What the Millennials Believe:
How it can Impact How we Teach

Randy Isaacson
FACET Conference 2007
Teaching and Learning Across the Generations
Millennials Work in Groups

• Put yourself in groups of 3-4
• Get yourself a “clicker” and, with your group, figure out how it works

• “Voting” (answer) on each question:
  – By yourself as YOU would answer it
  – Then a second time, after talking to your group, as you believe a millennial would answer the question.
Millennials –
How they See the World … and Us

Me and all my friends, we're all misunderstood
They say we stand for nothing and there's no way we ever could
Now we see everything is going wrong with the world and those who lead it
We just feel like we don't have the means to rise above and beat it

So we keep on waiting (waiting) waiting on the world to change
We keep on waiting (waiting) waiting on the world to change
It’s hard to beat the system when we're standing at a distance

Now if we had the power to bring our neighbors home from war
They would have never missed a Christmas, No more ribbons on their door
When you trust your television, what you get is what you got
‘Cuz’ when they own the information, oh, they can bend it all they want.

John Mayer, “Waiting on the World to Change”
A Little Background

- Fairly dramatic change in the population of students at IUSB … I suspect an even greater change at a school like IUB

- Students had different expectations and looked to new “authority” for guidance (i.e., parents)

- Peer Mentors helped me understand … and once I taught them about Millennials … which led to a “clicker-test” in my class this spring.
7 Characteristics of Millennials
(Howe and Strauss)

- Sheltered
- Achieving
- Team-Oriented
- Pressured
- Special
- Conventional
- Confident
Question #1  Sheltered

You are a freshman in college getting ready to sign-up for spring classes. Your parents both graduated from college and you met with your advisor in the summer. Who would you ask for advice before you registered for class next semester?

1. Your parents
2. Your advisor
3. Your friends
4. Check the school website
5. Figure it out yourself

Question #1
You are a junior in college and discover that your advisor gave you information about classes that is wrong and will hold up your graduation. What is your next step to avoid a late graduation?
1. Confront your advisor
2. Call your parents
3. Write a letter of appeal to the department
4. Send an e-mail to your advisor
5. Talk to a peer
Millennials see themselves as Protected (Sheltered)

- Helicopter parents
- Safety and health focus of parents
- Expect security everywhere
- Parents buying homes for children near campus
- Encouraged to follow rules and they expect reinforcement and due process … but “I’m special”
- Post-Columbine (and now Virginia Tech) era: zero tolerance for an unsafe campus/world
Millennials are “Wanted Children”

- Children of Baby Boomers
- Parents are likely to have waited until later in life so they are likely to be more affluent
- “Baby on Board” signs in cars …
- Marketing to children is increasing
- “It’s all about me” is common
- Politicians often use “effect on children” talk
- Parents are MUCH more likely to “step in” and their children expect it.
Millennials see themselves as Special

- Larger generation with relatively wealthy parents
- Made important by those who want to sell them a service or product (consumer mentality)
- Collectively vital to nation
- Parents build off children’s success
- Parental involvement in decisions
- Students expect constant feedback
So what’s a Teacher to Do?

• In your group, identify at least two approaches that instructors could use in their classes given these millennial differences.
  – Clear procedures that are consistently followed
  – Getting to know students personally
  – Regular and specific feedback
  – …
Characteristic of Millennial Parent

- **Protective**
  - Expect their sons and daughters to be safe

- **Involved**
  - Want to help children achieve (i.e., they “hover”)

- **Concerned**
  - They want children to receive “their fair share”

- **Demanding**
  - Very savvy customers and not afraid to step in and support/protect their children
Question #3  Team-Oriented

You will have to make a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation in a class. Which of the following would you prefer?
1. Group assigned by the instructor
2. Pick your own group
3. A partner assigned by the instructor
4. A partner you choose
5. Make the presentation by yourself.

Question #2
Millennials are Team-Oriented

- “Millennials” like to congregate” (DeBard)
- They enjoy (expect?) to learn, deliver presentations, and get graded in groups
- Activities in teams throughout childhood
- Constant connections with peers through cell phones, text messaging, and MySpace & Facebook
So what’s a Teacher to Do?

• In your group, discuss the impact of this focus on a team-approach. What are you doing in your classes, or what are colleagues doing, to address these millennial differences.

  – Group projects with clear rubrics
  – Teaching skills for collaboration
  – …
Question #4 Everything is Negotiable

In your English class, you had a paper due yesterday; however, you were extremely busy and stressed out about school. The syllabus says there is a penalty for late assignments. What would you do?
1. Take the penalty
2. Inform your parents and ask for advice
3. Visit the professor and ask for a waiver
4. Send an e-mail to your professor
5. Talk to a peer
Negotiation: Good or Bad?

Is there anyone who ever remembers changing their mind from the paint on a sign?
Is there anyone who really recalls ever breaking rank at all
For something someone yelled real loud one time?

Oh everyone believes in how they think it ought to be
Oh everyone believes and they're not going easily

Belief is a beautiful armor but makes for the heaviest sword
Like punching under water you never can hit who you're trying for
Some need the exhibition, some have to know they tried
It's the chemical weapon for the war that's raging on inside

Oh everyone believes from emptiness to everything
Oh everyone believes and no one’s going quietly

We're never gonna win the world, we're never gonna stop the war
We're never gonna beat this, if belief is what we're fighting for
Question #5  Technology

Next week is finals and you are planning on getting a study group organized. How would you inform your peers to see if they are interested in joining the group?
1. Meet them in class
2. Call them on the phone
3. E-Mail them
4. Post on MySpace
5. Text them
Question #6 Technology & Special

It is Monday and you have just submitted a paper for your M-W class on Oncourse. When do you expect to get feedback from your professor?
1. Today
2. Tomorrow
3. Wednesday
4. Next Monday
5. In a week or two
General Suggestion for Teaching

- Student-Faculty contact: Quality is critical
- Learn names, seek contact, talk to students outside of class, comments in OnCourse
- Encourage participation in groups including learning partners, discussions, assignments
- Give frequent, prompt, and specific feedback
- Use variety in teaching and assignments
- Be clear in syllabus, assignments, expectations
- Use technology: on-line quizzes, chats, grading
- Discuss academic honesty