

**True Colors Assessment in the Classroom:
A Tool for Increasing Motivation, Engagement and Class Culture in SBAE**

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Introduction

Personality assessments come in multiple formats, but how can they improve our practice as agricultural educators? True Colors self-analysis (True Colors International [TCI], 2018) is a simplified assessment that categorizes individuals into four different personality types represented by Blue, Gold, Green, and Orange, each with a breakdown of common traits (TCI, 2018). This simple assessment can provide information about the uniqueness of the individuals in the classroom, increasing engagement in content, motivation to be successful, and collaborative class culture with learning and respect (Colbeck et al., 2000; Hunter & Westwick., 2020; Weber, 2019). Individuals that feel heard, acknowledged, recognized, and understood tend to develop a sense of belonging within the classroom or social group, as it is an essential need related to motivation, success, and engagement in the learning environment (Maslow, 1943). Soft skills (i.e., collaboration with peers, critical thinking, and group problem solving) are by-products of small group learning, but individuals often have anxiety about working in collaborative groups (Colbeck et al., 2000). This anxiety is defined as groupphate (Sorensen, 1981), which can be mitigated using True Colors (Hunter & Westwick., 2020).

How It Works

While True Colors is often used in leadership and management settings to build corporate teams and communication skills (Weber, 2019), the potential is rarely implemented in the classroom. This activity takes place at the start of the course, allowing students to self-evaluate using a simple paper-pencil true colors assessment. Students rank descriptive terms by most like me (4) to least like me (1), the items are then totaled, correlating to a color description Blue, Gold, Green, or Orange. Each color corresponds to a personality description; Blue is known for being affectionate, empathetic, compassionate, and thrive in harmonious environments; Gold is known for being punctual, organized, loyal, and dependable; Green is known for being independent, analytical, intuitive, and visionary; and Orange is known for being competitive, adventurous, energetic, and charming (True Colors International, 2018). To determine which color trait aligns, you must add scores associated with each color trait, with the largest score being the individual's most dominant personality color. Everyone is a combination of these four personality types, which is why some students will have a combination of dominant color trait results (True Colors International, 2018).

Classroom Implementation

Integrating True Colors into week one of a course allows for a safe environment where individuals have input on classroom norms and expectations. The activity takes 45 to 70 minutes; it starts with word sort and ends with students reflecting on how they prefer to learn and engage in a course, their learning needs, and how they work with others in whole class, small groups, lab teams, and individual assignments and tasks. After students complete the word sort and score their colors, they move into the four-color trait groups and answer questions that allow them to reflect on what causes the groupphate (Sorensen, 1981) in small groups and what conflicts they have had in previous group assignments. Students then review the characteristics of each color, and its described attributes allow individuals to connect how they perceive others and how they feel when working with others. Each color group then shares their personalities, traits, strengths, and weaknesses and how they can contribute to the group. Using the reflections and perceptions

shared students develop class norms and expectations that represent the needs of all students. Time is valuable, but students feeling like they belong, are understood, and heard adds to the classroom's engagement and motivation and builds a strong positive classroom culture of respect and understanding of others' perspectives (Maslow, 1943).

Results to Date

As school-based agricultural education teachers form relationships with students, True Colors provides a tool to identify needs quickly, guide opportunities that impact the growth of communication and critical thinking skills and allow instructional changes to better meet the needs of students. Students with dominant personality traits (i.e., blue and orange) are often labeled with IEP or 504 accommodations, as Blue and orange possess positive traits, but the ability to process and structure information is not one (TCI, 2018). Ultimately, these students need conceptual models, structure, and hands-on guided practice to stay engaged and maintain focus. Students with dominant green traits struggle with group projects because they must trust the group with their vision, although never perfect, their vision causes overwhelming anxiety (TCI, 2018). Gold is known as the overachiever, organizer, and leader (TCI, 2018), leading to an overwhelmed state unless a trusted partner will follow the plan. Therefore, Gold's will overwork themselves to finish the work because others do not step up to complete the work correctly. Although each color has strengths and weaknesses, conducting the assessment helps to overcome groupthink and reduce anxiety by understanding students' needs and mitigating early (Colbeck et al., 2000; Hunter & Westwick, 2020; Weber, 2019).

Future Plans

The benefits of True Colors word sort allow for flexible settings, applicable in different group dynamics (i.e., mentor to mentee and student to teacher), easily used and adapted, making it an ideal low cost and low stakes way to gain insight into needs within different group dynamics (TCI, 2018). These attributes make True Colors an ideal tool for pre-service teachers to implement when establishing a working relationship with a cooperative teacher at their school sites and to gain a greater understanding of students during their clinical teaching internship. Early implementation could allow pre-service teachers to establish relationships and classroom expectations prior to their internship. Ultimately helping pre-service teachers gain insight into students learning needs, create an inclusive class culture, and norms and expectations during to maximize the experience for students, cooperating teacher, and pre-service teacher.

Costs/Resources Needed

While there are many different types of personality assessments that could be implemented True Colors word-sort (TCI, 2018) is a free paper-pencil assessment that serves as a beneficial tool. The pre-service teacher would need printed copies of the assessment for each participant, a presentation to provide an overview of the color trait descriptions, and materials to facilitate student small group reflection and discussion in the classroom (TCI, 2018).

References

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