Happy Fall!

Problem Based Learning

Young human beings tend to be creative thinkers who use their imaginations freely without constraint. As humans are socialized into their teens, they become less divergent in their thinking desiring to be more like everyone else. One could say they utilize convergent thoughts wanting to operate within societal norms. It should be no surprise then that when students are asked to think creatively, they freeze. Problem-based learning (PBL) is one way to help your students do that "out of the box" thinking that is an essential element in developing better critical thinking skills.

PBL is student-centered where learning occurs through the construction of knowledge by asking them to focus on complex problems. These problems are used as vehicles to promote student understanding of theories, concepts, and principles. PBL is self-directed by the student and offers the opportunity for them to become effective problem solvers. The premise of PBL is to start with real-life problems that are selected to meet the course student learning goals. For instance, if you teach sociology and are focusing on income inequality, you might ask your students to problem solve by asking where city highways are built and the effect this construction has on neighborhoods. Or if you are in biology, you could ask your students to problem solve what steps might need to be taken to sustainably feed the world's population?

To solve such problems, faculty first create groups of students and facilitate their learning while they work through the following seven steps:
1. Discuss the question and make sure everyone understands the problem
2. Identify which questions need to be answered to shed light on the problem
3. Brainstorm what the students already know about the problem and have them try to identify some solutions
4. Analyze and reflect upon the results of the brain-storming session
5. Have the group formulate learning objectives for what they don't know or are unsure of
6. Independently or in small groups do research to gain the required knowledge
7. Discuss/present the finding

PBL is a great technique that allows students to engage in hands-on active learning which allows for greater retention of knowledge, enhances student motivation to learn, and helps students deliver the critical thinking skills necessary for future success.

For more information about Problem Based Learning please see:
Jalinus, N., Nabawi, R. & Mardin, A. (2017). The Seven Steps of Project-Based Learning Model to Enhance Productive Competences of Vocational Students. Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, 102. Pp: 251-256

Methods to Promote Student Engagement

Student engagement is correlated with student success. Implying that, if engagement practices are employed, students will become more successful, and the retention and persistence rates for the University will increase. All good things! So, what are some methods that you can begin to employ today to better engage your students?

- **Redefine participation**- Student participation involves more than just verbal discussions. Students can contribute to conversations and discussions on topics by utilizing electronic chats, discussion boards, and other collaboration pieces on Canvas. In doing so, students, particularly those who are introverted, will more likely share their ideas and insights, which may be extremely valuable to the other students and their learning. As well, students need to learn to listen. Listening to what others have to offer is also a form of participation.

- **Be present as a teacher**- Weimer (2016) says that an "engaging teaching presence is communicated by nonverbal behaviors that convey confidence, comfort, anticipation, and great expectations." Classrooms are communities of learners, so faculty need to also be a part of this community utilizing the tools listed above. Faculty can do so by being present and engaged with their students, and in turn, the students themselves will be more engaged. Alternatively, you might reflect on a former professor who engaged and motivated you. Then try to model this professor's teaching practices in your class.

- **Devote time to talk about learning**- What it entails and why it's essential- Help your students understand that achieving mastery requires a lot of hard work, supplemented by a diet high in complex carbs and proteins, lots of water, and a good amount of sleep. It is sad but true that many students entering colleges and universities do not enjoy learning for learning's sake. It is your role, therefore, to make your class be the one that "introduces students to learning that captivates their attention, arouses their curiosity, stretches their minds, and makes them feel accomplished" (Weimer, 2016).

- **Give students a stake in the process**- Students who have greater control over their learning, whether it is helping to create some basic class requirements, like quizzes and study guides, or freeing up parameters regarding research papers and presentations, will become more engaged because they are making decisions about their learning.

- **Design assignments that are authentic or use active learning experiences**- Doing the work in a discipline is more valued and engaging than learning about the work of the discipline. If it is true that we humans learn by doing, it makes sense that course activities that are based on this premise will allow for mastery at greater levels. You might ask whether your students are ready to do a good job working in the discipline, and Weimer (2016) says, probably not. But one lesson we all know is that mistakes create learning experiences. As well, by doing the work in the discipline, students come to understand its importance which, again, motivates further engagement.

Work cited:
Weinmer, M. (2016, June 29). Six things faculty can do to promote student engagement. Faculty Focus. Accessed from http://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/teaching-professor-blog/six-things-faculty-can-promote-student-engagement/

Campus Vaccine Requirement

All employees of the SVSU campus community must complete the online registration form to indicate their COVID-19 vaccination status or participation in weekly testing. Please complete the form to assist the university in tracking cases and keeping the campus community safe.

If you received your COVID-19 vaccination on campus, and you have not done so, you must complete the form and submit your proof of vaccination. If you have completed the form and want to check to see if it has been appropriately delivered please e-mail nest@svsu.edu.

Connecting with CETL...

As part of our re-growth, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has expanded the ways you can connect with us:

We offer a blog titled. **At the Center.** This is a bi-monthly newsletter full of teaching information You can book an individual consultation by following this link. Or you can stop by our office in Zahnow 231! Soon our Facebook and Twitter accounts will be updated... so watch for that!

CETL's 1st Annual *Count the Candy Corn in the Head Contest*

Have Fun!

- Go to Z231 to enter
- Enter many X's to win!

Win Prizes!

Workshops

October 6, 2021
Create Online Surveys: MS Forms
2:00 PM | Virtual

Brain-Based Learning with Ann Coburn-Collins
October 13, 2021 | 12:00 p.m. | Virtual
October 14, 2021 | 5:00 p.m. | Virtual

October 15, 2021
Faculty Friday: Making GE Assignments Relevant Beyond Your Discipline with Elizabeth Rich
1:00 PM | Emeriti Room

October 18, 2021
Teach your Students to Use Stream for Screen Recording
11:00 a.m. | Virtual

October 19, 2021
Breakout Rooms in MS Teams Meetings
2:00 p.m. | Virtual

October 27, 2021
Canvas: Modules
10:00 a.m. | Virtual

To register for these and other workshops please go to https://appsc.svsu.edu/workshops/workshopsOffered
For CETL workshops select "Tools for Teaching" in the drop-down box.