



Welcome to "Teaching Titbits" from the NYLS Initiative for Excellence in Law Teaching (IELT)!

Peer Observations: One Path to Improved Learning

We here at IELT Labs™ are big fans of peer observation. We think that "sitting in" on each others' classes is critical to improving the quality of teaching at NYLS, and that two of the most important things you can do to improve student learning are (1) observe another professor's class, and (2) have another professor observe your teaching and offer constructive feedback. Peer observation is a critical component of teacher training at the K-12 level, and we like the idea of making it a more regular part of our teaching practices at NYLS.

In the spirit of promoting peer observations, we looked at a recent empirical study that examined how well peer observations measure teaching effectiveness in undergraduate classrooms. Here's the bottom line: **asking your faculty colleagues to observe your teaching can help you determine whether your students are actually learning.** The study concludes that peer teaching assessments based on classroom observations are strongly and positively correlated with student learning. In other words, when peer evaluations ask the peer observer to assess whether the faculty member achieved certain learning outcomes during the class period, those assessments were largely successful in predicting whether or not students actually achieved those outcomes on a subsequent exam. Moreover, it concludes that peer evaluations did a better job of assessing whether students achieved learning outcomes than student evaluations of the teacher's effectiveness. The article also does a nice job of summarizing the literature on peer teaching evaluation. The citation for the study is Craig S. Galbraith & Gregory B. Merrill, *Predicting Student Achievement in University-Level Business and Economics Classes: Peer Observation of Classroom Instruction and Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness*, 60 College Teaching 48 (2012). If you want a copy of the study, just let us know and we'll email it to you.

The IELT Co-Directors are eager to visit your class if you'll have us, arrange for another faculty member to sit in, or to help if you want to sit in on another professor's class. No pressure or anything – but we're available if you think it would be helpful.

Visual Presentation in the Law School Classroom

If you missed Aaron Dewald's terrific IELT talk last week on Learning Science and Visual Presentation Techniques, the presentation is now available at:

<http://nyls.mediasite.com/mediasite/Play/b2af98cbd693436e84e11d183f0dd3121d>

With appreciation for all that you do for our students,
Doni Gewirtzman and Kris Franklin
Co-Directors, NYLS Initiative for Excellence in Law Teaching