

Four Student Misconceptions About Studying and Learning

In this article in *Faculty Focus*, Maryellen Weimer (Penn State University) draws on the work of Stephen Chew to highlight four common beliefs that undermine college students' efforts to learn [also true for many K-12 students]:

- *Misconception #1: Learning is fast.* “Students think that learning can happen a lot faster than it does,” says Weimer. “They think they can get what they need out of a chapter with one quick read through (electronic devices at the ready, snacks in hand, and ears flooded with music).” Student need to be taught how to interact with materials in ways that make learning sink in.

- *Misconception #2: Knowledge is composed of isolated facts.* When students use flash cards with only one term or concept per card, they memorize definitions but often fail to grasp higher-level concepts. Teachers should use test questions that ask students to relate definitions, use them to construct arguments, and apply them to new situations, and then work with students to modify their study techniques.

- *Misconception #3: Doing well academically is a matter of inborn talent.* “All of us have had students who tell us with great assurance that they can’t write, can’t do math, are horrible at science, or have no artistic ability,” says Weimer. Students who think this way don’t try as hard in weak areas and give up when they encounter difficulty. Teachers’ feedback is very important to getting these students to shift from a “fixed” to a “growth” mindset and to see that effort and strategy are the key variables in achievement.

- *Misconception #4: Look Ma, I’m multi-tasking.* The evidence is clear that the brain can’t simultaneously handle more than one cognitively demanding task, says Weimer. People who think they are successfully multitasking are in fact missing important information – and they don’t even realize it. Since many students won’t take our word for it, a demonstration may be necessary to prove the point.

“Four Student Misconceptions About Learning” by Maryellen Weimer in *Faculty Focus*, Jan. 29, 2014, <http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/four-student-misconceptions-learning/>