# Motivation Strategies Based on Student Learning Preferences

The following activities engage and stretch students in both their preferred and nonpreferred domains of learning.

- **Present information in multiple ways,** including kinesthetic, to encourage learners to branch out of their learning preferences. Many learners tend to prefer specific domains of learning information—often verbal/linguistic for girls and visual/spatial for boys.
- **Use student models and examples** when introducing the learning to be accomplished. Seeing the work of other students who are like them will encourage students to explore beyond their comfort zones to master new subjects and materials.
- **Use wait-time** to allow students to process, connect, and reflect on information. Some learners are deep introspective thinkers and thus will take longer to respond to in-class questions.
- **Use journaling** as a method of reflection on and development of content knowledge. Having students record each day something new they have learned or something at which they excelled helps them recognize their learning growth. Metacognition may be difficult for some learners who have not been stretched to think beyond the basics.
- **Provide multiple options for students to complete assignments,** ranging from artistic representations to three-dimensional constructions to physical performances. Some learners think outside the box and prefer to do things their own way.
- **Ensure ample opportunities for learners to work in balanced groups as well as individually.** Some students are strong independent learners and need assistance in developing collaboration skills. A developed process to move them from individualistic (possessing only some of the skills needed to accomplish a task) to group-oriented (where a collection of individual skills creates a better product) will assist them in building positive social skills. You might also allow students to develop social networking accounts to network with other learners of like skill or preference.
- **Have students take a variety of learning preference instruments** to help them understand all their unique abilities and ways of thinking and doing. Many students have a good understanding of their abilities and learning preferences based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, but may not be familiar with others, such as Anthony Gregorc's Model (Concrete, Abstract, Random, Sequential), Hemispheric Dominance Theory, VARK (Visual, Aural, Read/Write, Kinesthetic), and Sternberg's Successful Intelligence Theory (Analytical, Creative, Practical), to name a few. A simple Internet search of "learning preferences" will produce numerous websites of inventories and instruments. Be clear on your purpose and which preferences you are willing to work with and through.
- **Use elaborate rehearsal.** Elaborate rehearsal (ER) is the active process of relating new material to something the learner already knows. ER focuses on the meaning of information through authentic practice and blurring the lines between content areas. When using ER, students are required to actively use all of their senses to encode information into long-term memory. Activities that are considered elaborative rehearsals are:
  - clustering a series of numbers to resemble a phone number (1.8422384943 = 1-842-238-4943)
  - using acronyms or mnemonics to remember sequential or serial information (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet = ROY G BIV)
  - creating analogies, metaphors, or similes to summarize information
  - using mind maps, graphic organizers, or other diagrammatic representations of the information
  - engaging in a reenactment of an event, a role play, or simulations