

Consider the following statement in the honest light of your own teaching methods: “Thinking and learning styles go very closely hand-in-hand; a lecturer with one dominant style is likely only to be communicating fluently with those students who share that style” (Burton 2008). To what extent is the case with you and your approach to teaching? Don’t be ashamed, it’s perfectly natural to follow our hearts teaching-style wise, hoping that what works for us as learners (not just teachers) will work for our students as well. Besides, the way we learn, since it is our own preference, seems to make the most sense when considering other learning styles, right?

For visual learners, for instance, it can be tremendously difficult taking a class with an instructor who feels that having students sit and listen to a long lecture and pay careful attention to the spoken word is the best mode of learning because that is the way that instructor himself always learned best. The instructor is not trying to exclude other learning styles—he simply thinks that he is presenting material in the clearest, most concise manner because that style of learning always made sense to him. The students might think that this instructor is missing the mark but if they were to go to that instructor and mention something along these lines, the remarks might be met with surprise, “yes, but this is the best way to present this material,” he might say, baffled.

It is easy to become myopic ; we get into certain patterns and believe that since what we are doing has always worked well in the past, then this same practice would be suitable for others too. While this can be true in some situations, when it comes to teaching and learning, it’s critical that we realize what our own learning preferences are and think deeply about how we might be only targeting those students who learn the way we do. There is nothing malicious or exclusionary going on here; we simply know how things make sense the best for us and often forget to expand our reach to target students who do not learn the way we do.

As instructors, many of us are already aware of what our learning style or preference is because during our training we were very likely prompted to take tests to evaluate learning preferences.

Chances are also quite good that we heard a lot about learning styles but this is not necessarily just because it was part of broader educational philosophy that we were required to know to pass a test or get certified—it was so that we would leave training with a much broader perspective about learning style diversity. Hopefully, we would be able to implement this understanding of the wide range of learning styles in our practice—at least such was likely the thought.

One of the reasons why so many educational institutions emphasize learning styles education for anyone seeking teacher licensure is because they understand that it's important for all new instructors to realize that there is a diverse array of learning styles that exist. All instructors need to be aware that there can be several different styles of learning present in a relatively small-sized classroom and this knowledge and recognition of diversity alone can be helpful.