Learning Theory: Elaboration and Self-Explanation

**Definition:** Connecting learning material to other concepts, experiences, or memories and explaining/describing concepts in greater detail.

**Effect:** Elaborative interrogation and self-explanation enhance learning by integrating new information with existing prior knowledge. This integration increases retention of facts and improves performance on testing.

**Why it works:**

*Research:* Improving Students’ Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions From Cognitive and Educational Psychology (Dunlosky et al., 2013)

**Key Points from the article:**

- Elaborative interrogation strengthens associative memory in short-delay recall. More research is needed regarding its effectiveness across longer delays as well as in different educational contexts.
- Self-explanation can similarly strengthen memory, as well as comprehension and transfer, across many task domains and age ranges.
- There is not enough conclusive evidence to claim that elaborative interrogation and self-explanation are as effective as repeated and distributed practice testing but there is sufficient evidence to consider them valuable additional techniques.

**Curricular Design Application at the Larner:** Students need to have a rich understanding of material that spans different topics. We structure pedagogy in a way that encourages using elaborative techniques so that students can create more durable memories and transfer and apply knowledge to new situations.

1. *Case Based Learning*

2. *Problem Based Learning*
3. Integrative Review Sessions

Other Resources: Study Strategies: Elaboration