

Why Effective Techniques May Not Help Students Achieve: Challenges for Implementing Cognitive Principles in College

Students can use a variety of different techniques while studying course materials as they attempt to meet their learning objectives and perform well in their courses. Unfortunately, not all techniques are equally effective, and students tend to favor some that are relatively ineffective. I'll describe a variety of relatively effective techniques, focusing on one in particular – called successive relearning – that shows promise for helping students to achieve real learning objectives. *Successive relearning* involves using retrieval practice until a student can correctly retrieve to-be-learned content and then returning to the same content at a later time to relearn it. I'll present evidence that using this strategy with fidelity can boost college student's performance on high-stakes exams in Introductory Psychology and Biopsychology. Despite the promising evidence (with exam performance being elevated by a letter grade or more), I will discuss barriers that may make successive relearning relatively inert for some students and discuss how they can be overcome so as to ensure that all students will benefit from successive relearning.