

Teaching Millennials

Student Issues	Possible Causes	Recommendations
Lack of focus, short attention spans	<p>Millennials have been raised in a drive-through culture with little conception of delayed gratification.</p> <p>Exposure to video at a young age has affected reticular activation systems in children so that there is a physiological reason for shorter attention spans.</p>	<p>Chunking material in lecture into 10- to 15-minute spots; breaking up with other activities. Attention spans may be a function of student interest in the activity, so using a variety of strategies to increase engagement is recommended.</p> <p>Give choices in learning experiences whenever possible.</p>
Easily bored, desire to “multi-task” (i.e., text, surf the ‘net, listen to music, social media during class or doing homework)	<p>Millennials are easily bored in the “twitch speed” world they’ve been raised in, so they multi-task to stay engaged. However, there is no such thing as true multi-tasking, there is only “switch tasking” – moving from one thing to another and back and forth between them quickly – and most people cannot learn effectively while they are doing this.</p> <p>There is no appreciation of information for information’s sake as has been in the past, simply because information is so easily accessible to this generation.</p>	<p>Show your students this YouTube video demonstrating the myth of multitasking: http://davecrenshaw.com/tag/multitasking-exercise/</p> <p>Break up lectures with time to process information: Q&A, discussion, group activity, instead of using class time all for information dissemination. Push information acquisition to outside of class time and use extrinsic motivators (points) for those who come to class prepared.</p>
No coping skills for failure, give up too easily	<p>Those who grew up getting too frequent rewards have not developed persistence; they quit when the rewards disappear.</p> <p>Millennials were raised on extrinsic reinforcement and expect points for everything they do.</p> <p>The students who have always been told they are “smart” typically believe intelligence is innate, so everything should come easily. Therefore, they have wrong expectations and beliefs about college classwork.</p> <p>They have no way to recover from failure if they think they’re not good at something, because there is no way to control or change their chances of success.</p>	<p>Reward what you want to reinforce.</p> <p>Be specific with your praise for things like persevering, trying again after failure, working hard, etc.</p> <p>Give low-stakes, regular assessment throughout the course to help students know where they stand.</p> <p>Help students understand how they learn (metacognition). The brain is malleable and can change. Hard work can help them be more successful.</p>

<p>Entitlement mentality</p>	<p>“Smart” kids may take the easy way out in order to maintain their image of intelligence to others.</p> <p>“I am smart; I shouldn’t have to put out effort” is one of their mantras.</p> <p>They have an expectation for the instructor to be lenient or give extra credit, because that is what they have experienced in K-12.</p> <p>Ubiquitous praise that they have received growing up has undermined the importance of effort.</p>	<p>Early intervention. Instructors should present consequences sooner and faster. The students should feel the “crisis” early in the semester, before it is too late. Reality must hit early enough for them to make changes.</p> <p>Use rubrics in grading to show them ahead of time that “just showing up” and doing the minimum will not get them a good grade. A good grade will require considerable effort, which should be outlined in the rubric.</p> <p>Provide rationales for assignments; tie them to student goals, such as, “The skills in this assignments (X, Y, Z) are skills sought by future employers.”</p>
<p>Academic misconduct</p>	<p>Some students turn to cheating because they haven’t developed a strategy for handling failure; they may not think there is an alternative if they believe their intelligence is innate and they are not able to grasp ideas immediately.</p> <p>If they have cheated to avoid failure in the past and have not been caught, they have never used the opportunity to learn from their mistakes.</p>	<p>If possible, give opportunities for students to re-do work and learn from failure early in the course, so they learn how to recover from failure.</p> <p>Give regular reminders about integrity to students in the classroom and before tests or quizzes are taken.</p> <p>Be consistent in enforcing your policies.</p> <p>Develop rapport with students by being fair (and flexible when possible), while always holding to your standards.</p>
<p>Classroom/respect/boundary issues</p>	<p>Social media is what Millennials are accustomed to; they are not as skilled in face-to-face interactions.</p>	<p>Model what you want student behavior to look like.</p> <p>Students are largely unaware of college culture, whereas faculty are immersed in it; students have to be taught what the expectations are.</p> <p>Set specific boundaries in syllabus and enforce them consistently.</p> <p>Have the class as a whole come up with rules</p>

		<p>of conduct. Giving students more input on the rules of the class usually means less opposition when they have to be enforced.</p> <p>Give rationales for class policies that show how they benefit the student, such as, “I don’t allow laptops because students in previous classes who have used their laptops consistently received lower grades ...”</p> <p>Use student’s inappropriate actions as “teachable moments” (however, it is best to use a student’s actions from another course or previous year to teach current students).</p>
Problems in group work	<p>The self-esteem building culture has created students who are more competitive than ever and more interested in tearing others down.</p>	<p>Provide more structure in group assignments, especially for freshmen.</p> <p>Meet with groups outside of class time to discuss group dynamics, progress.</p> <p>If the discussion is on electronic media, set clear parameters for netiquette.</p>
Won’t admit need for help/pride	<p>Asking for help is perceived as showing that one is not smart; it’s an image buster.</p> <p>Expending effort is stigmatized – it’s public proof that a person can’t cut it with gifts alone.</p>	<p>Helping students understand that the brain is a muscle that can be exercised. The brain is malleable and can change. Hard work can bring about more success.</p> <p>Give specific praise for persevering, trying again after failure, working hard, etc., to reinforce productive activity.</p> <p>Early intervention – consequences sooner and faster.</p> <p>Timely and regular feedback.</p>
Weak critical thinking skills	<p>Students taught to the test; they expect teachers to spoon feed them.</p> <p>Students are risk-averse if they have been conditioned to praise; image maintenance is more important than learning.</p> <p>“Smart” kids don’t want to try things they aren’t sure</p>	<p>Give students opportunities to fail and re-do work, if possible.</p> <p>Teach metacognition skills (learning how to learn. See “How Students Learn” webinar on front page of CERTI website for more information http://certi.mst.edu)</p>

	they will be successful at.	<p>Surveys on first day of class can help students come to their own conclusions of what they want to achieve through the course.</p> <p>Surveys after tests can help students examine how they prepared for the test and how they can improve their preparation next time.</p> <p>Leave time in class for students to process lecture information and use critical thinking skills.</p>
Increased need for disability services	More diagnoses of these issues than ever before, therefore, more students in need of services	<p>Disability services website:</p> <p>http://dss.mst.edu/pages/resources.html</p>

Resources

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Bronson, Po. (2007) How Not to Talk to Your Kids: The Inverse Power of Praise: New York Magazine, Feb 11, 2007, retrieved June 22, 2011 from <http://nymag.com/news/features/27840/>

McGuire, S. (2011) "Teach Students How to Learn: Metacognition is the Key!" Innovative Educators' webinar

Price, C. (2010) "Engaging the Millennial Learner: Interactive Workshop with Dr. Christy Price"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeU8pKjsCzc>

Sweeney, R. (2006) Millennial Behaviors & Demographics, New Jersey Institute of Technology, University Heights, Newark, NJ 07102-1982
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Van Brunt, B. (2011) "Managing Disruptive Classroom Behavior" Innovative Educators' webinar (see certi.mst.edu to view webinar)