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### The Z Dimension

**T**FS Partner Author, Brian R. Shmaefsky, Ph.D. teaches in three dimensions. The X dimension predominates the classroom and represents faculty-to-student interaction. In the X dimension, students actively or passively receive information from the teacher.

The Y dimension is student-to-student interaction. This sort of interaction takes place either in class during group work or outside of class. Students share information to work out inconsistencies in their knowledge about the course content. Both the X and Y dimensions are important to learning, but their value can't be instilled without the use of a third dimension represented by the Z dimension.

The Z dimension covers the span of student-to-content interactions. Here students are asked to interact with the content in real-life situations, and this is the Content Analysis Critical Success Factor of the TFS System at work. The Z dimension comes into play when students test the knowledge, information, and theories they learn in a class and apply it to their lives outside of school.

To fully use the Z dimension in your class plans, you have to work in assignments that allow the students to work in the real world with the material they learn in your course. Examples of Zdimension activities include:

- Design an activity that challenges students to solve real problems
- Have students search their communities to identify real problems
- Set up situations where students can interact outside the classroom

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- Put the student in charge of their interactions outside the classroom
- Allow students to evaluate the outcomes of their interactions
- Students evaluate their learning based on criteria relative to the real-world situations
- Some of these principles can be combined into one activity and can be used in small group, lecture session, and laboratory settings.

Students are generally superb at grasping and retaining the content needed to pass a class. However, in most instances, the information is lost by the next semester. When students can apply what they've learned in their classes to the real world, the information stays with them for years, or even the rest of their lives.

*~John H, (Jack) Shrawder, Exec. Director  
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