

Task Rotation

Strategies for Differentiating Activities and Assessments by Learning Style

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Why Task Rotation?

This section serves as an introductory tutorial on the Task Rotation strategy. In this section, our goal is to help you think about your own learning-style preferences, reflect on your current approach to differentiating classroom assessments and activities, and learn how Task Rotation uses learning styles to help teachers develop a balanced assessment system.

In this section you will

- Learn the four major learning styles and consider your own learning-style preferences.
- Explore the research and classroom goals that make Task Rotation such a powerful strategy for differentiating teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Examine a range of teacher-designed Task Rotations that demonstrate the different ways the strategy can be used to conduct formative and summative assessment.
- Experience several Task Rotations to see how working in different styles affects your own learning.

Let's Get Started

We open this Strategic Teacher PLC Guide on Task Rotation with an experiment in the power of metaphorical thinking that comes in the form of a simile. First, think about yourself as a learner. What characteristics define your approach to learning? Now, for the simile: As a learner, which of the objects in Figure 1.1 are you most like? Which are you least like?

Figure 1.1 Four Objects That Symbolize Learning Styles



Use the space below to develop your simile. Then discuss your responses with your learning club.


Activity: Thinking in Similes

As a learner, I am most like a _____ because...

As a learner, I am least like a _____ because...


So, what did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about your colleagues? Figure 1.2 shows what we have learned as a result of using this activity in hundreds of workshops with thousands of educators over the years.

Figure 1.2 Which Object Best Represents You as a Learner?



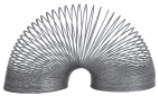
Learners who choose the paper clip tend to think of themselves as organized and efficient learners. These learners love to build their own competence and take a practical approach to learning. Does this sound like you?

Yes No




Learners who describe themselves as magnifying glasses tend to emphasize the logical, knowledge-seeking, and problem-solving aspects of learning. These learners love to ask questions and often take an intellectual or analytical approach to learning. Does this sound like you?

Yes No



Learners who select the Slinky tend to focus on the playful and imaginative sides to learning. These learners love to explore ideas, ask “What if?”, and take a creative approach to learning. Does this sound like you?

Yes No



Learners who see themselves as teddy bears tend to view learning as a warm and nurturing process. These learners emphasize the human story and the personal and conversational elements of learning, and they look for ways to connect their learning to their experiences and values. Does this sound like you?

Yes No

Now let’s take this experiment one step further. Imagine that you have just signed up for a new course in college. On the first day of class, your professor informs you that 50 percent of your grade will be based on your choice of two of the following four tasks:

1. A 150-question, timed, multiple-choice final exam.
2. An essay in which you identify a central thesis of the course and assemble evidence for and against the thesis.
3. A project in which you use two major concepts from the course to create an application to your work as a classroom teacher.
4. An extended letter in which you explore the personal meaning of the course to you.

Which two tasks would you choose? Which one would you do your best to avoid? Do you see any connections between the symbol you chose to represent your approach to learning and the tasks that you would likely be drawn to or avoid? Take a few minutes to explore the potential connections between your chosen symbols and tasks with your learning club. Then answer the questions below.

Activity: Symbols of Learning Styles

How would working on the task that you're drawn to motivate you?

What might happen if every task the teacher assigned was just like the task you chose to avoid?

What effects might working in all four approaches have on your learning?

The activities you've just completed are a way to begin thinking about the concept of *learning styles*. Learning styles are derived from the work of renowned psychologist Carl Jung (1923). A core theme in Jung's work is that much apparently random variety in human behavior actually stems from the preferences that individuals develop for certain styles of thinking and learning. About 40 years after the release of Jung's *Psychological Types*, Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Cook Briggs (1962/1998) expanded on Jung's work to create a comprehensive model of human differences, culminating in the well-known Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Since then, successive generations of educational researchers—including Bernice McCarthy (1982), Carolyn Mamchur (1996), Edward Pajak (2003), Harvey Silver and Richard Strong (2004), Gayle Gregory (2005), Jane Kise (2007), and Diane Payne and Sondra VanSant (2009)—have explored the implications of these ideas and applied them specifically to education.

Our own model of learning styles synthesizes this research together with our 30 years of helping schools engage, motivate, and raise the achievement of all learners, and it identifies four main learning styles, outlined in Figure 1.3.