

Becoming A Brilliant Star Activity

The following activity is designed to introduce the concept of "Becoming A Brilliant Star" described at the following URL:

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/brilstar.html>

The major idea of the Brilliant Star is that there are multiple domains to consider if we are to describe development of the "whole" person. Ten separate dimensions are identified: 5 that focus more on the internal aspects of the individual (spiritual, physical, cognitive, affective, and conative) and 5 that focus more on external aspects (family, friends, career, finances, and social).

I first hand out the star with a set of descriptor terms for each domain. This is available in pdf format at:

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/brilstar/brlstr10.pdf>

The way I introduce this concept is by having students "color" their star. I print out the graphic that is linked to the "Becoming A Brilliant Star" page. Students identify where they are now on each domain and place a dot at that point. I show them how to connect the dots in a way that when they draw the star it looks like a star and not just a big circle. I pass out colored pencils and have students color their star. Then we talk about how everyone has some room for growth on their star and if they want (such as their friends, their children, or their students) to become Brilliant Stars they need to start working on themselves.

We then do a mission statement exercise developed by Stephen Covey and publishers of the Franklin Planner that is also linked to the page (we're in a computer lab so it's easy to do). It provides an excellent prod to get students to think about how their actions ought to connect with their values. The mission statement builder is available at

<http://www.franklincovey.com/missionbuilder/index.html>

We then talk about how values, intentions, commitments, and behavior are guided by our knowledge and beliefs.

I then give students the option of doing an extra credit exercise. I hand out the checklist and the affirmation statement that are also linked to the page. These are available at:

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/brilstar/dayacctsc.pdf>

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/brilstar/affstate.pdf>

If they develop their own affirmation statement that deals with each of the domains of the star I give them some points on the next exam. If they will complete the checklist for a 30-day period and then write a 1- or 2-page summary of what they think of the exercise, I give them some more points. I don't make them necessarily use the tasks that are on the activity sheet; these are only suggestions of the types of activities that might demonstrate activity in each of these areas.

Students seem to really enjoy the activity of making explicit what they already know: there are some areas of their lives that need some work. There are also specific values that are linked to their behavior. Those who complete the month-long activity think it should be required of all students. But if it were required, it wouldn't be so meaningful.

I also try to make the point that there are a variety of sources of information about how these different domains should be developed. In my course, we take the perspective of science, but of course, philosophy, history, literature, religion, personal experience, social and cultural norms, etc. also provide some information. In my view, an educated person is one who can take all of these disparate views and use them to guide his or her own development and well as that other others.

I'd love to hear how you and your students use this information.

