Designing Collaborative Group Activities for E-Learning Environments

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Online Educational Programs

As of the Fall 2011 semester
- 32% of students have taken an online class
- 6.7 million students have taken at least 1 online course

As of 2012
- 12.5% of students in the US were enrolled exclusively in distance education courses
- 16.1% of students in Florida

(Allen & Searman, 2013)

This workshop is about designing and developing collaborative learning activities for e-learning environments that facilitate student engagement and motivation.

Think about one thing you hope to learn from this workshop and what you can offer to others at the workshop. Share your answers with those around you.
Major Indicators: Recent Graduates

- Poor reading, writing, and oral communication skills.
- Inability to work on open-ended, complex problems (Sheppard, et al., 2009).
- More than 60% of employers perceived that “too many recent graduates do not have the skills to be successful in today’s global economy” (AAC&U, 2007).
- Bok (2006) reports that emphasis should be placed on learning to think, living with diversity, preparing for a global society, and preparing for a career.

Focus on More than Knowledge (Fink, 2015)

- How to use the content (application).
- How to connect the knowledge with knowledge about other subjects through interdisciplinary learning (integration).
- Something about themselves or how to interact with others (human dimension).
- New interests, feelings, or values (caring).
- How to keep on learning about the subject after the course is over (learning how to learn).

Active Learning (Barkley, 2009)

- Helps teachers develop more meaningful learning activities that motivate students and increase student engagement.
- Encourages teachers to have students engage in more experiential activities (e.g., case studies, simulations, role play).
- Encourages students to engage in more reflective activities (e.g., thinking about the learning process; What did and did not help me learn?).
- Assesses more than if students “got it” More authentic tasks are used for assessment.
- Uses rubrics for assessment and students self-assess their work, giving each other frequent and immediate feedback.
Our Challenge:

How can we create an interactive, collaborative learning environment for online students?

Andragogy Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefer a problem-solving approach.</th>
<th>Want to have self-direction and to take responsibility for their decisions.</th>
<th>Are motivated to learn that which helps them in their lives.</th>
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(Atherton, 2005)

Constructivism Theory

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<tr>
<th>Learner is intimately involved in creating/constructing meaning from the content.</th>
<th>Teacher is a facilitator of learning by guiding and scaffolding learning.</th>
<th>There is a sense of community amongst students and teacher.</th>
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(Atherton, 2005)
Collaborative Learning

- A process in which the instructor enables and empowers students to interact and collaborate with one another to facilitate learning.

Students take ownership of the class. They challenge each other to reshape their thinking through meaningful case examples and group assignments.

The instructor must be willing to surrender his or her classroom authority and trust the students to take control of the learning experience.

Group Interactions Should Promote:

- Positive independence
- Demonstration of interpersonal skills
- Individual goal achievement depends upon group goal achievement
- Self-reflection on the group process
- Ownership
- Motivation

Benefits of Group Projects

- Workforce preparation (Banerji, 2007)
- Real-world skills: interpersonal skills, critical thinking, & problem-solving skills (Yazici, 2004)
- Communicates, manages, and makes rational decisions (Yazici, 2004)
- Promotes supportive learning environments
- Reduces isolation and builds group engagement (Paulus, 2005)
Benefits of Group Projects (Cont.)

Develops communication skills
Fosters academic achievement
Improves persistence in college
Promotes positive attitudes about learning
Encourages active learning: students do instead of passively listening (Rovai & Barnum, 2007)

Overcoming Anxiety of Online Learning

Students and teachers may feel uneasy about an online class.
How can you help students feel comfortable sharing their ideas and participating in the class?
It is important to build a sense of community and motivate students to want to learn.
Active learning and motivation creates the foundation for student engagement.

Motivation and active learning work
Strategies for Student Engagement

- Find out what they know about technology and online learning.
- Facilitate icebreaker activities for students to get to know each other.
- Develop group activities to establish teamwork.

Find Out What They Know: Skills Survey

Answer yes or no to the following questions.

1. I've participated in other online courses.
2. I feel comfortable using email.
3. I have used an assignment drop box.
4. I can attach files to email: text files, audio files, and digital images.
5. I feel comfortable using a discussion board, group area, or chat room.
6. I have participated in a threaded discussion.
7. I can effectively search for items on the Internet.
8. I feel comfortable using Boolean logic (and, or, +, -, and so on) when searching the Internet.
9. I have participated in online collaborations such as team projects or presentations.
10. I have used course management software (for example, Blackboard, WebCT, eCollege.)

Facilitating Engagement: Things

- Objective: To introduce students’ interest and backgrounds to other classmates
- Instructions: Find an object or an image that represents who you are or why you are taking this course, or even what your research interests might be. Post a description of the object on the discussion board and explain why you chose that particular object. Attach an image of your object. Include a brief description of your expectations for the class in the explanation of your object.
Dyad Debate

- Objective: To introduce students to the idea of exchanging oppositional thoughts online
- Instructions: Using the threaded discussion area, debate two of the following issues with your assigned discussion partner.
  (Topics should be specific to your course.)
- Each of you should post a summary of one of your debates under the discussion area that corresponds to each topic. Read the summaries others have written and comment on at least two of the other teams’ debates.

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 65)

Where Do You Fall on this Continuum?

- Develop knowledge/confidence with content
- Implement collaborative, active learning in e-learning classrooms
- Implement elements of active learning

Strategies for Incorporating Collaborative Techniques

- Breakout Rooms
- Discussion Boards
- WIKI Projects
- Private YouTube Channels
- Student-Led Panel Discussions
- Case Studies
- Using Rubrics
Breakout Rooms

- Individual online work rooms
  - Students are assigned
  - Self-selected with other group members

- Groups are assigned a task to complete given a specified amount of time.

- The instructor may enter each breakout room and facilitate the discussion, clarify issues, elaborate on the topic, or verify the student's comments.

- Students may take notes on the whiteboard provided in each room, which they can share with the class.

Examples of Assignments in Breakout Rooms

- Case study analysis
- Small projects like analyzing a speech sample
- Debating a research topic
- Critiquing a video

Breakout Rooms using Blackboard Collaborate
Breakout Room: Online Resource Libraries

- Objective: To establish a place online for students to share their learning reflections of related resources
- Instructions: Each group is given an article to review using a rubric. In a break out room, students should share their findings and reflect on what they learned. They then share their reflections with the class.

(Bonk & Zhang, 2008, p. 95)

Discussion Boards

- Can create a sense of an online community amongst students.
- Can be used for students to post their feelings and attitudes about course content.
- Is an effective tool for developing higher-order thinking skills and critical analysis of course content.
- Can provide a database of research-based rationales for clinical decision-making.

Literature-Based Questions

Non-Literature-Based Questions
Non-Literature Based Prompt

Below are four video links for your consideration for the course self-reflection assignment. Select a video to review and respond to on the discussion board. Be sure you relate the topic of the video to what you learned in Language Learning this term. Your reflection should include a critical analysis of your skills and knowledge relative the KASA standards included in the syllabus or your perceived strengths in assessment and areas for continued professional growth relative to the topic in the video (i.e., Leadership or Goal-Setting).

Rita Pierson on Educators
Drew Dudley on Leadership
Comic Video on Goal Setting

Student Responses

I watched the "Comic Video of Goal Setting." I was able to relate to the video because I often get overwhelmed at the start of the semester when I look at the syllabus. I think to myself, “How will I ever get all this done?” The point of the video was that when you set your mind to achieving a goal, it can be done in small steps. This semester has taught me a lot about our roles in the RtI process and about language impairment. I know that it will not be easy to “bridge the gap” for our children, but we can get them there, one step at a time. We must work collaboratively with teachers and other school professionals in order to get them where they need to be. They must learn to predict before they can infer. They must learn to blend sounds before they can read words. We must teach them how to use strategies before we expect them to use them. There are so many little steps that we must take with our students in order to help them meet their goals. I try to celebrate their success, no matter how big or small.

Student Responses

I look forward to next semester because it is one more step on my path to achieving my own goals. I feel that I have a long way to go in becoming a well-rounded therapist. I try to reflect on therapy sessions and think about things I could have done differently. I also feel that I was able to better comprehend and apply the information that was presented in lectures, from reading the chapters, and from the articles. It shows me that through these small steps, I will be able to understand why I am doing the things I do every day. I am much more confident in my abilities when assessing and identifying children with language impairments than I was at the start of this journey, and that is exciting to me!
After reviewing the lectures on Aphasia and TBI, provide two useful websites, a research article, a gold standard assessment measure or evidence-based intervention for working with either the Aphasia or TBI population. Provide rationales for your selection and its usefulness. Students should respond by evaluating one of the selections and providing feedback.

Discussion Board Response

The Boston Diagnostic Aphasia Examination is a gold standard assessment that is used in the evaluation of a client with aphasia. Unlike many other language assessments, the BDAE was developed specifically on clients with aphasia that recently experienced a stroke (Granacher, 2005), thus increasing test reliability. The BDAE tests conversational and expository speech through the use of pictures and through conversation, thus allowing the clinician more opportunities to determine the abilities of the client. Specific subtests of the BDAE include auditory comprehension, verbal expression, oral movement, repetition, oral reading, understanding written language, and writing (Wordpress, 2013). This assessment is very comprehensive due to the wide range of material covered. However, the comprehensive nature of the BDAE results in a very long administration time. This is important to consider since it might be difficult for a person with aphasia to be attentive for a 1.5 – 2 hour time frame (Granacher, 2005).

After reviewing the videos of the administration of the VMPAC under Assignments for Unit 5, cite any evidence that might support a diagnosis of suspected Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS).
Other Discussion Board Prompts

Think of a hypothetical client/patient who would likely benefit from AAC that you may find yourself working with in the future (or possibly are currently working with). Briefly describe this person and their current communication system. Now, consider that this person is on the verge of a big life transition. A child might be transitioning from elementary school to middle school; an adult might be transitioning from school into a new occupation. What types of specific capabilities would be important to assess to help you make decisions regarding modifications to the person’s existing AAC system to ensure it’s appropriateness for the new context? What modifications would you make?

Group Activity: Discussion Board Post

Think of a class that you teach online or would like to teach online. Identify if your activity is a literature or non-literature based discussion. Briefly describe the course to your neighbor and list 1 way that you can use a discussion board post in your class.

Discussion Boards on Canvas

[Image of Discussion Board on Canvas]
Other Sites that Provide Discussion Boards for Use with your Students

**Boardhost.com**
- A free resource to host discussion board activities; Boards can be private so that only members of the class can access the thread

**ClassChatter.com**
- A free interface to manage course content including online assignments, discussion boards, and grading services

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**WIKI Projects**

Students develop a website that focuses on an assigned topic.

It is a useful way to engage the students with digital media.

WIX Program:
- Very user-friendly
- Free and easy to use

Students develop strong collaborative skills, higher-order, critical thinking, problem-solving skills.

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**WIX Project Examples**

Students are given the assignment to create a family-friendly website on Childhood Apraxia of Speech

**Included on the site:**
- Incidence
- Prevalence
- Symptomology
- Causes
- Risk-factors
- Gold-standard assessments
- Evidence-based intervention options
- Community resources
- Support groups
- Referral sources
- Usefull video link examples
- The role of the SLP
This medium is useful as a stage for demonstration of various clinical techniques. Group members evaluate the demonstration and make suggestions to the class as to the best strategies for use in particular clinical settings.
Private YouTube Video Assignment

You will demonstrate your PowerPoint presentation about the case on Conferencing, and then present the strategy on a premade video that has been uploaded to YouTube. You must make your YouTube video private (as “unlisted”) and provide the link to the instructor, as well as students.

How to make a YouTube video private:

- Go into your video manager
- Click into video
- Click on pencil icon (information & settings)
- Privacy settings will show up on the right hand side
- Click on dropdown box
- Click on “unlisted” (NOT PRIVATE! This will make getting into the video very difficult)
- “Unlisted” will allow your audience to view the video, however, you must provide the URL to your audience, or else they will not be able to access it

Aha!

- Objective: To provide an innovative way for students to share their thoughts and experiences
- Instructions: During your time in this course, you may experience what is termed an “Aha!” moment— a moment when something you have been reading or contemplating makes sense with an unexpected clarity. Share a moment with the class. A compilation of all “Aha” moments will be collected at the end of the course.

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 76)
Student-Led Panel Discussions

**Student-Created Questions**
- Allow students to take control of their learning (Pelz, 2004).
- Act as powerful learning tools (Choi, Land, & Turgeon, 2005).

**Evaluation & Reflection Questions**
- Allow students to reflect on what they learned.
- Allow students to share their concerns & opinions (Hannah et al., 2000).

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**Peer**
- Enhances sense of community.
- Encourages student involvement.

**Facilitation**
- Improves student outcomes.
- Overcomes challenges of instructor-led facilitation.

**Strategies**
- Empowers students to drive their own learning.
- Encourages students to ask questions and to challenge each other.

(Baran & Correia, 2009; Rourke & Anderson, 2002)

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Facilitator’s Role in Discussion

- Set the agenda for the discussion: objectives, guiding questions, or scenarios.
- Clarify the purpose: what is the expected outcome of the discussion?
- Encourage participation: create a trusting atmosphere.
- Guide the discussion by asking leading questions rather than speaking for students.
- Ensure that some participants do not dominate the conversation.
- Invite less participative members to enter into the discussion.
- Keep the discussion focused on the topics related with the readings.
- Encourage multiple views of the same issue(s).
- Bring the discussion to an end by summarizing the highlights (short posting).
I Didn’t Know That

• Objective: To give students an opportunity to think about what they are learning and contribute to the class discussion
• Instructions: Using the “I didn’t know that” discussion thread, post something new that you’ve learned this week, either from another student, from the text, or from class discussions. Indicate how you will use the new information or skill.

Case Study Presentations

A major advantage of teaching with case studies is that the students are actively engaged in figuring out the target principles by abstracting them from the examples. This develops their skills in the following areas:
• Problem solving
• Analytical tools
• Decision making in complex situations
• Coping with ambiguities

See student example http://www.bu.edu/ceit/teaching-resources/using-case-studies-to-teach/

Case Study Presentations

Test students’ knowledge against model answers or outcomes of experts, instructors, or peers
May consist of text, video, audio, animation, or combination of multimedia
May incorporate commentary from experts or require students to answer questions regarding issues in the case
May relate the case to opposing cases or situations that involve similar knowledge

(Bonk & Zhang, 2008)
Case Study Presentations

Medical Case Studies
• Obtain key information
• Determine diagnoses
• Consult external resources for care planning and decision-making
• Creates extensive and pedagogical resources

School-Based Case Studies
• Students can use a simulated school as a case study
• Collaborate with other professionals such as the school counselor, librarian, or principal about school-rated concerns
• Consult with peers about their students

(Bonk & Zhang, 2008)
Using Rubrics

- Guides self-assessment and peer assessment.
- Reduces time grading work.
- Makes the assignment expectations clear.
- Allows teacher to articulate gradations of quality.
- Shows students how to meet teacher's expectations.


Examples of Rubrics

- Online Discussion Board Rubric
- Wiki Rubric
- A+ PowerPoint Rubric
- Rubric Template

University of Wisconsin STOUT Wisconsin Polytechnic Institute
https://www2.uwstout.edu/content/profile/rubrics/pprubric.html

Feedback from Students

- Students appreciate the potential benefits of collaborative work.
- Adult students appreciate interactive learning environment.
- Students reported learning more by doing a group project than by doing another activity.
- They learned from other group members.
- Unequal participation of group members.
More Feedback from Students

- “She makes class interesting and fun, even after a very long work day.”

- “Dr. Ford made this class interactive and enjoyable. It is very apparent she truly cares about student learning and success.”

- “I really enjoyed this course. It reinforced many of my day to day responsibilities as a speech-language pathologist, and it provided me with insight into communication disorders with respect to adults and geriatrics.”

- “…she truly has our best interests at heart and fosters learning in a positive manner. She also helps us to think critically by guiding us through challenging research articles on unknown topics.”

Other Ways to Incorporate Online Collaborative Learning

- Moodle
- Dropbox
- Skype
- Google Sites
- Doodle
- AnyDesk

Talk with someone near you about what you learned from today’s presentation.
Activities to Engage Online Learners

From Conrad and Donaldson's (2004) Engaging the Online Learner: Activities and Resources for Creating Instruction

I. Skill-Building

Explore which skills your online students already have and which skills they will continue to develop.

Skills include:
- Recall concepts and facts
- Self-directed learning
- Self-monitoring
- Search skills
- Feedback
- Exploration

I Can Find That

- Objective: To provide students with practice in using Boolean search techniques
- Instructions: You will be emailed a topic to search for on the Internet. The trick of this task is to go from the largest number of Internet "hits" to the minimum number in the fewest number of searches by using the Boolean search techniques that we have discussed. Try several different browsers to determine which is the most effective for your particular search parameters.
  - You are to report only on the one that narrowed the topic to the fewest number of searchers. Your final report should consist of:
    - Search topic
    - Browser name
    - Initial Boolean search statement and number of "hits"
    - Each of the subsequent Boolean statements and number of "hits"
    - The final URL that best meets your search specifications
    - Total number of searchers performed

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 43)
Syllabus Quiz

- Objective: To provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding of the course's syllabus and orientation documents
- Instructions: You are expected to be familiar with the course syllabus, assignment due dates, and course orientation materials. The instructor will email you a multiple-choice quiz. You will have one week to submit responses to the instructor as an attachment in an email.
- Note: Test students on critical due dates or technical elements of the course (for example, all written assignments must be received as attachments.).

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 45)

II. Online Icebreakers to Foster Online Communities

Icebreakers are activities that will help students open the lines of communication and initiate interactions.

Skills include:
- Social engagement, building a social presence,
- Identifying commonalities, exploration of personal interests, synthesis, communication skills

One Word

- Objective: To introduce a student's interests and self-perception to other classmates
- Instructions: Think of one word that best describes you or your life. Enter your word and your name in the subject line of a discussion board entry, then explain why you chose that word in the body of the posting. Review the entries of others and find someone else whose word resonates with you. Reply to their message and try to find at least two additional nouns that the two of you have in common by the end of the week.

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 54)
Snowball

- Objective: To find commonalities with others in the learning community
- Instructions: Have one person enter a basic introduction of him/herself, including his or her interest. A second person must then introduce him/herself and find one thing in common with the first person. A third person introduces him/herself and finds one thing in common with the first person and the second person. Each of the rest of the class members then shares his/her introduction and must find something in common with at least three other people in the class. The first person, in turn, must respond to at least three people with whom he or she has something in common. The second person must respond to at least two additional people. The third person must respond to at least one additional person.

(Web-Based Survey Research

- Objective: To survey the class and collect data pertaining to course content
- Instructions: Students should create their own survey materials, collect responses, and manage their data. Students should analyze their results and compare it to course material.
- Don’t forget to respect rules regarding human-subjects if you plan to publish or present your data!

III. Peer Partnership and Team Activities

Aim to allow peers to develop academic ideas with one another

Skills include:
- Teamwork, collaboration, critical analysis, feedback, comparisons of interpretations, appreciation of multiple perspectives, analysis, content review
Medieval Shield

- Objective: To help team members determine the expertise they bring to a team
- Instructions: Find various graphics that represent the skills you bring to a team. Share and discuss them with your team in your group’s chat room or discussion thread. As a team build a graphic representation of a medieval shield with all the symbols of expertise on your team. Post it in the discussion group or add it to your team’s profile page.

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 69)

IV. Reflective Activities

Aims to help gain insight and build connections between topics

Skills include:
Feedback, synthesis, comparison and contrast, appreciation of multiple perspectives, sense of social presence, evaluation, critical thinking skills

Summary Words

- Objective: To provide feedback to the instructor and other classmates on the shared experience
- Instructions: Take a few minutes to reflect on your reactions to our completed class. What word or expression comes to mind. Enter each word or expression into the subject line of a discussion thread. Review the responses of your classmates. Choose one word or expression that speaks directly to you. Post a response to the discussion that explains why this word has special meaning in defining the class experience for you.

(Conrad & Donaldson, 2004, p. 83)
Reuse Chat Transcripts

- Objective: To allow students to reflect on the differences in perspectives from experts or peers, analyze themes in discussions, and review course content from previous weeks.
- Instructions: Assign learners to compare different chats or identify themes across different sessions. If a student missed a session, he/she can write a paper based on the archived session. Ask students how they could reuse course content.

[Bonk & Zhang, 2008, p. 80-81]

Workplace, Internship, or Job Reflections

- Objective: To relate experiences in real-world job placements to course content
- Instructions: Provide a list of questions for students to ask their supervisors in their work experiences. Students should post reflection papers to the online discussion board and comment on their classmates’ reflections. Identify themes or outcomes from their reflections.

[Bonk & Zhang, 2008, p. 82]

References


