

Identifying

BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING



Purpose: To develop a set of clear belief statements.

Time: 90 minutes.

Materials: Pens and paper.

1. Generate a set of statements of belief about learning without paying attention to the wording.
2. Read a statement to the group from the list of examples, picking one which you anticipate will create some controversy. Ask group members to arrange themselves along a continuum from "strongly agree" in one spot to "strongly disagree" in another.
3. Invite volunteers to explain why they are standing where they are on the continuum.
4. After several statements of clarification, ask participants to work in pairs to take each statement on the list and reword it so they agree strongly with the statement.
5. Revisit the original set of beliefs and clarify the language to come to a common understanding of values.

EXAMPLES

I believe that ...

- Teachers are the authorities.
- Teachers' role is to transmit information to students.
- Students have an innate desire to learn and to create meaning.
- All students can learn.
- Regular feedback is vital for teachers, students, and parents.
- Students need to be motivated to learn by external pressure.
- Student learning can be improved by them developing an awareness of their own learning style and learning processes.
- Students learn best when in a highly structured learning environment which focuses on mastery through repetition and drill.
- Students who think for themselves create discipline problems for the teachers.
- Students' learning can be demonstrated effectively in a written test.
- Students learn best when they experience ownership of their learning.
- Students learn effectively when they integrate experience, imagination, information, and application.
- All students learn best when their performance is compared to the performance of others.
- Students can and do learn from each other.
- Everyone learns in the same way.
- Some subjects are intrinsically more rigorous than others.
- The prime purpose of schools is to prepare students for university.

Source: *From values and beliefs about learning to principles and practice*, by Julia Atkins. Seminar Series No. 54, Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, Jolimont, Victoria, Australia, 1996.



Clarifying

BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING

Purpose: To develop clarity around one's values and beliefs about learning.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Music player, music, writing materials.

PREPARATION: Have soft background music playing as group members arrive and continue the music through the early part of the exercise. Consider a relaxation technique as an opening activity.

STEPS:

1. Ask participants to remember or imagine a learning-teaching experience from their professional lives in which they experienced a high degree of professional satisfaction, a time in which it was obvious to them why they were teaching and why they wanted to be a teacher.
2. Allow several minutes for participants to relive the experience, perhaps using some gentle direction to focus on the images, the emotions, their sense of the learning experience.
3. Ask group members to capture their feelings and thoughts and images in stream-of-consciousness writing of short phrases and words.
4. Have group members form pairs or trios to share their writings and memories.
5. Ask individuals to develop statements they can incorporate into their own professional statement of values and beliefs and which they would like to see captured in the school's expression of values and beliefs.

With these tools, it takes 90 minutes for a group to develop a clear set of belief statements and another 45 to clarify those beliefs and values.

Source: *From values and beliefs about learning to principles and practice*, by Julia Atkins. Seminar Series No. 54, Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, Jolimont, Victoria, Australia, 1996.