

Teaching and Learning Center
Roundtable
February 12, 2015

Moderator: Norah Kerr-McCurry, Director TLC

Attendees:

Baron, Barbara	Latte, Ave
Berke, Tom	Marshall, Rita
Burns, Bill	Shaloum, Jonathan
Edward, Katherine	Wolfson, Margo

Norah introduced the topic for the meeting, Project-based Learning. Project-based learning creates opportunities for groups of students to investigate meaningful questions that require them to gather information and think critically. The students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. She explained that research shows that because project-based learning is filled with active and engaged learning, it inspires students to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they're studying. Students are more likely to retain the knowledge gained through this approach far more readily than through traditional textbook-centered learning. In addition, students develop confidence and self-direction as they move through both team-based and independent work.

The discussion continued:

- Tom Berke is currently working on a real world event, The Greening of Brookdale.
 - The Teaching and Learning Center will work with faculty and students on a new initiative conceived by Professor Thomas Berke in collaboration with Professors Juliette Goulet and Deborah Mura, with support from the TLC's Norah Kerr-McCurry and Assessment's Katherine Edward.
 - This project will be an opportunity to gain experience working in an interdisciplinary team and synthesize concepts and ideas learned during the course.
 - Tom explained that the students become invested in the problem; generally, a leader emerges within each group. Faculty facilitate the process.
 - Lab experiments are broken down into parts. After 1 ½ hours, a group discussion follows and data is put on the board. With deeper knowledge of the topic, the questions become more sophisticated.
 - Katherine Edward discussed the assessment of the labs using a student survey. She noted that a few students were uncomfortable with this approach particularly if they had not done any preparation before class. The majority of students thought it was a good experience. Tom hopes to replicate this approach in the coming semester.
- Norah questioned if a particular discipline lends itself to project-based learning. She also noted that students would be more engaged because there is a completed project at the end.

- Bill Burns illustrated this point by explaining the case of the Chicago college students that researched murder cases. As a result, many convictions were overturned and the students met the goal of the project.
- Bill questioned whether the student in the middle is engaged and is there an increase in retention and grades.
- Barbara Baron noted that group work takes a lot of time both on the part of the instructor and the student. Being a non-residential college, Brookdale students have difficulty getting together to work on projects outside of school.
- Flipping the classroom was discussed. This involves recording a lecture and giving the student the responsibility to view the lecture at home and apply the knowledge in class where groups can work on a project resulting from the lecture. Rita reported that two instructors are flipping the classroom in Reading. After the lecture is recorded, it is not supposed to be repeated again in the classroom. It is the responsibility of each student to prepare for the class. The instructor can give a quiz to the class to see if they have listened to the lecture prior to class.
- Rita Marshall, Reading, said she had to impress on her students that they are not in class to learn to read but to increase proficiency and efficiency. She said that “reading is a skill.”
- Tom stressed that the relationship between student and teacher is very important. Norah agreed that “teachers matter” and they give extra context to the text
- Bill said that this current generation of students suffer from the “fear factor.” They know they are to be judged and question “who are you to question me.” Some students may think they are better than they are or hesitate to ask questions for fear of being embarrassed. This creates tension between student and instructor.
- Barbara records chunks of information for students that may need extra review of class material or for work on snow days.
- Margo questioned the value of prerecording before class. How valuable is it? Will the student do what is required before class? Norah answered that learning outside the classroom leads to learning in the classroom. The group also agreed that the students learn more if the teacher does the recording rather than listening to one prepared by Pearson, for example. Margo was assured that the TLC can assist an instructor with recording lectures.

Jonathan then explained and demonstrated the tool called Voice Thread, cloud-based software that enables students to create narrated slide shows collaborating with other students. The student can upload a sequence of slides, add narration and publish. Other users can annotate the text or add comments on the slides. Faculty can moderate the comments. Brookdale has an educational license and each student can use this free product for five presentations. Margo Wolfson suggested that students could prepare in breakout sessions in class. She also likes Prezi for the students to interact and collaborate. Bill noted that “this is the stuff the new innovation center will deal with.”

Because not all students have the technology at home, Norah would like to see a cart of iPads wheeled into the classroom for student use on a classroom project. She also noted that leaders emerge naturally

because of their technological expertise. Bill explained that Wall and Neptune sites are grant funded and up-to-date technology is available.

Katherine then distributed information entitled *Example: Project-based Student Learning Outcomes and Assessments*. (See attachment.) She also explained that a project can last the duration of the semester. She noted that faculty can give feedback throughout the semester because the students would be encouraged to keep a journal or diary of his/her progress. The instructor would review the student's realistic goals and check periodically to see that these goals are being met. She stressed that students should be encouraged to use the librarians as a great source for help researching data. The instructor could also suggest that the student prepare a portfolio for presentation as part of the project. During Week 14 of the semester, the projects would be discussed for a total overview and questions from the class.

Norah concluded the meeting saying that "active learning techniques work." The next roundtable will explore competency-based learning.