

# Patterns, Meaning and Scaffolding, Oh My!

In my everyday research I came across the work of Dr. Leslie Owen Wilson from the University of Wisconsin. It was her article "Overview of Brain Based Education" that was the most interesting to me. These are some of the things she had to say about Brain Based Learning and how to apply it to the classroom:

- "The search for meaning comes in patterning"
- "Meaning is more important than just information"
- "*Active processing*: The learner consolidates and internalizes information by actively processing it. Information is intentionally connected to prior learning. The stage is set before a unit of study is begun by the teacher preparing the students to attach new information to prior knowledge so the new information has something to latch onto. This also requires time to reflect on materials that have been presented. (Jensen; Caine & Caine)"

As we look at our teaching critically, it is important to take these things into account. There are three main points made in the quotes I took from her document: 1. patterns, 2. meaning and 3. scaffolding. I agree that these are the keys to successful learning. Lets look at patterns first. Patterns help learners organize information to make it more manageable. Instead of learning random facts, patterns offer a structure; thus simplifying a large amount of data. Next is meaning. When we give meaning to information, we attach a context to it. This helps ground the learner and makes recall that much easier. Finally, scaffolding is when we start from where a learner is and take them to where they need to go one step at a time. This is the most important skill a teacher can have. Only when we start from where our students are, can they truly understand the information. Our teaching needs to be logical from the student's point of view, not the teacher's. I can't emphasize this enough.

Here are some ways to help kids connect to what we want them to learn:

1. **Get a read on where you kids are.** What music do they listen to? Do they know what written music looks like? Do they play instruments? How fluent are they in music? Do they know what a composer is? Can they name any? Etc..
2. **Decide what they need to know by the end of the year.** Time is of the essence here. How often do you see your students and what can honestly be taught and learned by the end of the year!
3. **Create a plan to get there step by step.** Look at all of the information and create a plan that makes sense for each of your classes. It is in this plan that patterning, meaning and scaffolding come into play. Are there overall patterns to point out? How can we make the information more meaningful? What is going on in our world now that we can use to help make this happen? How can we scaffold the information for better understanding.

In the end, the information needs to make sense to the students. Let us know how you help make that happen!