

## Career Development as a Vehicle for Improving Learning

1. Learning occurs at three levels. The most common is the head (content level). It involves the processing of data, facts and information and is what many people picture when they think of a teacher or classroom. While content is necessary, it is rarely sufficient to make “real learning” occur, yet it is where many educators spend most of their time and effort.
2. The second level is the heart (feeling level), which involves the emotional charge that occurs during learning. Learners operating at this level give themselves internal, affective messages, e.g., “*I’m excited!*” “*I’m pumped!*” “*I want more.*” “*I’m bored.*” “*This is a waste of time.*” “*This is fun!*” “*I wish this class would never end.*”
3. The third and deepest level is the “soul” (meaning level). Here learners are dealing with things they value and that are important to them. Examples of internal messages at this level might be, “*Having this knowledge will help me reach my career goal.*” “*It’s clear that being of service to others is important to me.*” “*Now I know how understanding math can be a valuable skill.*” “*This activity spoke directly to me and to my values.*”
4. Real learning occurs at the heart and soul levels, i.e., when there are emotional charges and meaning. Effective career development programs bring heart and soul to learning because they focus on things that are important to students. They improve learning because they help students understand, internalize and apply what they are learning in their academic classes.
5. Learning improves when students can make connections and see relationships. Examples: “*The decision making I use when working on my career plan is very much like the decision making I use in math.*” “*The analogies we use in English Language Arts can be applied to any subject or career.*” “*Our career development assignments require the same skills that we use in science.*” “*Effective career planning is kind of like working through a science problem.*”
6. On Bloom’s Taxonomy, effective career development programs help students **apply** what they know and understand, making it easier for them to acquire the higher order thinking skills of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. A strong career development program that requires students to articulate what they are learning, why it is important to know, and what difference it will make in their lives, may provide the only application many students experience while in school.
7. Self-efficacy (the belief students have about their ability to perform a specific task or manage a situation) is a major contributor of success in school and work. Because career development programs are strengths-based, they help students increase their sense of self-efficacy, i.e., their belief that they can plan, create and manage successful adult lives.