assignment choice or path through the course.

Strategies for moving away from transactional learning:

- Decenter grades and implement process-oriented teaching methods by...
 - Including ungraded assignments that are “for learning only”.
 - Asking students to self-assess.
 - Implementing some edit-to-mastery assignments (“complete” or “incomplete”, with guidance on how to reach “complete”)
- Have students complete authentic, real-world projects with impact such as...
 - Collaborative projects to address local or global problems.
 - Working with community members to build problem-solving and substantive communication skills through civic projects.
- Utilize teaching strategies that engage students in the learning process and have been shown to increase student learning, such as...
 - Active learning through guided practice.
 - Collaborative learning that requires students to engage together to solve problems and debate ideas.
 - Experiential and problem-based learning in which students engage directly with, reflect on, and tackle complex, multifaceted problems in small groups.
 - Student-centered learning in which students are able to exert some measure of control of what they learn and how they demonstrate their competency.