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INTRODUCTION

In October 2013, Mount Allison University welcomed over 125 participants to the Association of Atlantic Universities Teaching Showcase. The Showcase theme *Assessment: Teaching, Learning and Quality* resonated with our community, resulting in a stellar array of sessions.

We seem to live in a culture of constant—often anonymous—assessment these days: reality television encourages us to vote people off; websites are devoted to guests' comments about hotels and restaurants; and "like" now means to click a thumbs-up sign.

The Showcase examined what assessment means in the higher-stakes context of education, where we spend much of our time and energy assessing others or being assessed ourselves. Courses are passed, degrees are granted, careers are affected by the criteria we establish and apply.

These Proceedings give you a taste of the fascinating sessions which made the Showcase such a success.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the many colleagues and students who helped organize this year's Showcase. They volunteered their time and talents in many essential ways. Special thanks go to Toni Roberts and Shelly Colette, whose assistance has been indispensable.

I would also like to thank Teaching and Learning Canada/Enseignement et Apprentissage, a charitable agency associated with STLHE, for providing funding for this year's Showcase. Their support and recognition of our regional activities and accomplishments are deeply appreciated.

We hope you enjoy reading these Proceedings as much as we enjoyed hosting the Showcase!

Eileen M. Herteis
Director, Purdy Crawford Teaching Centre
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Past Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities' Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development

INTRODUCTION

L'Association des Universités de l'Atlantique a accueilli, en octobre 2013, plus de 125 participants à son Expo-enseignement qui a eu lieu à l'Université Mount Allison. Le thème *Évaluation : Enseignement, apprentissage, qualité* a éveillé de bons échos dans notre communauté, et la gamme très riche de présentations a passionné tous les participants au colloque.

La société actuelle nous accable d'évaluations dont certaines sont anonymes : la télé-réalité nous incite à bannir des candidats; des sites web rapportent des appréciations, souvent défavorables, d'hôtels et de restaurants; et 'j'aime' dénote désormais le feu vert, pouces levés haut.

L'Expo-ensignement a interrogé l'évaluation et son expression au niveau gros jeu de l'éducation, où nous consacrons beaucoup de temps et d'énergie à l'évaluation d'autrui ou à l'examen de soi. Nous fixons, et mettons en pratique, des critères qui détermineront le succès de l'étudiant, la remise d'un diplôme, le parcours d'une carrière.

Ces Actes vous invitent à goûter des présentations passionnantes qui ont assuré le grand succès de l'Expo-enseignement.

J'ai le plaisir de reconnaître et de remercier les nombreux collègues et étudiants qui ont collaboré à l'organisation de l' Expo-enseignement de cette année. En contribuant son temps et ses nombreux talents chacun a joué un rôle essentiel. J'aimerais dire un merci tout particulier à Toni Roberts et à Shelly Colette pour leur concours indispensable.

J'aimerais remercier aussi Teaching and Learning Canada/ Apprentissage Médiation Enseignement, un organisme bénévole de la SAPES, d'avoir subventionné l'Expo-enseignement de cette année. Nous leur sommes tous profondément reconnaissants de leur appui et de leur valorisation de nos activités et accomplissements à l'échelle régionale.

Nous souhaitons que votre lecture s'avère tout aussi agréable que le plaisir que nous avons éprouvé en vous accueillant à l' Expo-enseignement!

Eileen M. Herteis
Director, Purdy Crawford Teaching Centre
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Past Chair, Association of Atlantic Universities' Coordinating Committee on Faculty Development

The following colleagues and students devoted their time and talents in various essential ways to bring the 2013 Teaching AAU Showcase to fruition. They have our unstinting thanks for their generosity:

Showcase Organization

Lucas Cober, Shelly Colette, Eileen Herteis, Toni Roberts

Reviewers for Showcase Proposals and Proceedings Submissions

Shelly Colette, Michael Fox, Robert Hawkes, Eileen Herteis, Robert Lapp, Mario Levesque, Andrew Nurse, Rosemary Polegato, Toni Roberts, Gary Tucker, Louise Wasylkiw, Elizabeth Wells

Showcase Student Volunteers

Ryan Baker, Lucas Cober, Kylie deChastelain, Jay Maillet, Nicole Mostofa, Erin Porter, Maria Raillard, Ian Roberts, Evelyn Wainewright, Norma Jean Worden-Rogers

Tintamarre (Mount Allison's bilingual theatre troupe)

Directed by Professor Alex Fancy and Victoria Vallière (1st year student)
Actors: Charlotte Britten (4th year), Liam Coughlan (4th year), Kelsey Jones (2nd year), Katie Lord (4th year), Ryan Mitchell (4th year), Andrew Rintoul (2nd year), Lauren Sturgeon (3rd year), Amber Tucker (4th year), Mireille Savoie (2nd year)

Translation

Alex Fancy

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17 ième Expo-Enseignement

Mount Allison University
Sackville, New Brunswick/Nouveau-Brunswick

Saturday, October 26, 2013
le samedi 26 octobre 2013

2013 AAU AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dr. Bradley Cross, St. Thomas University
Dr. Stephanie Inglis, Cape Breton University
Dr. Russell Wyeth, St. Francis Xavier University

Dr. Bradley Cross, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at St. Thomas University, believes that his most successful courses are ones in which he draws attention to what the class, including himself, doesn't know or might not be able to know. He explains that this approach provides "a common goal of asking good questions and sorting out possible pathways to learning the answers to these questions." As a result, he and his students learn as a collective through many non-traditional techniques and environments. Given the unplanned directions such an approach can take, teaching can entail a lot of risk, but Brad Cross defines good teaching as a dynamic process that requires "a combination of preparation and intuitive response to the unexpected."

To increase student motivation and their understanding of difficult-to-grasp abstract concepts, Brad provides many opportunities for students to study history outside the classroom, to partner with historical organizations, and to demonstrate their learning by preparing public exhibitions that benefit the entire community. Local museums, sites of historical significance, and even trips to New York City provide rich contextual and experiential learning opportunities that bring history alive. A student who nominated Dr. Cross for the award noted, "His outside-the-classroom trips to study history have been as well orchestrated as his classroom sessions and have proven to be some of the greatest learning experiences of my time in university."

Brad has also fostered collaborative learning communities with other history faculty and with faculty in Fine Arts and in Science and Technology Studies. These linkages enrich the students' understanding of the relevance of history to other disciplines. Despite introducing all these risks into what could be an otherwise stable, 'regular' learning environment, student feedback is enormously positive. Brad's courses are an excellent illustration of the benefit of employing non-traditional teaching techniques and of taking risks in a framework of organization, preparation, and ongoing self-reflection.

Brad is an engaged faculty member. He has developed and offered 17 new courses, supervised 24 honors students, mentored 14 students preparing conference presentations, and has contributed to the development of his colleagues with presentations on teaching and by mentoring new faculty. He received the St. Thomas University Instructional Leadership Award in 2008 and in 2012, the John McKendy Memorial Teaching Award.

His students and colleagues agree that Dr. Bradley Cross is indeed, a worthy recipient of the 2013 Association of Atlantic Universities' Distinguished Teaching Award.

Dr. Stephanie Inglis is an Associate Professor of Mi'kmaq Studies at Cape Breton University and, in the words of Sister Dorothy Moore, is "a visionary, a teacher, a writer, a researcher and a preserver of the Mi'kmaq language, culture and history." A very modest woman, Dr. Inglis would be the first to say that she is not solely responsible for any of the achievements for which she is noted. From her perspective, she has worked alongside many in the academic and Mi'kmaw communities on various projects throughout her career, and that collectively, they made things happen. However, those who know her would say that Stephanie Inglis has worked tirelessly for the past 30 years to enhance the quality of education for Mi'kmaw students at Cape Breton University and beyond. Her peers would say that her persistence and attention to detail have often made the difference in whether projects in which she was involved were successful or not.

Early in her career, Stephanie played a key role in the development of an innovative Mi'kmaq Studies course known as "Mi'kmaq/English Structural Comparisons," which recognized the linguistic differences between the Mi'kmaq and English languages and gave it authenticity as an academic course. Stephanie's drive and determination have resulted in major improvements to programs and curriculum at Cape Breton University. She was a leader in the establishment of the Mi'kmaq Studies program and has worked diligently since its inception to improve that program. As a result of her efforts, the Mi'kmaq Studies program at Cape Breton University now serves as a model for other institutions. Stephanie has collaborated with educators, elders, and researchers throughout the region to develop innovative teaching strategies and resources to promote language learning. The availability of these resources has enabled Cape Breton University to offer a certificate in Teaching Mi'kmaq as a Second language. This program now serves as the basis for a multi-stage program proposal designed to meet international standards for teaching second languages.

In 2012, her colleagues recognized Dr. Inglis' sustained and pervasive commitment to the improvement of university teaching and learning at Cape Breton University and beyond. It is fitting that the Association of Atlantic Universities has followed suit in awarding Dr. Stephanie Inglis the 2013 Anne Marie MacKinnon Educational Leadership Award.

Students in **Dr. Russell Wyeth's** courses learn to 'think like biologists'. An Associate Professor in the Department of Biology at St. Francis Xavier University, Russell Wyeth equips his students with biological knowledge and critical thinking skills to analyse and understand the natural world around them.

Key to Russell's success, whether in large lecture classes, in laboratories, in the field, or online, is his determination to engage and support all students in the learning process. Each learning opportunity is orchestrated around a theme with observations, relevant examples, images, videos, pair-share discussions, creative assignments, and other activities to draw in students. Students are particularly appreciative of his lecture guides, which aid their note-taking and study, and of his infectious enthusiasm for the subject. A former student described Russell's teaching as something that "… begins with his love of the material. Russell plainly finds biology an endlessly exhilarating subject. Perhaps more importantly though, he understands *why* he finds Biology so interesting. This enables him to transmit this excitement to his students. Russell sees the elegance inherent in nature's products and invites his class to share this view. More than anything, this inspires the class not only to learn, but to appreciate the subject, a process that can have an indelible effect on his students."

An Outstanding Teaching Award recipient at St. Francis Xavier University in 2012, Russell is recognized for assisting his students in developing the analytical skills necessary for answering questions about the natural world. He explicitly teaches the scientific method using a process he and colleague Dr. Marjorie Wonham coined Q-H-E-D—Questions, Hypothesis, and Experimental Design. This process, based on the ideas of biological patterns and biological mechanisms, provides students with a conceptual framework for understanding and applying the scientific method to answer their questions.

Russell has critically examined how teaching and learning technologies can enhance student learning. He was a leader in the adoption of Moodle as the University's course management system and served as coordinator of campus-wide support for the system from 2010 to 2012. Focusing on increased student engagement with course material and increased instructor-student interaction, Russell quickly became an expert in Moodle's features that facilitated course planning, communication, material dissemination, feedback, and assessment. He has been very generous with his time, sharing his expertise with others to facilitate their effective use of the system.

Dr. Russell Wyeth is clearly an exceptional teacher worthy of the Association of Atlantic Universities' 2013 Distinguished Teaching Award.

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PAPERS & SHORT REPORTS

TURNING THE UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOM INSIDE OUT: USING ONGOING ASSESSMENT THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Fabrizio Antonelli—Sociology Department, Mount Allison University

Abstract

Assessment, as a pedagogical practice, is generally used to determine what students know about a particular topic or subject area. Traditionally, assessment is used to measure student performance at a fixed point and is often divorced from other aspects of the course. Rather than use assessment as a singular "learning moment," students may be better served by using assessment as an ongoing and cumulative process that enables connected and constructed learning. As part of an ongoing learning practice for a third-year sociology of education class, a curriculum reform simulation exercise was used to assess students at multiple points in the course using varied teaching and assessment techniques. More specifically, the simulation dealt with the stalled health and physical education curriculum reform in Ontario regarding sexual education. Students, working in groups representing various stakeholders, constructed a curriculum document for secondary schools. The simulation allowed students to engage with the course material in an applied way and provided the instructor with an opportunity to introduce critical pedagogy to the classroom. The following paper will examine the relationship between assessment and student engagement as a method for building knowledge capacity and skill attainment.

Introduction

When I was faced with the challenge of creating a syllabus for the start of the year, I thought about two critical aspects for a successful course: student engagement and purposeful assessment. Student engagement is critical in terms of keeping students motivated through long, difficult and often stressful semesters. Creative and active classrooms go a long way toward assuring student engagement. As far as attaining purposeful assessment, students need to be in a position to use feedback throughout the course as learning moments that build toward a culminating activity. My decision to use a simulation as a culminating activity, with the design and implementation for the most part student-led, gave me the opportunity to connect student engagement with purposeful assessment toward achieving a critical learning environment.

The university classroom, although fairly uniform in learning levels, is often varied regarding learning styles. Perhaps less pronounced at the university level, students in undergraduate classes benefit from varied learning practices where they are able to display their knowledge of the course material in various ways. Assessments need to take varied learning styles into account and provide students opportunities to develop understandings of course material that play to their personal strengths. The learning that takes place should be considered cumulative and thus requires moments of feedback and reflection. Traditionally, professors have asked students to produce pieces of work for evaluation where the comments and feedback given are specific to the assignment and may not lead to knowledge development for succeeding assignments. In this arrangement assignments are siloed and opportunities for students to develop skills and knowledge over the course are potentially missed.

In 2006, the Manitoba Government released recommendations for assessment and learning practices for its public schools. Although the material was intended for elementary and secondary educators, much of what was recommended can greatly benefit the undergraduate classroom as well. The report recommended educators flip traditional methods of assessment so that it is used more as a diagnostic and development tool rather than simply and end point evaluation technique. In this way assessment can be used *for* and *as learning* rather than its more traditional and prevalent purpose *of learning* (Earl & Katz, 2006). Project-based learning is designed to take advantage of this assessment method and offer the teacher multiple points in the course to provide guidance and direction through formative assessment. In this way, students can better address any perceived weaknesses as well as further develop strengths in their skill set through moments of formative assessment.

Allowing for moments of assessment to act as cumulative and engaging moments can be somewhat difficult in the university classroom. Traditionally, instructors deliver material to students through lectures and assess understanding at fixed points in the course through standard methods like testing and essay writing. Often these assessment moments are independent of one another and potentially may not build toward a culminating moment. The concern with this assessment practice is that students may engage only in surface learning and may not achieve the deep learning required for "the synthesis of new ideas and the transfer of learning to new applications" (Salter, Pang, & Sharma, 2009, p. 5).

Project-based and collaborative moments of learning may best address these issues as students are better positioned to retrieve and relate prior learning during interactions with peers. Brock and Cameron's (1999) finding, building off Stice (1987; cited in Raymond, 2012), uncovered that "students retain 10 percent of what they read, 26 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they see and hear, 70 percent of what they say, and 90 percent of what they

say as they do something" (p. 73). Clearly moments where students are able to actively engage with the material and apply prior learning also presents the possibility for greater retention and application of knowledge. As well, collaborative learning moments allow for students to build on their own knowledge, develop interpersonal skills, and become active listeners through their engagement with others (Auman, 2011). On top of the possibilities for enhanced knowledge attainment and application, collaborative learning allows students to develop learning skills that can transfer to places outside the immediate space of their classroom such as other courses on campus or their workplaces (both present and future).

The complexities of moving beyond the teacher-centred classroom at the undergraduate level is cited quite often in the literature as a significant stumbling block to creating engaging and collaborative environments (Singleton & Newman, 2009; Raymond, 2012; Zapalska, Brozik, & Rudd, 2012). Singleton and Newman (2009) name the "expert knowledge" developed by professors as the hurdle to freely giving away control of their classrooms to their students, pointing to the reluctance of instructors to "share" in the creation of knowledge with their students. In effect, professors spend most of their research time outside of the classroom developing expert knowledge in the course material and may feel students incapable of sharing this knowledge on a similar level. As well, Singleton and Newman (2009) point out that student-centred classrooms create the potential for process to be emphasized at the expense of content. It is for this reason that pedagogical techniques should be used as learning strategies and should not be substituted for the content itself (Auman, 2011). Instead, shifts toward a student-centred classroom should be viewed as a means to accessing knowledge and skills that may otherwise lay dormant in the lecture hall.

The shift toward student-centred models can take many approaches. For this paper I will focus on the merits of using classroom simulations as the culminating activity at the undergraduate level. Raymond (2012) emphasizes the benefits to the classroom environment created by role-playing simulations and explains that students are given an excellent opportunity to actively engage with other students and connect the content of the course to the conceptual and theoretical understandings delivered during the instructor-lead moments. Students, through an active project like a simulation, can interact with each other to generate knowledge and play with concepts that may otherwise appear elusive or abstract. To allow for these moments of learning, Zapalska, Brozik, & Rudd (2012) stress that the teacher should structure the simulation so that goals and objectives are clear to the students, that the learning outcomes are attainable, and that all available resources are used effectively and efficiently. Although simulations could potentially be time consuming for instructors, the better the instructor is able to deflect preparation to the students the more time the instructor can spend on other aspects of the simulation, such as delivering more effective and frequent feedback for

students. What can be termed as "suitability, resources, and risk" (Lean, Moizer, Towler, & Abby, 2006), instructors should take advantage of who and what is around them as a first step in establishing a student-centred learning project.

Of course there is the potential for problematic moments with project-based learning, especially those involving group work. The most obvious issue with group learning is that of free riders. Auman (2011) found that students tend to shy away from group work activities because of the potential for some students to shirk their responsibilities or make others in the group work harder to pick up the slack. To best address this issue, Auman (2011) stresses the importance of delivering motivation and accountability to students through the content of the course. If students are able to see a purpose to the simulation and see applicability to practice and/or content, they will likely better relate to the material and have a vested interest in delivering the best product possible. In essence, the culminating activity of the simulation helps to motivate students and allows them to take on classroom leadership roles and solve classroom problems that may surface, thus minimizing the potential problem of the free rider (Auman, 2011).

When relating student learning to previous experiences, students must wade through what is often termed surface or anecdotal learning to come at richer and deeper understandings of course material (Shahzad, 2010). Media, peer community perspectives, and common perceptions accompany students in the classroom and present various understandings and ways of knowing as they relate to the topic at hand. The challenge set before students with this particular simulation was to untangle what they perceived to be "common understandings or misunderstandings" regarding sex education and successfully connect their knowledge of the subject with others in the classroom and with the core content of the course. As will be described below, in the case of a simulation dealing with sex education curriculum reform, many students had to understand their own personal experiences in the classroom in a much broader sense. In essence, their lived experiences had to be understood in terms of political and social relationships that exist beyond the classroom.

Raymond (2012) uncovered through an extensive review of the literature that although not all studies on cooperative learning increased student performance, no study concluded that students were adversely affected (in terms of knowledge acquisition) by participating in cooperative-engaged learning rather than more traditional lecture-based courses. The cooperative classroom provides opportunities for students to explore course content beyond the simple unidirectional knowledge transmission of the lecture. The following paragraphs will explore the opportunities with which students could engage with course content using a simulation activity I introduced to an undergraduate third-year sociology of education course.

The Simulation

Prior to introducing the specifics of the in-class project, it might be helpful to provide a brief background to the events that served as the foundation for the simulation exercise. In 2010 the Ontario Government attempted to implement reforms to the Health and Physical Education curriculum (see Ontario Government, 2010 for full document). The government, through a long consultation process with stakeholders and community partners arrived at a final document to be implemented for the following school year. The final document included a rather progressive and, some would argue, much needed updating of the sex education portion of the curriculum guide. Unfortunately, a minority but vocal group was able to rally opposition to the curriculum reform and place pressure on the government to repeal the reforms. Two days following the initial release of the curriculum document, the education minister repealed the portion of the curriculum dealing with sex education and retained the 1998 document as a guide for teaching in the classroom. To date, educators in Ontario still must work from the 1998 curriculum guidelines for classes dealing with sexual health.

In a third-year sociology classroom students are often keen to explore the politics associated with social issues and inequality. As a subject, I felt that sex education would resonate with the students for a variety of reasons. For one, all the students in the class would have lived experience from which to draw upon. At some point in their lives students would have sat through and experienced the curriculum first hand; however, it is worth noting that not all experiences would have been the same. Some students expressed very limited or primarily biological instruction regarding sexual health education. Others in the class experienced more progressive classrooms where clearly their teachers would have stepped outside the mandated curriculum. This mixture of student experiences gave opportunities for students to engage with one another and express specific and personal understandings of the curriculum that culminated in an understanding of a broad spectrum of classroom experiences. Also, because students were working from a true-to-life event, a level of authenticity could be easily attained for the simulation exercise.

The simulation involved a practical application of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks learned in the first half of the course. Students were divided into groups of four and were given roles as stakeholders in a curriculum reform exercise. The stakeholder groups ranged from conservative groups like the *Institute for Canadian Values* and the *Canadian Christian College*, to more liberal groups like *Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays* and *Planned Parenthood*. As well, there was a government group (Ministry of Education) and two

teaching associations. In all, nine stakeholder groups were represented in the simulation that provided students an opportunity to experience the activity from a range of political and social views. During the week of the simulation, students were responsible for role-playing their stakeholder group as part of a consultation process regarding the reform of the sexual education portion of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. Prior to entering the simulation, students were expected to research the organization or person they would represent in the role-play, the key issues associated with the reform, and the expectations and guidelines from the original curriculum document. The decision to place much of the preparation in the hands of the students allowed me as the instructor to divest myself of much of the work involved with preparation and planning. As well, the research portion of the project allowed students to gain a better sense of the stakeholders involved, the issues at play, and the strategies necessary for engaging with others in the class. As a skill development practice, the research component afforded students the opportunity to establish group-work skills and develop a comfort with their group members. It was also at this point where I could assess the accuracy of their knowledge surrounding stakeholder philosophies and their understandings of the key issues associated with this particular curricular reform. Two groups were given special roles outside the stakeholder lobby groups. The curriculum writers (representing the Ministry of Education) would act as chair for the consultation meetings in addition to their task of drafting the revised curriculum. In exchange for their efforts with writing the curriculum, the curriculum-writing group was excused from the group research activity. This tradeoff in assignments was deemed fair and equitable by the class and did not result in "extra" work being done by one group over the others. Finally, an individual member who was not present during the early stages of the project was given the role of the media. The media role was a far less rigid role that worked well to accommodate students in the class who, for whatever reason, may have missed a portion of the course. The media representative role was to report back on the daily events of the simulation acting primarily as a sounding board for stakeholder groups, as well as summarizing the simulation as a whole through a reflective piece of writing. Once again, this arrangement was deemed fair and equitable with the rest of the class.

The meeting and consultation phase of the simulation took place over a week (three classes in total). Students were required to attend all three classes and were graded for their attendance and participation. During the "meeting and consultation week" of the simulation little formal guidance was required on behalf of the instructor. Instead, all formal direction regarding the agenda and procedures were set out by the curriculum writers' group (government). The formal agenda determined by the curriculum writers' group laid out the format for the week's events and facilitated considerable communication and progress in establishing a reformed health curriculum. Students were asked to meet formally during class

time where the content related to the course expectations was debated and agreed upon. It was here where the curriculum writers tabled and finalized specific expectations related to the curriculum document. The simulation also took place outside of class time with groups free to bargain or negotiate with other stakeholders in attempts to broker deals and avoid possible impasses. As well, groups used time outside of class to deliver press releases to the media or design ad campaigns in an attempt to sway public support in their favour.

The student engagement during the simulation went beyond my expectations. Students interacted well in their groups and delegated responsibilities so that all members of the group were actively engaged with the simulation. Because there were many roles available to group members, students played to their strengths and acted as either a spokesperson for the group, a note taker, a researcher (especially in review of other groups' proposals during discussion periods), or worked as media reps formulating press releases, ad campaigns, and even linking the discussion with social media sites. Once engaged with an aspect of the simulation, students eventually became comfortable with the process and by the end of the exercise everyone in the class spoke publicly and provided clear, thoughtful, and critical examinations of the issue.

After each day of the simulation a debriefing session was held with groups who felt that they may be struggling with their expected group role or were confused with a specific aspect of the curriculum reform process. The sessions were short and involved a one-on-one meeting with me to unpack the issue and search for solutions. For example, one of the more conservative stakeholder groups was worried that the tone and content of their discussion material might have been too extreme. After we discussed the pros and cons of their negotiation strategies, the group and I decided it might work best to show greater restraint during the proceedings. This brief but effective meeting is a good example of the quick and immediate assessment practices that can lead to more effective student engagement and learning. Similar feedback strategies were used with most groups and provided an effective use of assessment "*for* and *as* learning" as it provided much needed support for students to critically engage with the material. The debriefing sessions allowed students to feel comfortable in "risky" situations and provided the assurance needed to take chances and push the boundaries of student engagement and learning.

The end product of the simulation was a curriculum document that was technically sound, progressive, and well thought out. Although the government group was responsible for putting together the document, it was easy to see the input from the class from the three days of discussion. After drafting the document, the class was treated to a presentation by the government group outlining the specifics of the final document. Once again, the opportunity presented itself to use verbal feedback as a moment of assessment "*for* and *as* learning" as the

class as a whole analysed the document and underscored the pedagogical strengths of the document and the apparent connections with the course material.

The final reflective piece of writing asked students to identify the learning moments from the exercise and link the material from previous lessons to the simulation. In this way, the culminating activity of reflective writing could incorporate much of the feedback and assessment given throughout the entire project allowing previous assessments to take on a cumulative purpose rather than a static and isolated occurrence. The cumulative and scaffolded assessment practices reinforced conceptual, theoretical, and content-based understandings from the course and afforded students opportunities to engage and re-engage with the course material, essentially acting as moments of "practice" for both skill development and knowledge attainment.

Assessing the simulation as the instructor presents the potential for surface understandings that may obscure underlying problems associated with the activity. It is for this reason that I asked students to complete the end-of-term course evaluations with the simulation in mind. Specifically, I asked students to explain what worked and did not work from the simulation project. It was clear from the feedback that students appreciated the opportunity to learn and engage with the course material in a variety of ways. In particular, the student comments emphasized the value of active learning and the connections they made with other students and the course material. One student wrote: "The curriculum simulation was very unique, educational, and fun. I learned a lot about school curriculums and how they are influenced by a number of factors. It was interesting and eye-popping to learn about the values of different organizations." Other responses stressed the appreciation for varied assessment and evaluation methods, stepping away from the more traditional and standard methods: "Having a simulation was fun and a good way to learn and get grades without doing the *dreaded* research paper" (emphasis added).

The negative feedback from students was minor and limited to issues around procedure and practice associated with the meeting days during the simulation. In particular two students voiced concern over the intensity of the simulation and feeling silenced at points for having differing views from the majority. This is a critical piece to keep in mind and one that I will have to plan for in the future. Simulations can act as double-edged swords in that the more successful and real they are, the greater the potential for students to take their role too seriously and potentially silence others in the class. It is for this reason that the instructor needs to be careful that all groups experience the classroom as a safe space where they are able to voice opinions and engage with others. Frequent verbal assessments and feedback affords the instructor an opportunity to maintain a safe space; however, in some instances,

more frequent written communications may better enable students to communicate their concerns. At the very least, instructors should allow students opportunities to assess the activity and the role of the instructor at some point during the simulation; otherwise, students may enter the culminating activity without the necessary preparation and knowledge to successfully complete the project.

Conclusion

Simulations and project-based learning provide students with opportunities to engage with fellow students and course content in meaningful and lasting ways. Rather than simply act as passive learners in a lecture-style course, students were able to actively engage with the course material and construct meanings and knowledge that presented moments of critical thought and understanding. Through more frequent formative assessment practices students were able to develop and build upon previous knowledge resulting in the production of a sophisticated and thoughtful end product. Students were pleased with the chance to learn in an active environment and were appreciative of the opportunity to present their learning using a variety of methods. Overall, the simulation activity achieved the intended outcomes and allowed for critical and meaningful engagement with the course curriculum.

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EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF SCREENCASTS LECTURES ON CLASS ATTENDANCE

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Abstract

The relationship between attendance and grades has been of interest in research for many years. Why students choose to attend or not to attend is therefore an important factor in the research field. This paper will look at the use of electronic class materials and electronic screencasts in an introductory-level Computer Science class to determine whether providing students with screencasts resulted in a decrease in attendance. As well, we will examine how students use these electronic resources. Online surveys were used to poll students on their opinion of COMP1813 (Computer Concepts and Applications). Results were inconsistent with the hypothesis that screencasts would negatively affect attendance. It was found that the availability of screencasts had no effect on student's decision to attend class. As well, students were asked about how they used the screencasts; however, these results showed no relationship between attendance and the use of screencasts. Students were slightly more likely to attend COMP1813 than other courses and overall, students did not believe the screencasts were a valid substitute for class attendance. Information on materials downloaded by students is also considered, showing some interesting patterns that indicate unexpected usage patterns. These results are useful for educators in helping them decide how to prepare and provide course materials to students.

Introduction

Supplying electronic copies of class slides has become common practice in many university settings. Students are often able to preview slides before and during class with their laptop computers. They can also augment the slides with notes as the class progresses. It is this model of note-taking that many university professors hope to achieve when providing their class slides to students. Some faculty members believe providing slides may have a negative effect on course attendance, as students do not need to attend class to receive the lecture notes. If this is the case, providing electronic class materials to students could promote a higher absentee rate, potentially resulting in poorer marks for students.

Our research looked at the link between providing electronic class materials to students and attendance. In particular, the link between class attendance and the use of screencasts was examined. For the purposes of this study, a screencast is a video recording of the instructor's computer screen along with an audio recording of the lecture. The resulting video files are posted after the class to a website where students can download them via links in a course management system. The use of other electronic material (class slides) was also examined. This

allowed us to consider the extent to which electronic course materials were downloaded in the class, and make some estimation on how those course materials were used.

Our hypothesis for this study anticipated that due to the comprehensive quality of the screencasts, combined with the availability of electronic course slides, students would be more likely to skip class. We also considered the type of student (low attending students vs. high attending students) and how they were using the screencasts (as a substitute for attending class or for review). The questionnaire used for this study focused on the use of the screencasts and class attendance. We then evaluated the relationship between these two components. Information on screencast and class slide downloads were used to augment our understanding of how electronic class materials are used by students.

Our second hypothesis for this study anticipated that there would be a somewhat consistent use of the electronic course materials and screencasts throughout the term, with slightly more use of the screencasts on the more difficult material.

Background

The factors that influence receiving good grades are of interest to many psychologists, educators, and students, with class attendance as a particular interest. A study by Clump, Bauer, and Whiteleather (2003) highlighted the importance of class attendance when they found a positive correlation between attendance and grades. Attendance was recorded by obtaining names from pop quizzes. Students who were present for all three quizzes had significantly higher test grades than those who were present for zero, one or two quizzes. Attendance correlated with nearly a full letter grade difference between the lowest and highest attendance groups.

Considering the benefit of attendance for students' grades, one must ask why students choose not to attend. One question that has been explored is whether posting lecture material online affects class attendance. Landrum (2010) polled students and professors regarding their opinions on providing class notes to students. Both students and professors agreed that this might encourage students to miss class. Students were more likely than professors to believe that class attendance can be encouraged by supplying incomplete notes with room to write in missing details. Students believed that obtaining lecture notes before class would improve their grades, while professors were much less likely to agree with this statement.

Heffner and Cohen (2005) further studied the benefit of providing online resources to students through a learning management system. They found a positive correlation between web page use and grades. Students who regularly used the course web page received significantly higher grades than those who did not take advantage of the web-based resources. In this study, most of the materials included were required readings and supplementary

resources rather than class notes. However, research where students were provided with lecture notes has since been conducted.

One such study by Bowman (2009) found that, contrary to expectation, posting PowerPoint notes on a learning management system had no effect on class attendance. The study was conducted over two spring session periods. In the first session, two courses were taught without lecture notes provided. In the second session, the same courses were taught while providing lecture notes to students. No difference in attendance was observed between the two conditions. In addition to monitoring attendance, Bowman also looked at the relationship between performance and the availability of lecture notes. There appeared to be no significant difference in performance between the two conditions (Bowman, 2009).

Another study by Hove and Corcoran (2008) examined the relationship between class notes, attendance, and performance; they found the same results. In contrast to Bowman's study, Hove and Corcoran examined two introductory psychology courses taught during the same session. One class was taught early in the afternoon and allowed PowerPoint notes to be available online. The second class was taught later in the afternoon and did not allow PowerPoint notes to be accessed online. Attendance was taken every third class. Interestingly, there was no significant difference in attendance between the two classes. However, the class that had access to lecture notes received significantly higher overall grades in the course. One confounding factor this study overlooked was time of day, which may have acted as a third variable, altering both attendance and grades (Hove & Corcoran, 2008).

Following these studies, many researchers began to examine the relationship between screencasts and class attendance, as well as students' opinions of the screencasts. Mullamphy, Ward, and Belward (2010) surveyed a class with access to screencasts at James Cook University in Australia. Students were asked about their experience using the screencasts as well as their opinion regarding the usefulness of screencasts as a learning resource. Of the students surveyed, 87% thought screencasts were a good supplement to lectures, and 39% believed they should be used to replace class time. A case study of a small class (14 students) offering screencasts delved deeper into the reasons students choose to attend lectures rather than replace class time with screencasts. When students in attendance were asked why they attend, six stated that they value the ability to receive immediate answers to questions. Screencasts of complete lectures take no less time than attending class but students do not have the opportunity to ask questions. Two students also explained that it helps to reinforce a weekly schedule that they might not reinforce on their own, and two responded that they understand the material better with personal contact. Finally, two others found the screencasts boring (Loch, 2009). A final study of screencast use in the classroom found that students value the use of screencasts because it allows them to check for any errors they may have made in their personal notes, they can review explanations they may have misunderstood, and they can read the annotated slides easily. These last two reasons are particularly useful for English second-language students and students with learning disabilities. Screencasts are also a reasonable option for students who may not be able to attend class due to illness, emergencies, or other

reasons. Overall, the feedback from students in this study was very positive (Feinstein & Rowlett, 2011).

Approach

The Survey

In order to determine the rates of attendance and usage trends of screencasts in the COMP1813 class, we created an online survey to distribute to students (see Appendix A). The survey contained 14 questions including rating scale, multiple choice, and open-ended formats. Participants were asked questions regarding how often they attend class, whether or not they use the online lectures, what they use them for, and how helpful they find the screencasts. Along with these questions, demographics including age, year of study, major, and gender were collected. Informed consent forms and debriefing forms were provided to participants along with their surveys.

A link to the survey was e-mailed to each student enrolled in the course, at which point students could voluntarily choose to complete the survey. Participation was also mentioned in class and encouraged by the instructor. Participants were not given compensation for participating in this study as it required minimal time to complete, and students were aware that participation was completely voluntary and anonymous, and could be completed on their own time outside of class. Research Ethics Board approval was not needed for this survey, which was part of a research methods course for a Psychology class.

Usage patterns

In order to better understand how students use electronic course materials, the server logs for the course management system (Moodle) used at Acadia were accessed through the "Reports" interface. The reports include information on the time of the access, the IP address from which the material was accessed, and the name of the student who accessed the material. This data was collected for each of the course screencasts and each of the class slide files for the entire course.

Data collected from the server was "cleaned" before analysis. We removed all accesses to the course materials that were made by the course instructor or the teaching assistants. Next, we removed "duplicate downloads" of the course material made in close proximity to each other. We identified duplicate downloads as two downloads of the same electronic resource by the same student in less than 5 minutes. Finally, we removed all accesses to material not made during the time the course was offered.

Participants

To understanding the results we collected we must consider both the type of class and the type of students in the class. For example, one would expect that the attendance level in a required upper year course would have a different type of student and different attendance patterns

than a non-required first year course. Let us first consider the type of course where the data is collected, and then the type of student who is in this class.

The course for which this data was collected is an introductory Computer Science service class. This 1000 level course is available to any student on campus without any prerequisites. The goal of the course is to teach basic computer knowledge and usage. Topics include understanding computer components, operating systems, word processing, spreadsheets, database management systems, HTML, CSS, security, networks, video editing, and sound recording. While the topics vary somewhat significantly, this course is intended to provide students with a fair amount of hands-on computer work by way of assignments, coupled with bi-weekly quizzes to test retention and knowledge. Student knowledge varies widely in this course; some students know very little and some students know much of the material before the class starts. This same variation also occurs from topic to topic, i.e., some students may have a solid previous knowledge of word processing, but may have no previous knowledge of spreadsheets. These variations in knowledge may result in different student behaviors based on the topic of a particular class. This course is not directly required for any degree, although it can be taken as part of a minor in Computer Science and Bachelor of Business Administration students with a concentration in Business Technology Management. For the term in which the data was collected, there were 286 students enrolled in one section of the course.

The format of the course is important in understanding how the course materials were used. The course runs over a 13-week term, with deliverables consisting of 10 assignments and one project. Along with the assignments and projects, there are six bi-weekly quizzes. Of the 10 assignments and six quizzes (which are all worth the same value on the final mark), the lowest mark is dropped. The project is mandatory. Course material is covered on quizzes, with some of the content covered more in-depth through assignments. One would expect that the slides and screencasts for material that appears on both quizzes and assignments would be downloaded and used more often than those slides that pertain to material only on a quiz. It should be noted that there was no textbook for this course. The entirety of the course materials was located in the screencasts and the class slides.

Surveys were collected from 25 males and 50 females for a total of 75 responses. Students' ages ranged from 18 to 29 years (M=19.91, SD=1.63). Faculties of science (33%), arts (20%), and professional studies (45%) were all represented in the sample. Year of study ranged from first through fifth year, with first year students most highly represented (32%) followed closely by second (29%) and third year students (25%). Fourth (12%) and fifth (1%) year students were the least represented years of study.

Results

The Survey

Results from the online survey are presented in **Table 1**. In general, students' self-reported attendance was quite high; sixty students (80%) reported high levels of attendance (options 4 and 5 for "self-reported rate of attendance" on a scale of 1 to 5). Only a small number of students reported low attendance (3 participants), therefore the low and average attendance groups were grouped together for chi-square analysis. The chi-square test was performed to assess the relationship between attendance rates and how the screencasts were being used, either for review or as a substitute for class; however, the results were non significant ($c^2(2, N = 74) = 1.06$, $p = .589$). Therefore, no relationship was detected between attendance and how the screencasts were being used. Another trend that can be seen in **Table 1** is a generally low use of screencasts, with over half of the participants reporting low usage levels. As well, students did not seem to use screencasts as an alternative to class attendance. Over half (66%) of participants reported rarely using the screencasts for this purpose. It is likely that due to the high level of attendance reported on the survey, the majority of students who completed the survey could not report using the screencasts as a substitute for class because they rarely missed class. It is also possible that only those students who attend class regularly chose to complete the survey, therefore biasing our results. A larger number of students did report using the screencasts as review, almost half (43%) reported sometimes or always reviewing the material this way.

Table 1: *Survey responses in percentages*

Survey Item	Responses				
	Low		Medium		High
	1	2	3	4	5
Self-reported rate of attendance	0%	4%	16%	36%	44%
Use of provided screencasts	42%	22%	23%	5%	8%
Use of screencasts as substitute for attendance	66%	18%	12%	4%	0%
Use of screencasts as a review	44%	13%	17%	11%	15%
Difficulty of this course compared to others	49%	28%	20%	3%	0%
Likelihood to miss class, knowing that the screencasts are available	54%	19%	19%	7%	1%
Attendance compared to other courses of similar difficulty	0%	16%	48%	11%	25%

From the results, it was determined that 42% of students do not use the screencasts at all. In addition, to the questions reported in **Table 1**, participants were also asked if they use the screencasts in the event that they miss class, 48% of students responded "yes" and 52% responded "no". When asked why they chose to enroll in the course (Figure 1), the most popular reasons for taking the course was as

a GPA boost and because it fit in their schedule, followed closely by individuals who took it for its interesting topic. For this question, participants were asked to select all answers that applied to them. As well, 49% of students replied that this course was easy compared to other courses they were enrolled in. Given these responses it is possible that the extra resources provided to students may not be required because the material is not challenging or their interest in the topic helps them to retain the information learned in class.

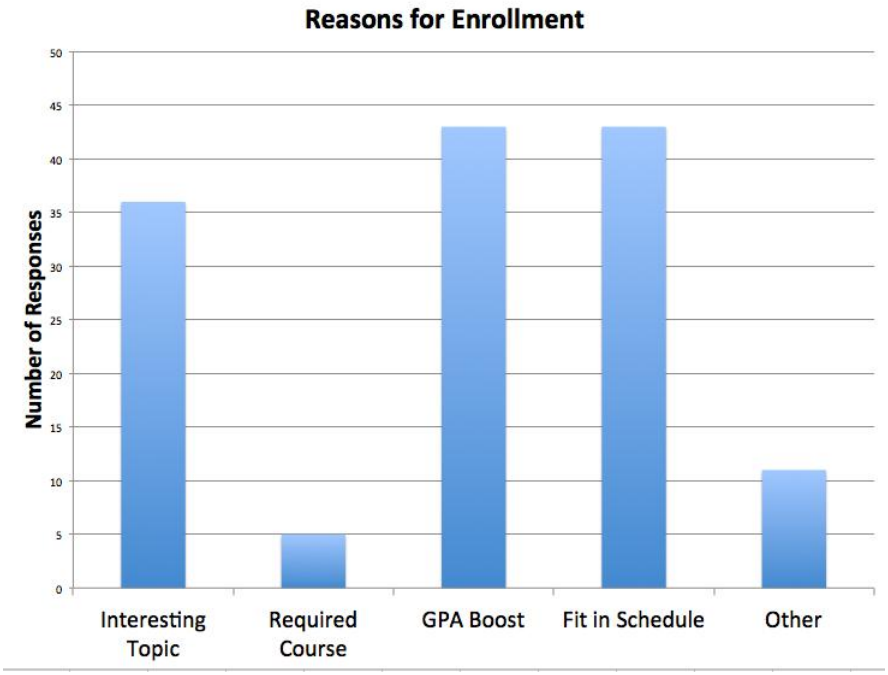

Figure 1: Reasons for enrollment

Some other interesting trends were that participants reported being more likely to attend COMP1813 than other courses of similar difficulty (**Table 1**). As well, the majority of participants were no more likely to miss COMP1813 because of the availability of screencasts (**Table 1**). In fact, 76% of students claimed that they do not believe screencasts are a good substitute for class attendance. The remaining 24% claim they believe screencasts are a good substitute for class attendance.

Due to the fact that screencasts provide complete audio and visual aspects of the lectures, it was predicted that students would view them as a valid alternative to attending lectures. However, students gave many reasons as to why screencasts were a poor substitute for class attendance. These included the inability to ask questions if they were not physically in class and the random attendance quizzes that are worth marks. Some students find the screencasts boring and others want to attend to get value for their money. Of the students who believe the screencasts can be used as an alternative to class, many explained that the screencasts are useful for times when one is unable to attend class. Also, they are particularly useful for reviewing difficult or hard to understand material.

We expected that students would indicate the screencasts provide an adequate replacement for class, and that rate of attendance would decrease compared to classes of similar difficulty. However, the results do not support these hypotheses. In addition, it was anticipated that students who attend class would use the screencasts for review purposes and that those with low attendance would substitute screencasts for class time, but the results from this analysis were inconclusive.

Usage patterns

The data presented in Figure 2 shows the number of times each set of class slides were downloaded during the duration of the course. The horizontal red line in the figure indicates the number of students enrolled in the class.

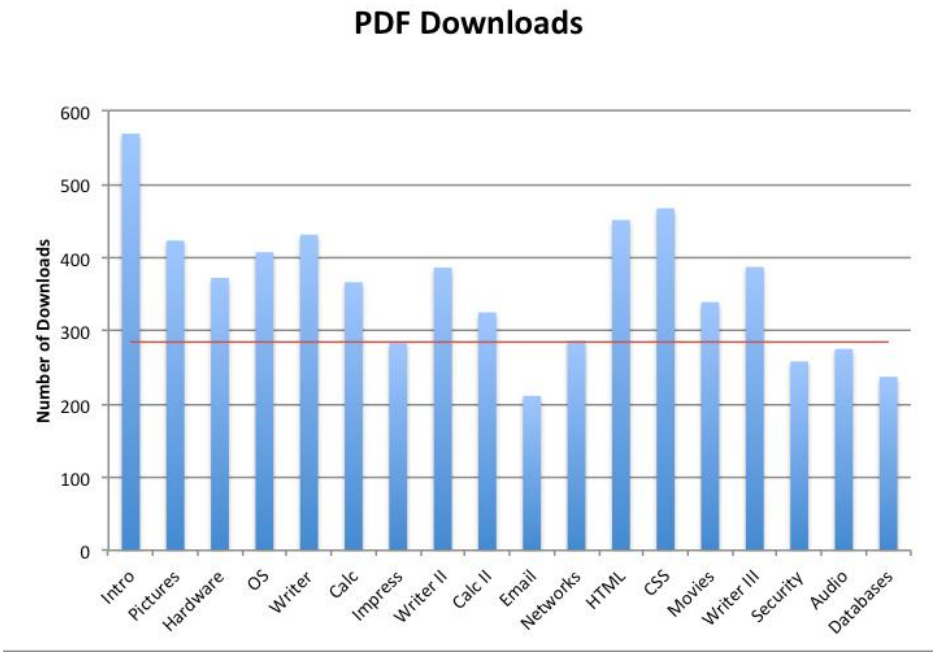

Figure 2: Number of downloads per set of class slides

The results shown in Figure 2 are not what we expected to see. Take, for example, the number of downloads for the “Intro”, “HTML”, and “CSS” sets of slides. For the “Intro” slides, we see approximately 575 downloads. For the “HTML” and “CSS” slides, we see approximately 450 download each. These numbers are significantly higher than the number of students enrolled in the class. Given that the class has no text book, one would expect that students would download a copy of the class slides once, annotate those slides, and then refer to their local copy of the slides for the rest of the term. Instead, what we have is a significant number of students who are going back to the server multiple times to re-download the course slides. This download pattern seems to indicate that some students simply rely on downloading slides again should they be needed. The high download numbers for the “Intro” slide is understandable, as the intro slides contain the syllabus and marking scheme for the class. The high download numbers for the “HTML” and “CSS” slides also make sense, as those slide decks are associated with two of the more difficult assignments in the course.

The results in Figure 2 also show other download numbers that we did not expect. Consider the download numbers for the "Email", "Security", "Audio" and "Databases" slides. These slide decks were downloaded fewer times than the number of students in the class. This seems like a rather odd behaviour, as we expected that each student would download each class slide deck at least once during the term. There may be an explanation for these anomalies. With respect to the lecture on "Email", several students may have felt that they already had enough knowledge in the area, and hence did not need this slide deck. As for the slide decks for "Security", "Audio", and "Databases", the lower number of download may be related to the marking scheme of the course in which the best 15 of 16 quizzes are counted. Students who performed well on all of the previous assignments and may simply skip the last few lectures and take their chances on the final quiz. This allows students to concentrate on core courses in their program during the final weeks of class.

Figure 3 shows the number of screencast downloads for the term. Once again, the number of screencast downloads is not what we were expecting. The first screencast was downloaded approximately 115 times, a download number that could be attributed to novelty interest from students. The screencast download rate is otherwise low, with spikes in lecture downloads for one of the Writer lectures, HTML, CSS, and the Movies lecture. It is not surprising to see a high number of downloads related to the HTML and CSS lectures, as those assignments were difficult for non-CS students. The download rate for the Movies screencast is reasonable considering the class project was based on material from that lecture.

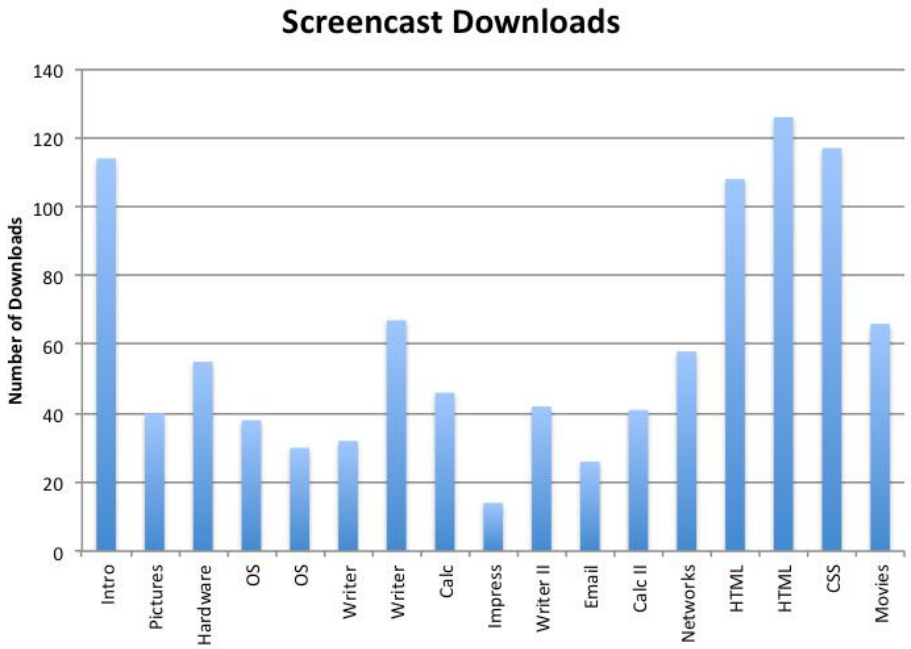

Figure 3: Number of downloads per class screencast

In general, the download rates were lower than expected given the fact that the material was freely available to the students. It should be noted that even if students only wanted to review a short section of a lecture, then the Moodle system would register a full download of the file. With several lectures having a download rate of less than 40, it is clear that only a small portion of the class is using the screencasts.

Discussion

Overall, the results of this study suggest that approximately half of the students surveyed use some of the screencasts to review course material both for classes that they do and do not attend. Combined with the screencast download information, this would imply that students used the screencasts sporadically, and few students depended on the screencasts for every class. Students are no more likely to miss class because of the screencasts and do not believe that the screencasts are a valid alternative to class attendance. The majority of students reported high levels of attendance. This information is useful as it suggests to professors that screencasts are a good resource for students and do not impact their attendance. There was no negative correlation found between providing screencasts and class attendance.

As screencasts are a relatively new concept in university classes, more research is required in order to determine whether or not they are a positive or negative addition to courses. In future, it would be beneficial to conduct similar research while ensuring that data is collected from a more representative sample. The majority of students who completed the survey were those who rarely miss class. Since the attendance rate was not measured for this study, it is uncertain whether or not this is representative of the actual class attendance. Along with the unrepresentative sample, a major limitation in this study is that all collected data was solely based on self-report. Because the data was completely anonymous and involved students answering questions based on their memory and their own opinions, there is no way of testing the validity of the responses.

In future research, it may be worthwhile to look at students' marks compared to their use of screencasts and their attendance. It would also be interesting to conduct research on more difficult courses providing screencasts in order to determine whether the difficulty of a course has any effect. In addition, as suggested by Feinstein and Rowlett (2011), screencast availability can be particularly useful for students with learning disabilities and English second language students. It allows students who may have more difficulty absorbing or comprehending the material to review lectures several times. Future research may want to concentrate on how these students are using screencasts, and how to maximize their ability to learn using this relatively new teaching tool. Although the effects mentioned in this research are small, providing screencasts is a relatively simple procedure. This makes it worthwhile to help the few students who do benefit from this resource and provides one more option for students to best learn the material.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A – Survey

What is your major?

What is your year of study?
Please Select
1st year
2nd year
3rd year
4th year

5th year
Other

What is your age?
Please Select
up to 17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
Older than 30

What is your gender?

Male Female Other

Are you currently enrolled in COMP1813 at Acadia University?

Yes No

Please rate your response to the following questions on a scale from 1 to 5.
1= Never, 3= Sometimes, 5= Always

	1	2	3	4	5
1. How often do you attend COMP1813 lectures?					
2. How often do you miss COMP1813 lectures?					
3. How often do you use the screencasts provided for COMP 1813?					
4. How often do you use the screencasts as a substitute for class attendance?					
5. Do you watch screencasts to review material from classes you did attend?					
6. Are you more likely to miss a 1813 class knowing that the screencasts are available (even if you don't use them)?					
7. Do you ever miss class with the intention of watching the screencast, only not to watch it?					

8. How does this course compare to other courses you have been enrolled in, in terms of difficulty?

Easier Equal Harder

9. Compared to courses you have taken of similar difficulty, how often do you attend COMP 1813 lectures?

Less Often Same More Often

10. Why did you choose to take this course? (Select all that apply)

Interesting topic
Required course
To boost GPA
Fit in my schedule
Other

11. How useful do you find the screencasts?

Not Helpful Sometimes Helpful Very Helpful

12. Do you think the screencasts are a good substitute for class attendance?

Yes No

Please explain:

13. Do you know of other students who use the screencasts as a substitute for class attendance?

None Some A Lot

14. When you miss class, do you use the screencasts to review the lecture?

Yes No

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WHAT SHOULD WE BE LOOKING FOR WHEN ASSESSING STUDENTS' READINESS FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION?

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Abstract

Research shows that students often experience challenges transitioning from high school to university or college, resulting in increased risk of a number of difficulties, including homesickness, loneliness, stress, anxiety, and depression. Such difficulties are known to affect adjustment to post-secondary education and, ultimately, persistence. Researchers recognize that many variables contribute to variations in academic adjustment and performance, yet success in post-secondary institutions has primarily been predicted using an index of academic achievement (e.g., GPA, standardized test scores) or a battery of psychosocial variables (e.g., depression, anxiety). Despite these approaches, our prediction of student success is imperfect. How can we improve this prediction? Are there other missing skills seen as necessary for student success?

Group discussions identified empirically supported predictors of adjustment (e.g., mental health, study habits) as being important for the transition to post-secondary institutions. In addition, we proposed that life skills (e.g., financial literacy, time management, self-care) are a neglected set of abilities that likely contribute to successful transitions. Indeed, many academic websites provide informal guides that outline the practical skills needed for independent living. These websites suggest that adolescents who have such skills will adjust better to post-secondary schools. Two lists of resources follow. The first includes websites that focus on the transition from high school to college/university. The second includes a listing of journal articles relevant to predicting successful adjustment.

Appendix A: Websites

http://www.studentawards.com/stacks/articles/surviving-the-transition-from-high-school-to-university.aspx

http://www.studentawards.com/stacks/articles/curb-your-campus-shock.aspx

http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/aug/14/uni.first.week

http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/09/students.highereducation

http://www.studentawards.com/stacks/tips/preparing-for-university-loppnow.aspx

http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/transition/academic/classes

http://business.queensu.ca/ConversionDocs/bcom/docs/T2U.pdf

http://www.blog.equals6.com/2012/06/07/making-the-transition-from-high-school-to-university/
http://www.wlu.ca/page.php?grp_id=65&p=1284

http://mindyourmind.ca/community/your-school/3996-transitioning-to-college

http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/student-toolkits/

http://www.studygs.net/

http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/general/transition-to-university

http://www.uleth.ca/counselling/stories/hows-transition-university-going-so-far

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ASSESSING ACTIONS AND REWARDING BEHAVIOUR: AN INNOVATIVE FIRST-YEAR COURSE TO HELP STUDENTS SUCCEED AT UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

In the fall of 2010, a team representing all parts of the UNB Saint John designed a First Year Experience course for our small commuter campus. In the years that have followed UNIV 1003: Everything You Need to Know in First Year has been taught by members from each of the university's faculties as well as by instructors from student services and advising. This multi-disciplinary process has resulted in a course in which many academic traditions have a voice, and which we believe will help students develop the skills they need to succeed at university. In order to provide feedback not just regarding what students study and learn, but what they actually do with this knowledge, UNIV 1003 assesses students using both conventional and authentic assessments. The course assessment has seven components, five of which focus on students doing various tasks in order to develop their skills. Students attend and review campus events, explore the library, formulate theses and revise essay drafts, work in and outside of class in groups, and find ways to enrich their community through a university project. Early assessments of the course itself suggest that students who complete UNIV 1003 not only have higher levels of persistence as they move from first to second year, but also a higher GPA across their course work during their first year.

The Challenges Facing Our First Year Students

As any university teacher knows, the first year students we encounter each fall are a highly stressed lot. More than those who preceded them, our first year students are increasingly

anxious, partially because they face challenges unknown to previous generations. There is strong evidence that first time university students are anxious about these numerous challenges as they enter university (Ellis, 2006; Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004; Scanlon, Rowling, & Weber, 2007; Shepherd, 2008). Higher tuitions, a grimmer and mercurial economic climate, and sense that post-secondary education is critically important have placed a lot of pressure on students who are starting their university careers. The transition into the role of "university student" creates many stressors that affect how their experiences are perceived (Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, & Alisat, 2000). New academic standards, changes in teaching styles, and a new environment are additional concerns for the student (Ellis, 2006; Shepherd, 2008).

Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, and Hunsberger (2000) identified that before arriving to university, students have expectations of their upcoming experiences, and often, their expectations do not measure up to their experiences. This dissonance in expectations affects their university experience and has been linked to student dropouts (Jackson, Pancer, Pratt, & Hunsberger, 2000; Pancer et al., 2000). Studies have gauged first year withdrawal rates to about 25% - 40% (Jackson et al., 2000; Parker et al., 2004; Scanlon et al., 2007). In light of the challenges that students face, it is important that universities strive to develop students' academic skills and as well as their familiarity with the new academic environment. Ultimately, we hope to increase their likelihood of academic success. It was with this objective in mind that the proposal for UNIV 1003 was first submitted.

The UNIV 1003 course was developed to help first-time university students transition into their new role and to give them the skills to succeed in their academic careers. This type of course is not a novel idea; Griffin and Romm (2008) listed various universities and colleges that have courses targeted at first year students. The course helps new students create a sense of connectedness to the institution, which helps them succeed (Cho & Karp, 2013; Scanlon et al., 2007). In reviewing the challenges facing new university students, the two prong approach of the course is to instil academic skills and provide the soft skills new students need. This paper will explore how the course was developed, the background behind the assessments we employ, and, finally, the specific activities which help our students acclimatize to the university environment. As our final review of the impact of UNIV 1003 will demonstrate, first year students taking the course are having success making the transition into their undergraduate programmes.

Developing UNIV 1003 to help First Year Students: A General Overview

UNIV 1003: Everything I Need to Know in First Year was developed to help incoming undergraduate students succeed in their university courses. The first-year experience course is a three credit hour lower level elective in almost all of the university's programmes, and is in its third year of operation. Each fall four sections – each capped at 30 students – are taught, and for the past two years we have offered a single section in the winter term. Students are in their first year of university when they take this course, many are not sure of their major, and most

are exploring their options. Although student persistence is one goal of the course, a larger goal is to help students understand and take control of their learning.

As we know from the high attrition rates in universities across the Maritime region, many incoming university students are unprepared for the challenges that they encounter during their first year, and, as a result, many decide not to complete their programmes. The reasons for student attrition vary. When asked about their reasons for non-completion, people who abandon their studies often report that they were not prepared for their university classes and felt that their programmes were not compatible with their needs (Ozga & Sukhnandan, 1998; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). A study of Australian university students found that social supports are necessary if students are to successfully integrate into university (Wilcox et al., 2005). Further, students reported looking to course instructors for emotional support and guidance. Because not all instructors feel qualified to provide emotional and social support, it is important to educate students about the other services that are available to them. Thus at UNB, in the UNIV 1003 program, one of our goals was to address these widely varying concerns. From the first day of class, we provide students with information about various campus resources that may help them enjoy their university experiences. Each term, representatives from Student Services, the Student Representative Council, the Writing Centre, and an Alumni panel visit the classes to talk to students about services available to them. From the outset, we encourage our students to see the university as a larger community to which they can connect and contribute. As instructors, we are there to foster their development and answer any questions that students have and, if questions are asked that we do not know the answers to, we point students to people who would be able to help them.

UNIV 1003 is truly multidisciplinary and one of our goals is to teach skills that are needed by all students, regardless of their specific majors. Students from all faculties—Arts, Science, and Business – are encouraged to take the course and it is taught by instructors representing each faculty. It is also important to note that the course instructors are full-time faculty (representing the Faculty of Business and Departments of Humanities and Languages, Social Sciences, Engineering, and Psychology) and staff (representing Student Services). Research suggests that full-time faculty use more active and collaborative techniques and, compared with part-time faculty, spend more time interacting with and challenging their students (APA, 2007). For these and other reasons, students in UNIV 1003 are taught by instructors with strong connections and a commitment to the university community. Indeed, in order to ensure that each professor can bring their own strengths to the course, a section of the course mark (i.e., 10%) is held by each professor for the specific kinds of course activities which they know will fit their style of teaching. Besides developing the sense of enthusiasm and community among first year students, UNIV 1003 has a variety of specific information drawn from the realm of educational psychology, as well as a number of specific practises which we want to impart and develop. As we realized that UNIV 1003 was as much about encouraging our students to behave in particular ways as well as wanting them to learn a particular body of knowledge, we realized that we needed to adopt an assessment process which was sensitive both to our student's learning and to their actions.

Methods of Assessment: Evaluating Performance vs. Rewarding Behaviour

Because UNIV 1003 is not a standard "information driven" course, we have had to shift away from a sole reliance on the forms of assessment which are typically employed. Of course, some of our assessments are traditional; at least some of the time we want to evaluate performance. UNIV 1003 has a lot of information about how to work effectively as a student and we use traditional assessment methods to make sure this information is absorbed. Up to 45% of the UNIV 1003 final grade is based on conventional forms of assessment, and one purpose of these tests, exams, and term papers is to expose students to the types of academic assessments they are likely to have in other classes. For example, because students are drawn from all faculties and disciplines, our tests include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Although these types of assessments are important, many of our other assessments focus on encouraging particular behaviours and skill-sets. As we developed a wide variety of activities in the course, we also developed a variety of assessments to properly track how the students are developing. Our determination to reward behaviours and assess actions pushed us towards theories of authentic assessment.

For the past several years, educators have been moving in the direction of outcome-based forms of teaching and assessing student learning, including outcomes that pertain to skills in lifelong learning. This movement has been spurred forward by a widespread belief that the assessment processes in use may be limiting the growth and accurate evaluation of some of the skills necessary in the 'modern' workforce (Wilson, 2004). Competencies deemed necessary for competition in the twenty-first century world include creative thinking, decision making, problem solving, learning how to learn, self-management, and collaboration (Wilson, 2004). The need has arisen for active, constructive approaches to learning in order to facilitate the development of these competencies, reflecting a holistic view which in turn prompts the need for a broader set of assessment practices to mirror this type of learning approach.

Alternate assessments are often defined as those that differ from standardized forms of conventional testing and one-shot measurements following instruction (Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe, 1993; Wilson, 2004). "Authentic assessment" refers to the idea that assessment should engage students in applying knowledge and skills as they are used in real-life situations. Performance assessment has been described by some as a combination of alternate and authentic assessment practices (Marzano et al., 1993). When an educator includes a variety of tasks and situations in which students are given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and apply knowledge, skills and habits of mind in a variety of contexts, they are supporting the concept of performance assessment. Performance assessment occurs over time and results in tangible products or observable 'performance' indicators. What is important to consider is the basic premise that underlies the creation of a performance task, that it must include important and relevant content standards (Marzano, 2003).

Wilson (2004) suggested that to best promote learning, students should be engaged and involved in the learning. Based upon this premise, it is recommended that educators increase their use of active learning strategies such as the performance of specific tasks, cooperative

learning, and group projects. Providing opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and teaching them how to 'self-assess' are also vital methods in fostering engagement. Respecting the diversity in educational environments includes the recognition of the diverse talents and ways of learning that students bring to the classroom and responding by including diverse teaching and assessment strategies.

In UNIV 1003, many of our course components are included to reward behaviours. Although each class is slightly different, all classes include specific assessments to evaluate students when they behave in particular ways. Some of these activities focus on the social aspects of university (i.e., attending a variety of social events on campus) and some encourage behaviours that are known to be related to academic success (i.e., visiting and using the library). Other assessments are used to help the students develop good writing habits, and still others focus on campus projects. The following sections outline five ways in which assessment encourages particular behaviours all of which are geared toward helping them act like successful students.

UNIV 1003: Campus and Classroom Activities

Although our first year population is quite diverse and includes traditional, non-traditional, and international students, UNB Saint John is a commuter campus and approximately 85% of our students live off campus. Our students typically come to university to attend their classes and, often, are not on campus when they are not in class. Wilcox et al. (2005) suggested that students who live off-campus often do not form strong social networks with their fellow students and often need assistance to make new social connections. The assessment practises in our first year course attempt to help our students develop these kinds of social connections. From orientation on, UNB Saint John faces a challenge connecting students to the campus. Unlike many residential campuses where first year students see their university as their new home away from home, UNB Saint John is likely to be perceived by our students as one of several places which could meet their affective needs. Finding ways to help students connect with each other, academically and socially, thus becomes important. In UNIV 1003, grades associated with campus activity involvement and class attendance reward behaviours, which strengthen social bonds.

One of the keys to being successful at university is for students to become in involved in activities they enjoy (Astin, 1978; 1993). UNIV 1003 rewards students for exploring various campus activities. Students are asked to attend five campus activities in the term, of which only two events can be similar. After attending the event, they submit a half page typed review of it. The review includes a brief overview of the event, answering the five W's, as well as a reflection by the students on how they felt about the experience. For example, one of my students described an ice cream party in her residence and noted that the break was a great relief from the stress of studying. Another student wrote enthusiastically about a Halloween horror film

festival which provided a chance to both socialize and scream. Students receive one mark for each event attended and summarized, for a total of 5%.

A second occasion that allows us to reward social behaviour is the quotation of the day exercise. Some days, at the beginning of class, students consider a quotation that is related to the material we are covering in class that day. They each take a few minutes to respond to the quotation in writing on a cue card that we provide. The response could take many forms. Students might want to agree or disagree with the author and give reasons for this stance. They might choose to relate the quotation to their education or other aspect of their life. Students might have a question they would like to ask the author, or their response could take a completely different form. Students then discuss the quotation in small groups and report back to the whole class. The students begin to share their ideas and responses in a non-threatening and non-judgmental forum which gives them a chance to get to know their fellow students in a new light. We always collect the responses from the students after the discussion.

There are three curricular reasons for the quotation of the day. First, we believe one method to improve as a writer is to write often in many different forms, both formal and informal. Secondly, responding to an author's work is excellent practice in critical thinking. Finally, the quotation operates as a schema activator. It engages the students' brains in considering the topics to be examined in class that day. We have a fourth reason for using this activity. After we collect the cards, we have a record of who was present in class that day. Students who attend class regularly are rewarded since they respond to more quotations than students who are routinely absent. Quotations of the Day are worth 10% in some course sections.

UNIV 1003 and the Library

Besides using UNIV 1003 as a kind of social engineering project, we have also structured the course to help our students build a deep connection to the academic institutions on campus: particularly the library/ learning commons. Recently, there has been shift from the traditional library to learning commons model, in which multiple services (i.e., writing, counselling, and employment centres) are integrated to provide a central resource to meet student needs. Moore and Wells (2009) found that students had high expectations of the Commons and liked the central availability of different resources but also wanted quiet study spaces and access to reference librarians. The learning commons provides students with the opportunity for out-of-class interactions with faculty and staff, provides social space, and serves as a central location for many student services (i.e., math centre, writing centre, computer support). By providing out-of-class interactions with faculty and staff, space for students to socialize, and answers to questions about campus technology and bureaucracy, academic libraries and information commons are contributing to student persistence in ways that may not be explicit in their missions.

More and more researchers recognize the importance of "the other curriculum" (Kuh, 1995) that focuses on the importance of informal faculty contact. As such, in addition to their course instructors, each UNIV 1003 class has a Class Librarian who visits each week during the first half of the term. The visits from the library encourage student research and are meant to teach students how to access specific resources that they will need in their classes. Being able to connect a name and a face may decrease some stress associated with going to the library to get specific information. This increased familiarity and support of the learning commons model, has been found to contribute to student persistence (Grallo, Chalmers, and Baker, 2012).

For our first year students libraries can be intimidating places. Few of our first year students come from a high school with anything resembling a reasonable library, not many of them make use of the public libraries, and very few of them have ever accessed scholarly electronic research resources. Indeed, since Mellon (1986) coined the term "library anxiety", librarians have been designing programs and activities to help students become familiar with library resources while helping them overcome the feeling that their they should be embarrassed about their inadequate library skills (Atlas, Wallace, & Van Fleet, 2005). In an effort to familiarize students with the library in a gradual and systematic way, librarians visit each section of UNIV 1003 six times over the course of the semester. The goal of these visits is to help the students learn the essential research skills they need to complete their assignments in both UNIV 1003 (such as the research paper) and their other courses. We believe that people need strong research and critical thinking skills to succeed not only academically but also in their careers and in their everyday lives. This is why we place a strong emphasis on acquiring these skills in UNIV 1003.

One of the six times the librarian visits, he or she gives students a tour of the library. Four of the visits consist of brief (approximately 15-minute) instruction sessions that introduce the students to the following research skills: using reference sources, searching for books, finding journal articles, and evaluating the credibility of various information sources, including web pages. For the final visit, students are given an entire 50-minute class session to conduct research in the library for their major essay project and to discuss their research strategies individually with the librarian.

Students are given an assignment after each of the four instruction sessions to help them apply the skills they learn. For example, after the session that teaches them why and how to use reference sources, the students are required to find information in a reference source on a topic that interests them. The students must print or photocopy the first page of the reference entry they find and give it to the librarian the next time he or she visits the class to get credit for the assignment. The students have at least one week to complete each assignment.

Students who correctly complete all four assignments and attend the final research session receive five points (for a total 5%) towards their UNIV 1003 final grade. Students who complete some, but not all, of the library assignments receive no credit for their work. In previous years, students were not required to complete all of the assignments to get credit.

Instead, they could earn one point for each assignment they completed. However, when each assignment was worth only one percent we found that many students chose not to do all of them, probably because they felt that losing a couple of points for a couple of missed assignments would not significantly affect their grade. We changed to the all-or-nothing approach because we believe it is very important for the students to practice all of the research skills they learn. Students who do assignments incorrectly are given the opportunity to keep doing them until they get them right and are encouraged to see the librarian if they need help. We want the students to know that the goal of the assignments is to help them acquire the skills they need and that we are happy to reward them if they do the work to acquire the skills.

Usually when librarians visit courses to talk about research they make one 50-minute visit to the class rather multiple short visits as they do for UNIV 1003. Breaking the instruction up into several short visits helps the students focus on learning each specific skill and the assignments get the students to practice at a pace that helps them remember the skills more easily. Seeing and interacting with the librarian on several different occasions can also help the students feel more comfortable with the librarians and with the idea of asking for help. UNIV 1003 provides an excellent opportunity for students both to get to know their librarians and to acquire essential research skills.

UNIV 1003 Assessment and the Writing Process

UNIV 1003 helps students connect to their campus, social, and library communities, but it also helps them develop the specific academic skills they will need to succeed as undergraduate students. Guided by the maxim that the best way to learn how to do something is to actually do it, the team designing UNIV 1003 decided to help our students develop their skills as writers and researchers by having them write a research paper. Our goal is to have them develop their skills, not to reach a specific benchmark of expertise. Writing is a skill which reflects an individual's deeply embedded use of language and it's impossible to make everyone an excellent writer in three months. It is, however, possible to help someone become a more self-aware writer in that period. So we hope that each of our students becomes more mindful of their unique strengths and knowledgeable about how to correct their weaknesses.

We believe that if a student knows something real and significant about an issue they care about, they will be able to write about it. With this in mind, we designed a series of five small assignments which culminate in a final major assignment, a six page research paper anchored in whatever discipline interests the student. The small assignments we have them complete, on average every two weeks, are designed to help them find and dig into a topic that is important to them. The first assignment asks the students to describe what they want to get out of their university experience and the second assignment asks them to narrow this and identify the issue they would like to explore in a major paper. As they narrow their focus they will, by the third assignment, identify what they would like to explore about the issue which concerns them; in short a thesis statement is beginning to appear. As an aside, it is worth noting that each of these three assignments is submitted in a different way – by email

attachment, as a printed hardcopy, and using a course management system (Desire2Learn) dropbox –so that students become familiar with each system they might be asked to use in future years. At the same time as they are defining their thesis, their research is getting underway. They begin by doing some general research using the reference materials they have been trained to use by the librarians. Once they have a thesis to focus on, they begin to research in a more specific way. In the middle of October all students go to the library for a research trip and there they work closely with their librarian and consult at least four scholarly resources, including at least one book and one peer-reviewed journal article. The fourth assignment thus includes a brief account of how they completed their research, the people they consulted, and the ways they accessed their material. Then, in four paragraphs, they summarize the key ideas of each of their scholarly sources. With the early short assignments we check for stylistic competence and clarity. With the exceptions of major issues, if they complete the early assignment they are rewarded with two marks. As the small writing assignments continue we begin to more rigorously grade the written work on clarity and grammatical correctness.

By the end of October our students have completed some research and are ready to begin writing the paper. By leading our students through these successive assignments (worth a total of 10%), we reinforce one of the most important principles of writing: Don't leave it to the last minute! Three weeks after their research trip to the library, students come to class with polished papers, join in the peer-review process, collect their annotated papers by the end of class, and then they have three to five days to further revise their work. The peer review process is important because it not only gives each student some initial feedback on their own work, but it helps them start to appreciate the different levels of writing which occur in first year, and may even help them gain some sense of how their own work compares to that of their peers (Paton, 2002). Final copies are submitted (with the peer-reviewed version attached) at the beginning of the next class. The final writing assignment in UNIV 1003 is straightforward – they must write a self-assessment; a single full paragraph in which they develop a detailed self-assessment reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of their research paper and then they conclude with a plan as to how they will strengthen and improve any areas of concern they have identified.

Writing is not a mysterious or mystical process. It is a discipline, a practice, a skill we work at, and in this course we have isolated some of the key parts of the writing process to help make our students more self-aware about the work they will be doing as their degrees unfolds.

UNIV 1003 and Service Learning

A final key component of UNIV 1003 is a class project, worth 15% of each student's final grade. Service-learning is thought to connect classroom learning with real-world experiences (Shapiro, 2002) and connect students with the larger community (both on and off campus). Research indicates that students who are connected to the university communities are more successful academically and are also happier with their university experience. Waterman (1997) outlined four key components of successful service learning experiences: (1) active participation; (2)

integration of service learning to the academic curriculum, including time for reflection, (3) opportunity to use their skills in real-life situations; and, (4) extension of learning outside of the classroom. When we were developing the course we decided to include a service learning component. The service learning project begins at the start of the term and requires each course section to design, manage, and implement a manageable project. One of the last activities in the term is the presentation of projects to the larger university community (other sections of UNIV 1003 and members of the larger campus community). As such, the project incorporates aspects of assessing performance and rewarding behaviours.

Increasingly, universities have included more and more group work into class curricula. In the Faculty of Business Administration, for example, it is not uncommon to assign 50% of the class grade to team projects. The motivation to use class projects is twofold: to give students a project that is larger and more in-depth than might be possible from an individual assignment, and to help students develop important adult skills—"working with others in an organized and cooperative process." Therefore, when UNIV 1003 was developed, group work was felt to be an essential part of the program of study.

The original designers of UNIV 1003 wanted to combine the group work exercises with a specific focus — the students' community. At one level, this "community" was the immediate and new surroundings of the campus itself. At another level, especially for those who came to our campus from beyond the local region, the community also included the city and surrounding areas. Therefore, reinforcing their new "home" through active projects in this new "community" helps create a stronger sense of belonging. In the three years we have been offering UNIV 1003, we have approached this aspect of the coursework slightly differently. Our first year developing the course, students were given free rein to choose projects on any topic of interest — from the local campus to the broader community. They chose to create projects that supported everything from local food banks to international school building programs. While we felt this produced an important level of engagement, we also noted that the student's attention was rather scattered and fragmented. In our second year, we became more directive as we decided to bring the focus back to the campus. A single project was chosen: to improve the natural wooded walking trails that surround our campus on the Kennebecasis River. The trails were, at that time, generally unknown, poorly marked, and non-maintained. While this narrow focus kept our students' attention close to home, it did limit their enthusiasm for the work. For this, our third year, we have returned to a broader definition of community, "guiding the students" to consider topics, but encouraging them to discover a community project for themselves. As you might imagine, for students unfamiliar with each other, the campus, and for many, new to the community, this was not an easy task.
One technique we used this year, was to have the students reflect on their first few weeks at university, considering all the new experiences, the new setting, and identifying their "pain points".

Maybe you have heard this language used: it is common in business education, specifically in entrepreneurial education. When we talk to entrepreneurs with new business ideas, a key question is always, "What pain point are you solving?" A pain point, then, is a

problem, real or perceived, but one that entrepreneurs use to create opportunities for themselves by creating solutions to those pain points. And ultimately, these solutions create value for everyone.

The result was that when we asked our first year students to reflect on their first two weeks of university, and identify their "pain points", we were able to create a significant list in very little time. And many of these are the usual suspects that every university faces: parking problems, getting online or connected to the campus wireless, understanding how to use our eServices. Yet, as successful as the "pain points" exercise was in generating real, deeply felt problems, translating these into one or more team projects is not trivial. It not only requires a group interest and passion, but also an awareness or belief that their work can make a difference. To help their fellow students, our classes completed a variety of activities including developing a workshop on finances, a one-hour session to help students de-stress, an information session on nutrition, and a physical fitness activity to encourage student health. While the success of these projects varied, the students learned a great deal about the campus, its organization, and its administration as they tried to affect positive change. The students' marks on the group projects were determined by their level of engagement and participation, as documented through activity diaries and/or peer-assessments.

UNIV 1003: Student Performance after UNIV 1003

Having created a first year experience course with a number of traditional and non-traditional activities, and having matched the methods of assessments with the kinds of outcomes we want to encourage, we have been very interested in tracing what impact the course might have. This preliminary evaluation of UNIV 1003 used three different methods to determine the success of the course in preparing students to succeed at university. The first compared fall and winter GPA while controlling for the make- up of the groups. This analysis showed a small advantage for the students who took UNIV 1003. It should be noted that even though there was a small advantage the percentage of students for whom GPA's were available was considerably larger for students who took UNIV 1003 than those that did not. If the weaker students for non- UNIV 1003 did not return in the second term then one would expect that the mean GPA for non UNIV 1003 students would have been lower. The second analysis compared the percentage of students who would have been placed on probation for UNIV 1003 and non-UNIV 1003 students. The analysis showed a smaller percentage of regular Canadian students who took UNIV 1003 would have been placed on probation. The largest difference occurred in the fall term. The third analysis used linear regression to statistically control high school grades in predicting GPA. This analysis showed a distinct advantage for students who took UNIV 1003 in both the fall and winter terms. Over a set of high school admission grades ranging from 60% to 100% the advantage is about .3 GPA. In terms of GPA, one would have to conclude that UNIV 1003 is successful. A final measure of the success of the course is to consider retention. All students who took UNIV 1003 had a GPA for the second term and thus 100% of domestic students enrolled in fall section of UNIV 1003 returned for the winter term. For Canadian students who did not take UNIV 1003, enrollment dropped from 502 in the fall term to 436 in

the winter term. This suggests a retention rate of 87%. However, there were only 361 non UNIV 1003 students who had a GPA for both terms thus suggesting an even lower retention rate of 72%. Thus the UNIV 1003 course may lead to higher retention rates.

Across all the relevant measures, UNIV 1003 appears to be helping students flourish in their first year. At a time when they can be most stressed and most vulnerable, the course helps them find some of the keys which are leading to their success. The flexible course design and varying methods of assessment play a major role in helping create these positive outcomes. While we will continue to experiment with the course in order to improve the outcomes, we have determined that the individual parts are functioning effectively, and, indeed, some of these active strategies may be transferable to some of the other first year courses elsewhere in the university.

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USING ASSESSMENT TO CREATE 'LEARNABLE' MOMENTS: PAIRING FORMATIVE FEEDBACK WITH CORRECTIVE ACTION & REFLECTION

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Abstract

Feedback failure is a concern shared by many higher education instructors who report that they are unhappy with their assessment ROI (return on investment). They are devoting more and more hours each week to evaluating students' work and giving them feedback without a corresponding improvement in their progress. Research suggests that feedback which is not perceived as "helpful" (10) by students may actually inhibit their progress by adding an additional layer of frustration to their learning experiences. Judging the quality of students' work in a summative way and giving feedback at the same time results in the feedback being "backward looking." Because it arrives too late to affect the learning outcome, students tend to discount its value or even ignore it altogether (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004-5, 25). During this workshop, participants explored two ways to ensure that their feedback adds value to students' learning by: (1) developing action-oriented rubrics using John Hattie's three-question model (Hattie, 2009) and then (2) following up with guided, small group practice in their presence.

The presentation slides (with text) and full bibliography are available for downloading at http://goo.gl/W6ZZ1c and http://goo.gl/468Zvp respectively.

I.

In higher education, assessment seems to be something of an instructional black hole, 'sucking in' huge amounts of instructors' time, energy, and concern with little light in the form of improved student success escaping back into the learning environment. In 2004-5, Graham Gibbs and Claire Simpson conducted an extensive literature review to determine the value of assessment as it is commonly carried out in higher education. They found that that it is "enormously expensive [in terms of time and dollars invested], disliked by both teachers and students, and largely ineffective in supporting learning" (11). Despite that, assessment "has long been recognized as the single most influential factor in shaping what and how students in higher education choose to learn," swamping the effects of even the most innovative and engaging aspects of curriculum (Fostaty Young, 2005, 1-2).

If the amount and frequency of feedback are the assessment elements which most contribute to improved learner success, then UNBF students should be making good gains as a result of our instructors' efforts. Just under 50% of our faculty who teach at least one undergraduate course spend from 5 to 20 hours grading papers and exams in a typical week. Close to 40% devote from 5 to 30 hours or more to providing other forms of written and oral feedback (FSSE Pilot, 2011). The majority of our students acknowledge that they are receiving feedback that is prompt (96% of first years and 98% of fourth years), detailed (89%, 95%), or formative (80%, 90%) (NSSE, 2012). Despite all this, it is not uncommon for UNBF instructors to say that their assessment ROI is exasperatingly low.

Clearly, then, there must other factors at work here -- shortcomings which additional hours, a faster turnaround time, and more detailed comments on more frequent assignments will not remedy. During this workshop two issues were explored: (a) the extent to which students perceive feedback as "helpful" (Gibbs and Simpson, 10) and (b) the lack of instructor follow-up which permits feedback to be ignored with impunity (25). The big question I wanted participants to consider was whether students are not acting on the feedback they receive because they don't care or because they don't know how.

II.

Students crave guidance, but lacking what they perceive as clear direction, they "will work out for themselves … what they think counts" (Gibbs and Simpson, 10). Unfortunately, they don't always get it right. There is a growing body of research revealing that students and instructors, often and unbeknownst to each other, have significantly different conceptions of fundamental academic success tasks. For instance, they commonly do not define 'participation' or 'active learning' in the same way (Fritschner, 2000) and may vary widely in their perception of what becoming 'knowledgeable' means (Gibbs and Simpson, 23-4). In his paper entitled *Seeing Eye to Eye?*, Huang states that when assessing undergrad and graduate students' competence in academic writing, teachers and learners generally agree on what skills are important but are far apart on whether and how much improvement is required. While the students surveyed for this study mostly believed their writing skills to be satisfactory, their instructors identified at least nine areas of serious deficiency (Huang, 2010).

This pattern of mismatch carries over into assessment as well. In the MacLellan study cited by Gibbs and Simpson, although most students reported that feedback only seldom helped them to understand, most instructors reported that they thought it frequently did. Half of the students said that feedback did not prompt discussion; nearly two-thirds of instructors believed the contrary (10). Giving helpful feedback has a greater impact on learners than

anything else that higher education teachers do, but what 'helpful' means differs significantly depending on which side of the podium one finds oneself (Gibbs and Simpson, 10).

Instructors know what makes for strong work, but if feedback does not communicate that to students in ways *they* find helpful, it adds little value to their learning. This problem may arise because the criteria instructors have in mind are not always explicit even to themselves (Wolf and Stevens, 2007, 4) or because the feedback may not sufficiently deconstruct an instructor's "sophisticated level of knowledge and understanding" (Gibbs and Simpson, 22). "Many academic tasks make little sense to students" (21), so feedback that does not clarify for them what is expected, where they went wrong, and how to fix it may have the unintended negative consequence of training learners to discount its value or ignore it altogether (22-3).

Rubrics, an assessment tool with the potential to deliver action-oriented feedback, tend not to be widely used in higher education. I'd assumed this was because writing student-friendly criteria can be a very challenging and time-intensive, but Reddy and Andrade (2010) suggest another reason in their review of rubric use in higher education. Compared to students, instructors view rubrics as having quite a narrow purpose, making this assessment tool yet another example of the teacher/student perception mismatch mentioned earlier. Students rely on rubrics as roadmaps for "learning and achievement" (439). Instructors, on the other hand, employ them primarily to ensure more quick, objective, consistent, and accurate evaluation (439) or to "reduce arguments with students" (University of Illinois, 2012). This observation from Reddy and Andrade sheds some light on why many higher ed. rubrics do not appear to be written with the learners' needs in mind. They aren't.

III.

Before moving to a more learner-centric form of rubric writing, it is first helpful to understand the difference between 'evaluation' and 'assessment'. Interestingly, when I asked the workshop participants what, if any, distinction they make between these terms, most said they use them interchangeably. A few suggested that 'evaluation' involves giving some sort of feedback whereas 'assessment' refers to the instrument such as a quiz or test used to collect information on student progress. According to Penn State's Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence (2004-5), the definition of assessment is: "using information to improve learning." If what instructors do when marking and giving feedback does not enhance learner success, then they are engaging in evaluation but not in assessment.

As participants in this workshop discovered when asked to look at rubric samples from the learners' point of view, 'unhelpful' feedback comes in the form of:

- repetitive language and empty comments which do not sufficiently differentiate one performance level from the next,
- reliance on words which make sense to academic experts but not to novice learners,
- negatively framed descriptors which say only what was not present or not done, and
- comments which may be meant constructively but nevertheless carry the sting of disparaging criticism.

Such rubrics are antithetical to the goal of assessment. By compounding students' frustrations and anxieties, they put very real roadblocks in the way of improved performance.

How can rubrics be redesigned to become drivers of improved student success? John Hattie, a New Zealand researcher on a life-long quest to the determine which teaching practices have the greatest effect on student achievement, has conducted a meta-analysis of more than 50 thousand studies involving more than 240 million students. He says learners should be able to use rubrics to answer three questions (Hattie, 2009).

(1) Where am I going?	Learners can see from the outset what they need to know and be able to do in order to progress from novice to expert.
(2) How am I doing?	They find out as they are going along what they are doing well on each dimension of the developmental continuum.
(3) Where to next?	This points the way for improvement or extension by the student and additional follow-up by the instructor.

However, providing better rubrics may still not be enough to generate the desired outcomes. Learning requires *significantly* changing brain structures (Wieman, 2011). All knowledge is encoded in neural networks in the brain (Zull, 2012). For new learning to occur, existing brain cells, known as neurons, in which prior learning is embodied must grow new branches and literally reach out to connect with each other (Zull, 2012). Repeated use of new learning makes it more accessible and durable by causing networks that fire together to become wired together ("Hebbian Theory," 2013) into enhanced and strengthened pathways (Pliny-the-in-Between, 2011). If pre-existing learning is incorrect or ineffective, connections in that neural circuitry must be intentionally and decisively 'pruned' in order for it to be permanently let go.

In the context of a course, closing the learning gap that lies between what students bring with them on the first day of class and what they need to know and be able to do by the last requires a lot more than just adding or deleting bits of knowledge (Wieman, 2011). Some course goals and objectives students will be able to accomplish without little or no assistance. The rest fall into what is known as the 'zone of proximal development' (bcb704, 2012) or ZPD which varies across individuals and topics. What the learning outcomes in the ZPD have in

common is that they cannot be mastered independently. For successful acquisition of these skills and concepts, students require 'scaffolding' -- instructor or peer guidance which shapes and buttresses learning and moves it forward (Wood, D, et al, 1976). Scaffolding may seem like handholding at first, but as supports are gradually but relentlessly withdrawn, the range of tasks the learner can manage correctly and without help increases.

According to Gibbs and Simpson, instructor follow-up checks and corrective activities are as important to the assessment process as providing feedback. The more generic and forward-looking such tasks are, the more transferable the learning will be (25). The 'practice in your presence' strategy experienced by participants during this workshop can be used engage students in actively addressing their deficits and consolidating their learning (12) in class where the instructor and their peers can nudge them in the right direction if they become stuck or mistakes become apparent.

In the case of improving a piece of work, for example, students might collaborate in small groups for fifteen or twenty minutes to revise a test answer or other short assignment. Their goal would be to produce one new response by blending the best of their individual attempts, incorporating the feedback they had received, and referring to exemplars provided in the course resources. An opportunity to boost the original grade could be offered as an incentive to participate. To qualify, the group rewrite would have to address all individuals' deficiencies, and each student would also submit an individual reflection about how this was accomplished. Students who did not maintain their improvements in the next similar task would be flagged for additional corrective follow-up.

Using this kind of strategy in class makes it easier for students learn from the feedback they receive and more difficult for them to ignore its importance (25). As well, working with peers has documented benefits for learners (Crouch and Mazur, 2001). Having students create one revision as a group can encourage them to draw on their individual strengths, as confirmed by the assessment information received in their rubrics, in order to help each other across their respective ZPDs. Thus, the process does not stall if the instructor cannot get to everyone, and it is possible to overhear enough of the general wayfinding and sensemaking to find out if one's feedback was well received, helpful, and action-oriented (Hattie, 2009).

IV.

Evaluating students and giving them feedback at the same time is referred to as assessment *of* learning. A summative judgment about the quality of students' work or learning is delivered, and the feedback, arriving after the final grade has been determined, is too late to

motivate them to make the hoped-for changes (Gibbs and Simpson, 25). Assessment *for* learning, on the other hand, extends an instructor's ability to shape learning by giving students experiences designed to help them cross their zones of proximal development. When students' brains receive the active, corrective practice needed to grow highly branched and connected neural networks, the quality and durability of their learning improves. Using strategies such as pairing action-oriented feedback with guided practice in in class can also foster a rapprochement of sorts between instructor and students. Students are not left to their own devices to figure out what their next steps should be. Instructors are able to see the impact of their feedback first hand. Creating opportunities for each 'side' to see the learning experience through the other's eyes is one way to begin resolving the perception mismatches that frustrate both good teaching and good learning.

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DECEPTION DETECTION: USING TECHNOLOGY TO TEACH CREDIBILITY ASSESSMENT IN EVIDENCE LAW

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Abstract

One of the greatest challenges in legal education is teaching practical skills that carry over from the classroom to the courtroom. In the field of Evidence law, one of the key areas students must grapple with is how to determine when someone is telling the truth. Various social science studies have shown that lawyers and judges are generally no better than chance at determining whether someone is telling the truth or not. In order to introduce students to the complex area of credibility assessment, we have created a teaching module using videos in conjunction with a web-based student response system designed to accomplish two goals: 1) to introduce credibility assessment techniques and 2) to evaluate the learning experience and outcomes.

The web-based student response system allowed us to use multimedia presentations to teach the students deception detection techniques. Additionally, we evaluated the learning outcomes by utilizing the same technology. The substance of the lecture was an evidence law topic; however, the assessment techniques should appeal to a broad target audience as the method can be applied to various subject areas.

INTRODUCTION

University legal education is generally poor at training students in key skill areas such as credibility assessment. Law professors and course curriculum generally focus on substantive law content to the exclusion of practical skills, training and experiential learning. The legal profession, however, relies heavily on credibility assessment in day-to-day practice. Students are increasingly aware of this and demand that their education include practical skills training. Credibility assessment is an area in which few professions engage, with fewer still being taught using rigorous scientific principles and research (King & Dunn, 2009). In order to introduce law students to the complex area of credibility assessment, we created a teaching module to accomplish two goals: 1) teach students how to improve their credibility assessment abilities and 2) to evaluate these learning outcomes. We used a web-based application (InfuseLearning.com) that enabled us to design and introduce training exercises. The application also permitted us to measure the efficacy of these exercises.
This paper examines the use of micro-expression recognition training as part of credibility training in law along with the use of electronic data gathering techniques. Numerous studies have shown that the average person is no better than chance at detection deception, which has

been shown to be the same for career lawyers and judges (Porter & ten Brinke, 2009). This is largely due to subjective misconceptions surrounding deceptive behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

The experiment employed a hypothetical–deductive approach building upon previous micro-expression research (Ekman, 2006; Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Where previous research has utilized still images to provide micro-expression training the current experiment utilized high definition videos. This led to a hypothesis that the initial training would yield lower scores than traditional micro-expression training due to the full emotional portrayal being present in opposition to traditional methods which utilise only the highest intensity of the emotion. The seven universal facial expressions were chosen for use in this experiment. These expressions are anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sorrow, and surprise.

Fourteen individuals expressing these emotions were filmed using high definition cameras recording at 720p at 60 frames per second from three different angles on the z-axis. These angles were 0 degrees, 45 degrees and 90 degrees. The top four performers were selected for use in the experiment, in accordance with compliance to the criteria set out in the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) for these expressions (Ekman & Friesen, 2002). The other videos were not used as they deviated drastically from the required criteria set out in the FACS. The videos were then edited to show each emotion for 200 milliseconds. Five seconds prior to and following the emotional display an emotionally neutral face was displayed. Through the editing process we created a video in which the emotional display from low to high intensity and reverting back to low was shown in equal portions.

Data for the experiment was collected through InfuseLearning, a web- based student response system.

MICRO-EXPRESSION TRAINING

The resulting 42 videos were shown to the class in three separate instances. The first was a pre-test of the student's ability to accurately recognize emotions when shown for 200 milliseconds. Each emotion was shown twice from each angle. These videos included two individuals. One individual was shown in 41 of the 42 videos while the second individual was shown for 1 of the 42 videos. This was due to data loss during the video recording process. Both individuals were male.

This was followed by an hour and 45 minutes of instruction over two classes where the participants were shown regular speed and slow motion videos of these emotions being portrayed from the three angles. The slow motion videos were each 10 seconds in length and showed the same emotional portrayals as were used in the pre-test. The two males from the pre-test and one female were used in these videos. Special consideration and side by side analysis of anger in comparison to disgust, and surprise in comparison to fear were provided

given the extreme similarities of these emotions. In total, 54 videos were used in the instruction along with 14 still images to provide an introduction to the coding requirements of each emotion from the 0 and 90 degree angles.

Finally, the class was provided the post-test where they were tested on their ability properly recognize these emotions when shown for 200 milliseconds. Forty-two videos were shown with each emotion being shown twice from each angle. One individual was used for the post-test videos. This individual was female. In total, videos of two males and two females were used. Four different ethnicities were present. One male was African-American, with the other male being Caucasian. One female was Latina and the other female was Asian. All individuals were between 21 and 32 years of age.

DATA GATHERING

We used a student response system to gather data. InfuseLearning (infuselearning.com) allows educators to create a variety of question based tests ranging from multiple choose, short answer to true/false questions. We selected this service because it allowed us to create multiple choice questions with more than five potential answers (there are several possible answers to our testing). Many other student response systems limit responses to five options. Students were able to access the student response system on a variety of electronic devices including tablets, laptops and smartphones.

To access the test, students logged in to a predefined online classroom and entered a common access code. Once the instructor started the program, the students were able to start answering questions. The numbered videos were shown and the students answered the corresponding questions by entering the emotion they believed they had observed in the video. Students were able to select from the seven universal emotions for each question listed in alphabetical order.

InfuseLearning provided the live results to the instructors as the students answered questions. It also provided a downloadable Excel spreadsheet that contained the final results.

RESULTS

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Micro-expression training

In total, 42 students participated in the experiment. Thirty-two (32) results were deemed usable for data analysis. Data from 10 students was excluded because two students had had previous knowledge or training on the subject. Five were excluded for answering questions only on the pre-test or post-test, and 3 more were excluded for answering only 50% or less of the questions on one of the tests. The minimum sample size to achieve statistical significance for the experiment using a T-test was 32. The sample of 32 met this criterion.

The 32 participants scored overall 44.49% on the pre-test. There were some issues with the videos used for this portion of the experiment that will be addressed later in this paper. The post-test results showed an increase in correct results to 60.83%. This is a 16.34% increase in proper identification of micro-expressions. Utilizing a T-test, the results returned a significance level of $p<.0001$.

Data Collection

In general, it was found that the process was fairly user-friendly for both the students and the instructors. In a follow-up survey, 79.85% of students reported that they found the technology easy to use. In the same survey, 21.05% of students reported that the technology could be improved.

ISSUES

Micro-expression training

A number of issues arouse from the training portion of this experiment. These were predominantly due to issues associated with video editing. Due to the sensitive nature and extreme time constraints associated with the videos, as filming occurred on August 28th, 2013 and the videos were not provided to the editor by the videographer until September 26th, 2013, two days prior to the initial testing, some videos were not properly edited. These improper edits fell into two categories, improper timings and emotional leakage. Improperly timed videos showed the emotional displays from a time frame of between 201 milliseconds and 500 milliseconds, with the properly edited videos being displayed for 200 milliseconds. This was a minor issue occurring in only 8 of the 42 pre-test videos. Emotional leakage was more predominant than timing issues, occurring in 12 of the 42 videos. Both issues were present in the Happiness and Surprise emotions. Happiness and Surprise had a vastly increased correct response on the pre-test ranging from 79% to 100%. On the post-test scores for these emotions ranged from 49% to 98%. These issues surrounding the happiness and surprise emotions on the pre-test likely affected the responses to these emotions and skewed the data. When happiness and surprise were removed from the data set, a significance value of $p <.0001$ is still maintained. These issues were noted and addressed for the post-test videos.

The second issue was the pace at which videos were shown. Each video shown in the pre-test was 10.2 seconds in length. There was no break between videos. A number of students indicated that they had a difficult time keeping up with the pace at which the videos were shown. We corrected this during the post-test by inserting a 2.5 second blank screen between each video. This alleviated the problem.

The third issue was the lack of gender and ethnic diversity within the pre-test, post-tests, and the training module. The use of only males in the pre-test and only females in the post-test may have skewed the obtained results due to gender bias. A lack of ethnic diversity in the training module may have also contributed to this, given that the fact that the individual ethnicity used in the post-test was not represented in the training module.

Data collection

While collecting data, a number of issues arose which limited some students' ability to respond to the questions. The main issue we encountered was a slow internet connection. The students were connected the wi-fi internet at the Faculty of Law. The large amount of simultaneous traffic to a singular site may have slowed the internet connection. A number of students stated that they were unable to maintain pace with the videos to respond to questions due to this problem.

Further, some smartphones were not well suited to use the InfuseLearning website. This was a problem especially for Blackberry users. They reported that they had significant difficulties in answering the questions in the allotted time due to the website's layout on their smartphones. Fortunately, there were very few students who used Blackberry smartphones. Despite a number of issues while conducting the experiment the video process for micro-expression training was successful, and the participants were, overall, easily able to utilise the technology to participate in the tests.

RESULTS

QUALITATIVE DATA

The use of the student response system technology was two-fold: 1) it allowed us to measure pre-test and post-test skill development in credibility assessment; and 2) it permitted us to evaluate the learning experience and outcomes for the classroom participants. We used InfuseLearning.com to introduce and measure the students' ability to learn credibility assessment techniques. Additionally, we employed other qualitative methods to gather data on the student experience with the students' response technology. We collected two sets of information. Immediately after the pre-test, we asked the students to email us their comments about the utility of the student response system. At the end of the study, we used a free online survey software (SurveyMonkey.com) to ask the students a number of questions about the classroom experiment, such as how we could improve the classroom experience. These results were anonymous.

Pre-test Assessment

After taking the pre-test, students were asked to voluntarily submit feedback via email. Approximately 90% of the class participated in this feedback stage. They were asked to comment on the experiential nature of the test. Specifically, we asked the students to describe and evaluate the pre-test process of watching the short videos and entering data into their tablets, smartphones, or laptops using the InfuseLearning platform. A small sample of the qualitative data, as follows, is illustrative:

> "This topic is fascinating, and what a great way to learn it!"
> "The experience of taking the pre-test was a bit intimidating: the rapid fire nature of the test imported a sense of urgency and importance to the assessment."

> "Overall, it was interesting! I think the quickness of it is best to be able to record your reaction as opposed to being able to think about it for too long."
> "A bit more instruction re: how the test was to be administered would have been nice (like how many questions, how we would answer them) although I realize this was an experiment…"
> "I found it difficult to keep up with the test on my BlackBerry. I would recommend people do the test with an iphone or a laptop so they can have a long enough screen that they don't have to scroll up and down the list to be sure what video the quiz is set to…"
> "The test was interesting, but I found it went very quickly and if your internet connection was lagging it was very easy to get behind."
> "The pace of the test gave you little time to consider what you saw…for the most part [you] had to act on instinct and your initial gut feeling."

It is beyond the scope of the present study to code the qualitative data. However, this representative sample illuminates some of the issues with using technology in the classroom. For example, some of the students found it difficult to keep up with the speed of the test. Some of this may be explained by the nature of micro-expression testing in that it relies upon capturing first reactions. This being said, however, the comments are important to consider when using student opinion response technology for other subjects. The instructions must be clearly explained to the students and one should test the internet connection to ensure that the classroom Wi-Fi connection is appropriate for the task at hand.

Post-test Assessment

A few days after the post-test, we used SurveyMonkey.com to administer a questionnaire to the students to evaluate their experience with the teaching module. The benefits of this opinion response method are that it is free to use if the survey includes less than ten questions. The website also provides a number of data sets for review, including graphs and tables. Only 19 of 42 students completed the questionnaire. This drop in participation rate from the pre-test data collection can be partially explained by the fact that the test was administered outside of classroom time. Nevertheless, we received informative data. A sample of the responses illustrates that the students were engaged in the teaching module. They offered several suggestions for future improvements (Figure 1). With respect to assessing the teaching module, the survey results were generally positive with nearly 70% agreeing that the content and organization were good (Figure 2). Nearly 80% of the students found the technology easy to use (Figure 3). Just over 60% agreed that the teaching module should be used in the future (Figure 4). Approximately 65% found the in-class experience to be good or very good (Figure 5). These figures indicate that the students generally had a positive experience with using the teaching module. And, perhaps more importantly, the students were engaged with the subject matter and its delivery in the classroom. This engagement is evidence by the number of comments elicited during the qualitative feedback surveys and the thoughtful critiques by many of the students of the method and delivery of the module.

CONCLUSION

Using student response systems in the classroom can be a rewarding process. It is clear from our results (an increase from pre-test to post-test of 16.34%) that the students' credibility assessment skills improved during the module. More importantly, the use of the student opinion system technology permitted us to capture and evaluate this increase both quantitatively and qualitatively. The students' credibility assessments skills improved significantly. And, perhaps more importantly, we were able to gauge student opinion on the efficacy of the technology and the in-class experience. Web-based learning systems such as InfuseLearning offer educators an effective means to evaluate whether the students are improving their knowledge. In our opinion, web-based systems such as InfuseLearning have benefits over other classroom response systems such as clickers. There is no cost to this web-based system and there is no hardware to distribute or collect. Additionally, the students are already familiar with the technology as it employs their own tablets, smartphones, or laptops.

Our chosen subject was credibility assessment; however, this technology can be adapted to suit other subject areas. Our results also point to the fact that students find web-based student response systems to be an effective way to teach skills, measure the efficacy of the instruction, and to gauge student satisfaction. The Evidence Law students were clearly engaged in this style of learning. Web-based student response systems give educators a means by which they can gauge the learning environment. Our findings indicate that web-based and application response technologies are a relatively simple and economical way to promote student engagement in the classroom.

Acknowledgements:

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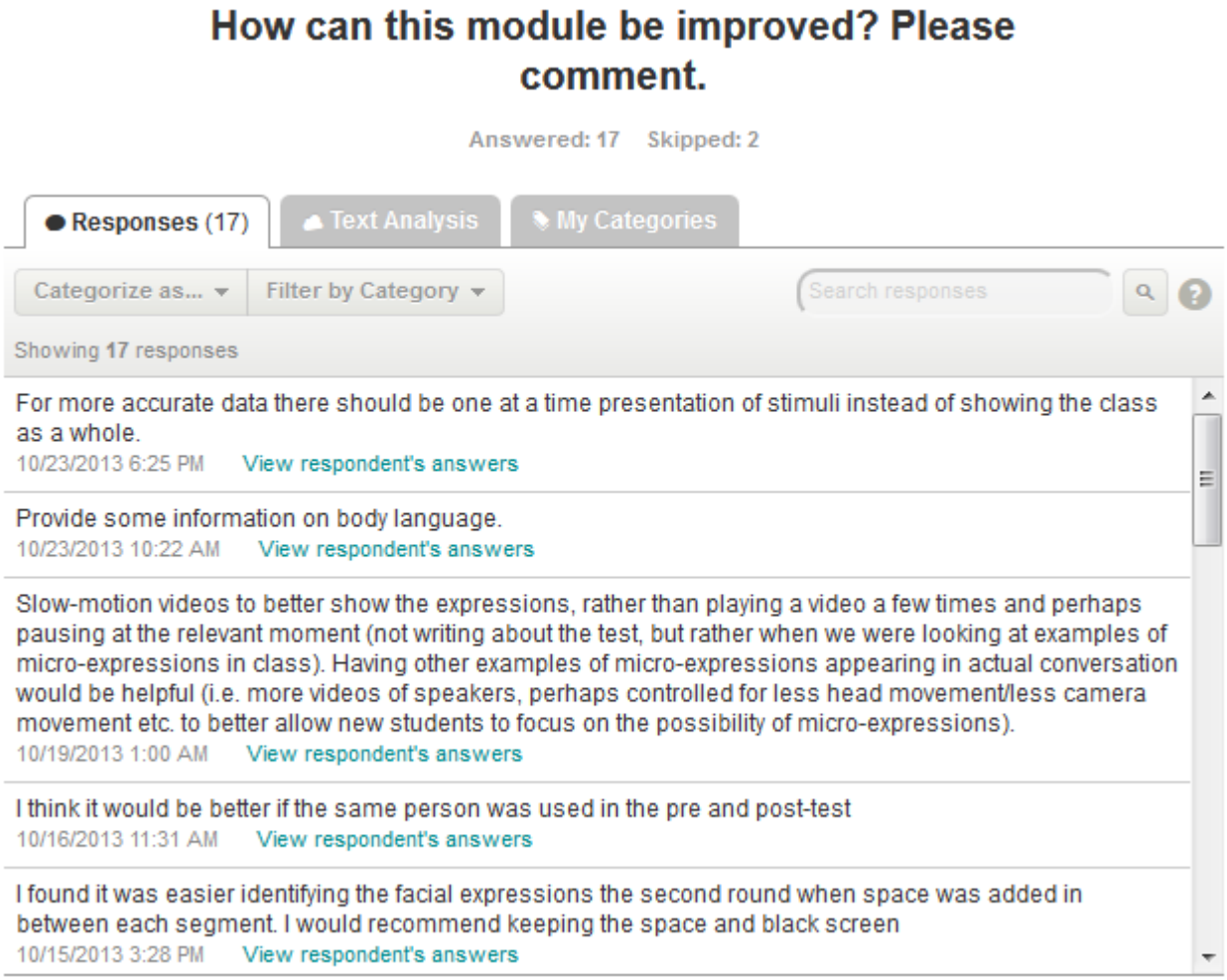
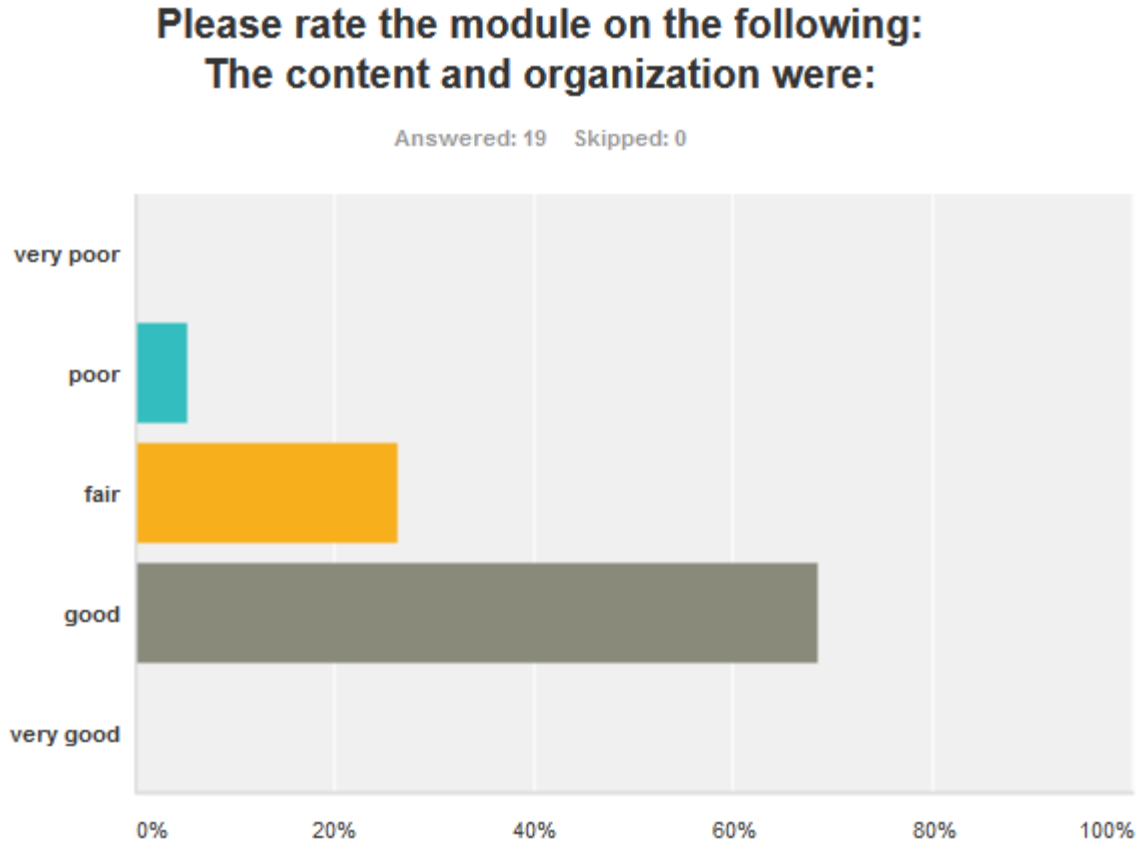
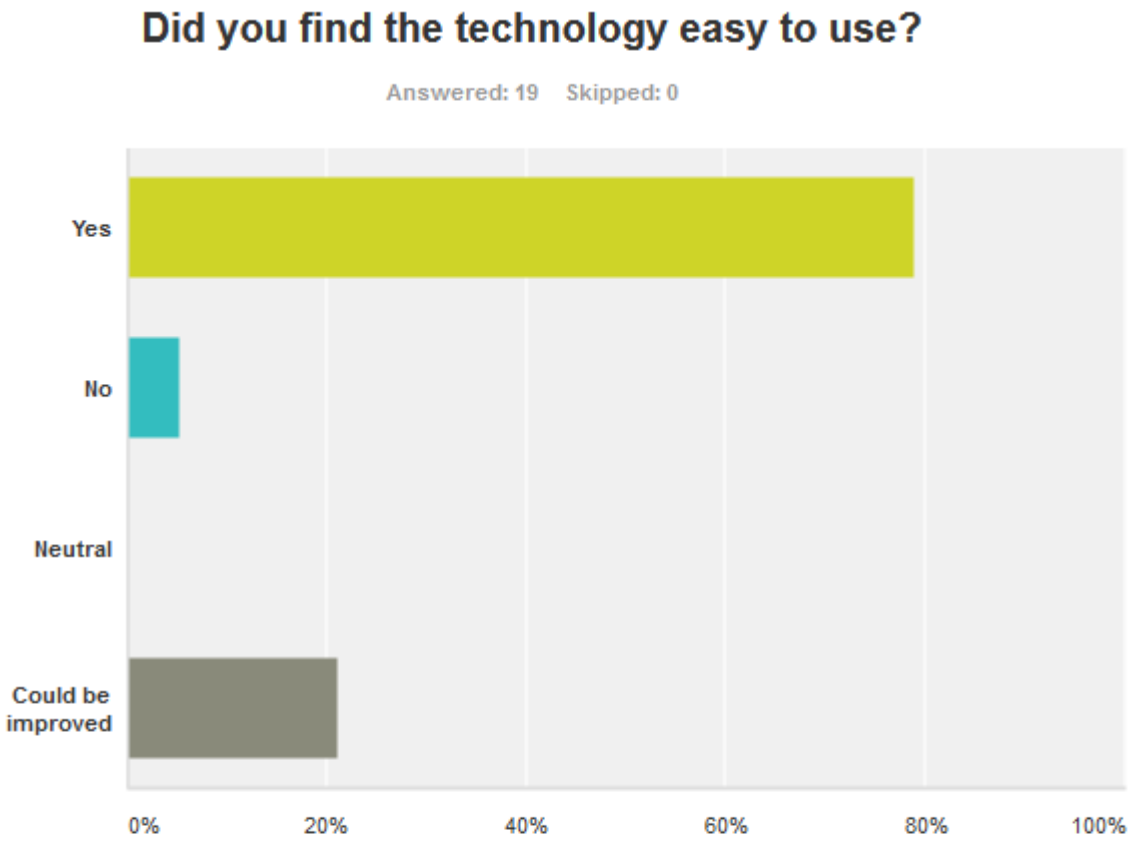


Figure 1: SurveyMonkey.com Post-test Evaluation



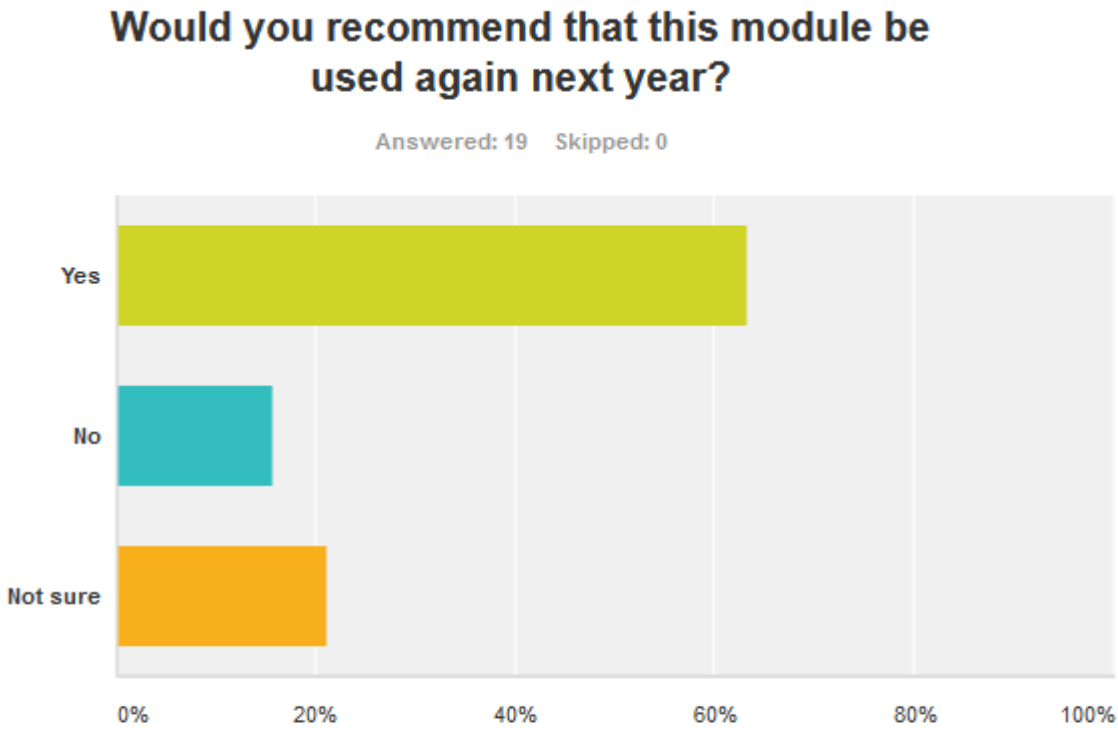
Answer Choices	Responses	
very poor	0%	0
poor	5.26%	1
fair	26.32%	5
good	68.42%	13
very good	0%	0
Total Respondents: 19		

Figure 2: SurveyMonkey.com Post-test Evaluation



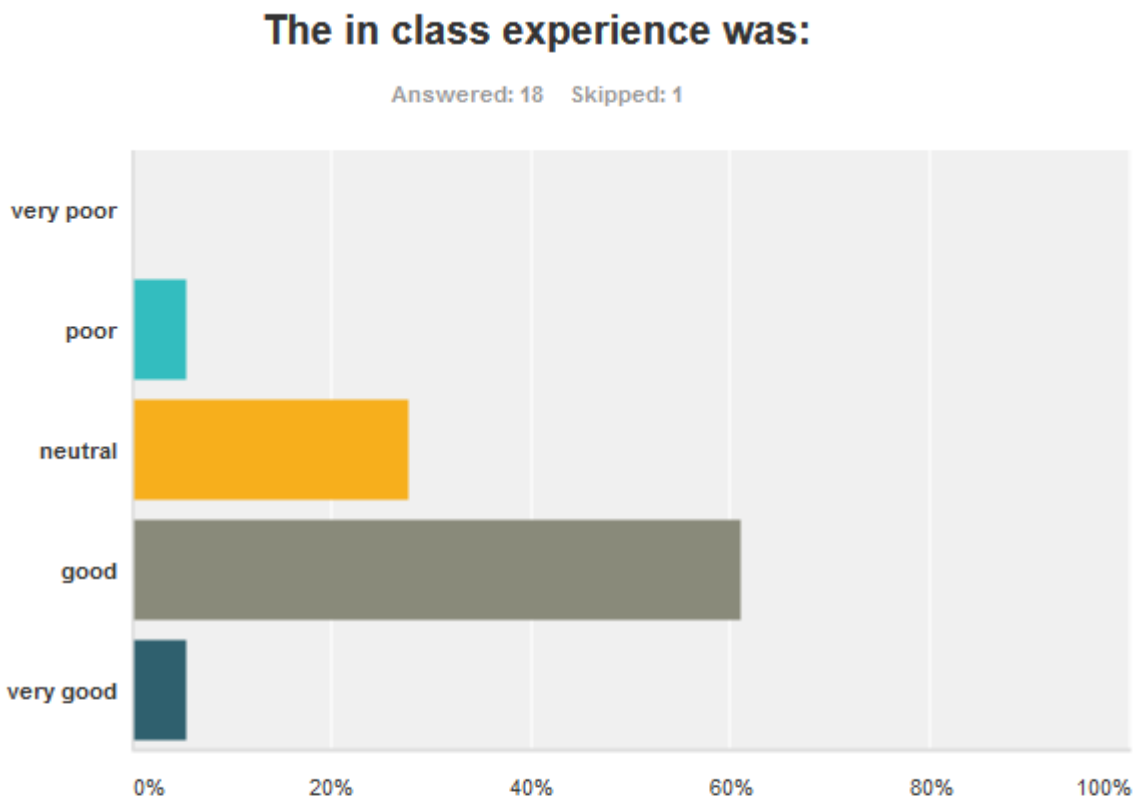
Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	78.95%	15
No	5.26%	1
Neutral	0%	0
Could be improved	21.05%	4
Total Respondents: 19		

Figure 3: SurveyMonkey.com Post-test Evaluation



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	**63.16%**	12
No	**15.79%**	3
Not sure	**21.05%**	4
Total Respondents: 19		

Figure 4: SurveyMonkey.com Post-test Evaluation



Answer Choices	Responses	
very poor	0%	0
poor	5.56%	1
neutral	27.78%	5
good	61.11%	11
very good	5.56%	1
Total Respondents: 18		

Figure 5: SurveyMonkey.com Post-test Evaluation

Law 2243 Evidence Law
Faculty of Law – Ludlow Hall
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LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE USE OF SIMULATIONS AS AN ASSESSMENT TOOL

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Abstract

Are the uses of simulations in undergraduate courses worthy assessment and learning tools? While many students may characterize lectures as dull and boring, simulations offer the opportunity for active engagement with course material in order to develop critical thinking, problem solving and group working skills and lead to higher knowledge retention and learning levels (e.g., Auman, 2011; Shellam & Turan, 2006). Students are often left with a higher interest in the subject matter and report higher course satisfaction levels. Yet such outcomes come at a price: Simulations are time consuming for both instructors and students alike; the potential for the "free rider" problem to occur is high while presenting challenges for how to incorporate technology (e.g., Wakelee & Itkonen, 2013; Rivera & Simons, 2008). This session presents lessons learned from the use of simulations as assessment and learning tools across three political science subfields: Canadian politics (a federal-provincial First Ministers meeting), international development (Global Governance) and international relations (Iranian-American Nuclear Negotiations). The focus is on what worked, what did not work, how to assess the effectiveness of simulations as a learning tool, and how to address the main challenges for future simulation use. Our experiences suggest the need to (1) clearly outline the expectations for each simulation participant and the group(s) as a whole; (2) delineate the structure and operating rules of the simulation; (3) consider the type, amount and source for information generation and provision; (4) potentially incorporate technology in each step of the simulation; (5) carefully consider time requirements and to set realistic expectations given course limitations; and (6) combine multiple methods of assessment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of simulations as teaching and learning devices.

Introduction

Our interest in mounting a simulation-based course emerged from a curiosity with exploring and using tools of critical pedagogy. Drawing on the Freirean tradition of critical pedagogy, Moreno-Lopez (2005) states that "The main goal of critical pedagogy is to create engaged, active, critically thinking citizens, that is to say, political subjects who can participate as decision-makers in the organization of their socio-cultural realities" (p. 2). Simulations appear to be a logical fit with this overall ethos of encouraging active learning and critical thinking which is something the traditional lecture is unable to maximize (Baloche 1998). Furthermore, there is a growing body of literature that documents the successful use of simulations in the

Politics & International Relations fields (Chasek 2005; Underwood 2009; Shaw 2004; and Taylor 2013). Benefits include higher knowledge retention and learning levels, increased student interest in the subject matter and higher course satisfaction levels (Auman 2011; Shellam & Turan 2006).

One of the central features of critical pedagogy is the notion of sharing power in the classroom. In practical terms, this requires an instructor to relinquish a certain degree of control over the curriculum, and create space for students to assume greater responsibility in shaping the content and structure of the course. The idea of sharing power in the classroom has manifested itself in a concrete method of instruction called student-centered learning. Scholars Felder and Brent (1996) describe this method of instruction as "a broad teaching approach that includes substituting active learning for lectures, holding students responsible for their learning, and using self-paced and/or cooperative (team-based) learning" (p. 43). This approach literally transfers power and authority from the instructor to the students in ways that enable them to establish a learning community where the instructor is not viewed as the sole authority or "expert" on the subject in question. On the question of the instructor's role in student-centered learning, Judith Berling (1999) suggests that "the teacher needs to establish herself-himself early as something other than 'the sole expert'. The teacher's role is that of a coach, facilitator, enabler, midwife. She/he has established the structure/common ground on which the conversation proceeds, and invites the students into the common ground" (p. 51). Thus, sharing power in the classroom and student-centered learning are key components to the form of critical pedagogy employed in the simulation. It is within this framework that we examine our experiences with simulations as an assessment tool in three very different contexts.

Simulations in the Classroom

(1) Canadian Federal/Provincial/Territorial First Ministers' Meeting

This simulation modeled a Canadian First Ministers' meeting to address three current policy issues. Officially, the simulation was used as a five hour final exam for a third year course entitled Canadian Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations for which there were 26 students. Unofficially, the whole course can be broadly seen as a simulation.

The unofficial dynamic is important given it formed much of the preparation leading up to the final exam "official" simulation. At the beginning of the course, students were asked to sign up for a province/territory of their choice (the territories were grouped as one entity) while ensuring that all provinces were subscribed to. All students then completed two issue papers each on policy areas of importance to their province to facilitate a deeper understanding of provincial issues. Issue papers were chosen in consultation with provincial group members to ensure duplication did not occur and themes that cut across the Issue Papers formed the basis for discussion at the First Ministers' meeting. A provincial group report profiling the socio-political-economic state of the province was also completed as contextual background, the

results of which were presented to the class in 30 minute presentations. This allowed all students to gain insight into provincial/territorial political cultures. Combined, these assignments formed the background for the final exam simulation with students evaluated both individually (Issue Papers) and as a group (Provincial Group Report, Group Presentation). A student's mark in the Group Presentation was also based on a mark for individual performance (50%) and for the group's performance as a whole (50%).

Many items were taken into consideration for the actual First Ministers' Meeting. Tables were moved to set the room up as a horseshoe thus creating an open format where participants could easily see and hear each other. Only one student was allowed to sit at the table at any one time to represent their province. Other provincial representatives sat behind them and acted as aides passing notes to their colleague at the table, perhaps alerting them to points to make, but had no voice. Students were rotated after each issue to ensure each fulfilled the role of Premier at the table. The instructor assumed the role of the federal government.

The First Ministers' Meeting was structured into three phases. The first phase consisted of opening comments with the federal government and Premiers each allowed two minutes. The second phase consisted of discussion of three issue areas for 40 minutes each. Between each session were short 7- 10- minute informal lobbying sessions where provincial delegations were allowed to mingle among themselves and with the federal government to try to broker a way forward on a particular issue (or not). It also allowed time for information seeking via a number of laptops that were provided along a wall for quick access to the internet. The last phase consisted of closing comments from each province and federal government.

The final 30 minutes of the exam involved a media scrum. Students were to defend their negotiated "wins" or "losses" to media representatives. The goal here was to make students think on the spot and appreciate what decision-makers experience. Six media personnel were selected from university staff (3, including a former reporter) and university students (3, including one from the student paper). Media were briefed on the simulation in terms of its set-up, background, issues and provided with sample questions and were asked to be "tough", "persistent" in not accepting a poor or evasive answer and to push the students to see how they could respond on their province's behalf.

Student simulation evaluation was multifaceted. It consisted of the instructor's notes and observations during the simulation itself on how each student performed. In addition, the simulation was recorded to ensure a thorough review of student and group performance. Consideration was given to (1) how well they elaborated their province's position on the issue in question (given their province's political culture), (2) responses to challenges to their positions, (3) attempts to collaborate or frustrate negotiations, (4) their influence on the rest of the group, and (5) how they responded to the media scrum.

Looking broadly at the situation, the First Ministers' Meeting was successful as a learning tool. A survey of students and media representatives revealed that it was an exciting

way to make course material relevant—especially the intergovernmental dimensions components and the challenges and opportunities offered by federalism. Several challenges were also noted. Most students felt the simulation should be a full-day event to provide for a better sample of student performance. They also felt that a longer media scrum was called for, a point the media also raised, with most stating that it really brought home the challenges of policy making and being held accountable to the people. Questions were also raised as to the uneven amount of time each student had in response to some questions in the simulation given time limitations. The fact the federal government was *not* neutral in the simulation favouring certain positions over others also proved to be controversial with some students as was the fact some students reported having difficulty staying in their "role".

Looking forward, several changes are recommended. The need exists for a longer simulation overall. One option would be to divide the simulation into two events spread out over the last half of the term. This would allow for debriefing sessions/classes in-between and for enhanced negotiations among provinces thus facilitating learning. It would also allow for student evaluations to be formative in nature. Students can improve their performance given what they have learned in the first simulation which can also be enhanced by including a simulation "dry run" in class. A longer simulation would also allow students to more fully express their province's positions. However, dividing the simulation into two smaller ones presents logistical challenges for instructors significantly increasing the preparatory work involved which is already substantial. It also emphasizes the continued need for clear expectations and instructions.

(2) Global Governance Simulation

At Mount Allison University we run a fourth-year seminar course in the International Relations Program called Global Governance Simulation. The course has been taught twice, in 2010 and in 2012, and both times focused on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Students, either individually or in pairs, were assigned one member state to represent throughout the simulation. The first four weeks of the course entailed preliminary research and analysis on the overall structure and workings of the UNSC, in addition to each student or pair of students presenting research on their assigned state. The remaining weeks of the course were dedicated to simulation activities. This component of the course was divided into three sections, each addressing one major issue/crisis for the UNSC to engage with. Finally, there was a de-briefing session after each one of the issues where we stepped outside our assigned roles and reflected on the simulation exercise.

The overall objectives of the course were for students to: (1) develop advanced knowledge of the UNSC's procedures and functions; (2) develop negotiation, teamwork, and debating skills; (3) develop deep knowledge of the foreign policy considerations of a particular state and how these are exercised at the UNSC; (4) gain knowledge of three contemporary situations of importance to the international community; and (5) think critically about the multiple challenges and limitations for a global governance actor such as the UNSC in

confronting instability and conflict. Moreover, these goals are consistent with simulations run by Steven Curtis (2012), as he notes "Along with improving students' knowledge and understanding of Politics and International Relations, they [simulations] can help to develop personal transferable skills, such as working independently and with others, self-organization and time-management, as well as facilitating deep learning, with students taking responsibility for their own learning" (p. 78).

The simulation used real and contemporary situations/cases, but then added a new hypothetical element to encourage problem-solving, creativity, and negotiation among the students. For example, one of the cases in the 2012 version of the course involved the civil war in Syria. Thus, students were first required to gain background and contextual information on the causes and consequences of this particular conflict. They were then presented with a hypothetical situation in which reliable sources reported the use of chemical weapons in the city of Aleppo. The total number of casualties, along with the perpetrators of these actions, was unknown in the scenario, but the matter was put before the Security Council. Students were then tasked with devising ways to investigate and potentially act on the situation.

Three situations/cases were addressed throughout the term, and the class chose these cases collectively during the initial few weeks of the course. This allowed them some decision-making power in the design of the simulation. In the 2012 term we used situations in Syria, Iran, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A brief description of each scenario under investigation was provided, which was accompanied by a short list of sources to get them started on more detailed research. After conducting further research on the topic at hand, students submitted a short position paper summarizing their state's overall position on the matter, as well as recommendations for a way forward. This culminated in resolutions being drafted, discussed, debated, and often amended while the simulated sessions of the Security Council unfolded.

Assessment of the simulation is done in response to two questions: (1) How were the students assessed (and was this effective)?; and, (2) What is the overall assessment of the simulation as a learning tool? In terms of assessing the students' performance in the course, the first element was a participation component, which was 35% of the total grade. The written components included an initial report on their assigned state, the short position papers, and a final reflection paper. These assessment tools were effective; they allowed for both written and oral contributions, in addition to assessing students' ability to meet the five objectives stated above. However, a couple notes of caution should be added. First, in analyzing simulations, Usherwood (2009) describes a "tension between 'realistic' and 'idealistic' actions. Students… were torn between accurately representing their group's position and projecting their own desires into the negotiations" (p. 300). One aspect of the students' participation in the class relied on accurately representing the views of the chosen state, and the tension noted by Usherwood was definitely a challenge. Students often made proposals based on what they individually thought might help alleviate the situation, rather than realistically portraying the behaviour of a state. This was a challenge to assess because while the student was not being 'realistic', they were demonstrating critical thinking skills and an

ability to creatively solve problems. A second related challenge was that grading students on participation sometimes caused unrealistic behaviour during the simulation. For example, students representing small states often participated in the deliberations in a manner that would realistically exceed their reach. Once again, although it was somewhat unrealistic, the students were meeting other important course objectives through their engagements.

On the question of simulations as effective teaching tools, the overall assessment from the global governance simulation is mixed. Although the simulation achieved many of the teaching objectives mentioned above, the key challenge was fostering critical thinking skills among the students. Based on the quality of participation and the written assignments, the students learned a great deal about the UNSC, the state they were representing, and the scenarios addressed in the course. However, it was less clear whether the students engaged in deeper thinking about the limitations of the UNSC as a mechanism to deal with violence. Critical pedagogy encourages students to think critically about established institutions and structures of power, and to imagine different ways that the world could be organized (Freire 2000). Yet the simulation did not necessarily facilitate this type of learning, even when we had de-briefing sessions after each topic. The students were not inclined to question the foundational principles and processes of the UNSC, or to imagine a broader transformative project for dealing with conflict. It is feared that the simulation at times teaches them to accept, and adapt to, the 'realities' of the conditions in which they find themselves, rather than imagining the world around them as something that is transformable. Encouraged to immerse themselves in the foreign policy positions of a particular state, and follow the procedural rules of the UNSC, students may not be exercising the type of critical, independent thinking about the world that could result in more creative and transformative problem-solving approaches.

(3) Iranian-American Nuclear Negotiations

This simulation modeled US-Iranian negotiations concerning the latter's nuclear program. It was held in a third year class with approximately 40 students. Its purpose was to increase the class' appreciation for the complexities of the issues involved in the crisis, the motivations of the actors and the constraints on their behavior.

To ensure that each student had a meaningful role, three simulations were run in parallel. This helped keep the students engaged and made for useful cross simulation comparisons during the post-simulation de-brief. Each of the simulation tracks consisted of 12 students, organized into five delegations. There were four students each in the American and Iranian delegations, two students in the Israeli delegation and one each for Russia and China. The American delegation included the President, the Secretary of State (Democrat), the Secretary of Defense (Republican) and a chief negotiator (independent). The Iranian delegation included the Supreme Leader, the President (hard-liner), the Speaker of the Parliament (pragmatic conservative), and a chief negotiator (independent). The Israeli delegation included representatives from the Kadima and Likud parties acting as the leaders of a unity government. Prior to the simulation, one class was devoted to preparation, and each player was given a brief

explaining their interests and ideological outlook. In addition, the American, Iranian and Israeli delegations were instructed that they would be facing domestic elections upon the completion of the negotiations.

Unfortunately, several students had responsibilities that would take them away from class for part of the simulation. When they were present, they were given roles as members of the press, and tasked with writing articles on each day's events.

The simulation was conducted over three classes. During the first class, the delegations were instructed to negotiate amongst themselves to establish their bargaining positions. At the end of that class, each delegation had to write a press release on the status of the talks and the press had to submit their articles. All reports were posted on a course web page so they could be read before the next session. During the second day, the Americans and Iranians held direct talks. Again, at the end of the day, press releases were submitted. On the last day the delegates were allowed to negotiate for half the class and then announce their final decisions and explain all of the deals they had made. The delegations could agree to a negotiated settlement, the two sides could try to maintain the status quo without a formal agreement, or the US and/or Israeli could engage in a military strike.

The instructor's task during the simulation was to oversee the proceedings and offer technical advice about the issues and actors. After each session, the instructor also posted a phony BBC report on the course web page which was based on the press releases and the media reports posted by each negotiation group. The BBC reports were meant to give the actors a sense of how the public was reacting to events and to provide a check when students acted unrealistically.

Student assessment involved several instruments. Student participation was worth 5% of each student's final course grade. The grade was based on individual participation (observed during the simulation and the debriefing session) and group work (based on each delegation's press releases). In addition, students were given the option of writing a 'simulation review' in lieu of a research paper. Reviews were worth 20% of the student's final course grade and involved an analysis of the simulation based the student's research into the 'real-world' crisis. Finally, students were responsible for the simulations' background material on the final exam. Overall, student participation during the simulation was very good, the press releases were particularly well done. Many of the simulation reviews were well done as well. However, there was a tendency for some students to *describe* what they did during the simulation rather than analyze and explain their actions as instructed.

Conducting this simulation posed a number of challenges. However, the most difficult hurdles concerned the need to maintain realism and, of course, time. To appreciate the constraints each actor faced during the negotiation process, it was important that students were restricted to realistic choices. To this end, students were given a 'menu' of choices and concessions they could make during the negotiations. Based on the available options, the challenge for the students was to find a compromise that would satisfy all of the parties or face

the possibility of war. There were costs and benefits to this solution. Providing a menu not only helped 'keep things real', it enhanced the educational value of the simulation because the rationale for each option on the menu had to be discussed with the students. However, there were still instances of students acting unrealistically. The menu was also complex, and explaining it was time consuming. No doubt, some of the students went along with it without fully understanding the reasoning behind the options. The menu also limited the students' ability to formulate novel solutions to the problems they faced. Given sufficient time, it would have been better for students to discover the options available to their characters through their own research. Time, however, was in short supply. The simulation was scheduled to run over four classes, but ended up taking almost five. To get the most out of the exercise, the students would have still needed more time for research, preparation and debriefing. Unfortunately, allotting more time to the simulation would have compromised the rest of the course material.

Discussion and Conclusion

In all three simulations, the main goal was to place students in positions of decision making so they could experience real life situations to develop critical thinking skills. To do so, students needed to conduct research to inform their positions and become fluent in the processes involved. It is through this active learning that critical thinking skills are developed, which leads to enhanced knowledge retention and learning. Consistent with the literature, our experiences suggest that students were highly satisfied with the simulations and courses overall. This was evident in all the debriefing sessions and also in the post-simulation survey of the First Ministers' meeting. Students were also active learners, as all worked to develop positions and background preparation materials for use in support of their positions for the simulations. For example, in both the global governance simulation and the First Ministers' meeting, students wrote "scoping" reports on their jurisdictions, short position or issue papers and in the case of the global governance simulation, a final reflection paper. Moreover, students developed a keen awareness of how they "fit" into the larger simulation framework with each group/province/state having to justify their positions. For instance, daily media reports were prepared by students in the Iranian-American simulation, while students in the First Ministers' meeting had to defend their final "wins" or "losses" before the media. The overall positions developed also contributed to the development of students' negotiation and group working skills.

Our experiences, however, were mixed in terms of the development of critical thinking skills. This is perhaps best shown in the global governance simulation. As stated earlier, students were not inclined to question foundational principles and processes and to break out from the structured environment to "think outside the box" for how to consider the impact of structure on their positions. This was complicated by the fact students had difficulty staying within their role. A similar pattern can be seen in the First Ministers' meeting where students expected a neutral federal government in negotiations. They were dismayed to find out otherwise, yet did little to challenge the federal government's position but instead directed attention to other provinces. One way to combat this problem may be for the instructor to

refrain from taking on one of the roles in the simulation, such as the Prime Minister in the First Ministers' meeting, because students may be too timid to challenge their authority. We may have also been expecting too much too quickly from the students. Students may need additional time to reflect on their simulation experiences before they can gain a better appreciation for what they have learned. Outside of tracking students in future courses to gauge how their learning has developed, which at best would offer a correlation related to the outcomes, one suggestion would be to conduct a post-course survey six to eight months later to probe learning outcomes.

In terms of logistical issues, our experiences suggest the need to (1) clearly outline the expectations for each simulation participant and the group(s) as a whole; (2) delineate the structure and operating rules of the simulation; (3) consider the type, amount and source for information generation and provision; (4) potentially incorporate technology in each step of the simulation; (5) carefully consider time requirements and to set realistic expectations given course limitations; and (6) combine multiple methods of assessment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of simulations as teaching and learning devices. Students have many questions and the above will do much to provide them with the information they need to get the most out of their experience.

Designing a sophisticated simulation and constructing multiple instruments to assess student learning demands extra effort from course instructors, and requires them to commit a significant portion of course time to the exercise. However, our experiences suggest simulations remain a valuable tool for promoting active, student centered learning and transferring to students the power to shape their own educational experience.

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A CORE MISTRUST – ARE STUDENTS DAMAGED BY YEARS OF ASSESSMENT?

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Abstract

By the time students arrive at the university classroom, they have encountered years of assessment. Novel approaches to the assessment of learning employed by faculty take place against a backdrop of these experiences and within the context of a larger educational field with its own set of expectations. As part of a larger study on community engagement, students participated in a focus group following an online positive psychology course. In spite of not being in the interview protocol, participants spontaneously offered their views on the assessment of experience-oriented activities. Analysis of the transcripts revealed that the issue of basic trust was pervasive in the students' concerns about the grading system. As the authors reflected on the meaning of the students' words, we began to discover our own set of mistrusts that emerge from previously being students and currently being faculty members.

Nobody arrives at a university class unscathed. Years of assessments have taken a toll on both teachers and students. From dreaded trick questions to teachers' idiosyncratic criteria for written work, it is fair to ask: have students been damaged by years of high stakes testing, examinations, essays, lab reports, and other forms of assessment? Teachers at all levels, from early years through to post graduate classes, are encouraged to find new and creative forms of assessment. The 2013 AAU Teaching showcase provided a wealth of novel ideas for assessment. Yet, these innovations are set against a backdrop of many years of experience with assessment; novel assessment methods do not appear to students *de novo*. The present authors have come to believe that what faculty believe they are evaluating is not necessarily what students believe is being assessed, especially when instructors try to be creative in changing the assessment process. In this paper we reflect on focus group commentary to consider whether enthusiasm for the admirable goal of creative assessment might be dampened by unintended consequences. Creative approaches to assessment can create a mismatch between teacher and student expectancies and tap into an undercurrent of mistrust in the classroom's collective psyche.

Our critical reflections originate in the results of a focus group with students who had recently completed a third-year online positive psychology course. By all other accounts (course grades, quality of participation, student commentary, and course evaluations) the course was successful and even enjoyable. The course has become the focus of an ongoing, larger study of students' responses to the activities, community engagement strategies, and assessment tools that are being utilized. The broad aim of the ongoing study is to explore the potential impact learning experiences that emphasize giving complements, altruistic actions, and community interventions can have upon ways students think about and practice civic engagement. The focus group sessions were designed to ask students about the ripple effects of the course activities in other areas of their lives.

But assessment seemed to get in the way. Evaluating students' work in the course required grading written responses to online forum questions that were assessed for the ability to integrate uniquely individual learning actions outside the course with concepts and guest speakers' theoretical positions. This grading category totaled 40% of the total and was by far the largest influence on the students' final marks. Within this category, students accumulated up to 4 points per post until a maximum of 40 points was earned. The assessment criteria for forum posts were explained and supported in a variety of ways, with a rubric, annotated example from a previous student, audio commentary from the instructor, and weekly written feedback posted on line and by email. At every turn, it was emphasized that students should connect theory and research to personal experience and opinion.

These plans somewhat went astray - more so in process than in product. Despite doing very good work and fulfilling the goals of the course and its assessment process admirably, the students we interviewed did not necessarily perceive the assessment process as it had been designed and intended. Instead of feeling the freedom to be creative, students described trying to figure out what was ***really*** going on and how grades actually were being earned or deducted. There appeared to be a core of mistrust in the assessment process, a creative re-interpretation of both the assessment criteria and feedback. With respect to the assessment criteria, at times it appeared students were more intent on reading between the lines than reading the lines themselves.

In this article we present a summary of focus group members' responses to the on-line positive psychology course assessment process, as well as our critical reflection on what they said. We present what we interpret as the students' key mistrusts regarding the assessment process, and then consider the counter mistrusts that fueled our responses as both researchers and educators. We discuss the proposed idea of "core mistrust" that we imagine our students and we bring to the classroom. We also propose a course of future research to consider more

intently ways students' and educators' learning and teaching may be damaged by years of unspoken 'rules' of assessment.

These are preliminary observations from a focus group; our goal is not to generalize the findings, though we suspect that they will resonate with students and faculty alike. The observations offered below might be a starting point for a longer conversation about the connection between basic trust and the assessment process.

Theoretical Framework

Our critical reflection is guided fundamentally by a theoretical framework that includes the work of Erik Erikson and Pierre Bourdieu. Erikson's influential, neo-Freudian theory of psycho-social development features eight broad stages, the first of which involves working out basic trust versus mistrust. According to Erikson (1963), a generally caring and dependable collection of interactions with the primary caregivers creates in the infant a sense that people can be trusted – essentially the infant realizes 'if I am hungry, I will get fed; if mom is out of sight, she can be trusted to come back.' The feeling of being deprived leaves a residue of mistrust and a tendency to withdraw that can affect a person in a long-lasting way (Ryckman, 2008 p. 180). Erikson (1950) noted that basic trust allows a person to embrace change, most specifically the developmental changes during the first years of life, and by extension change thereafter. If a sense of mistrust develops, the person becomes prone to distorted views of the self, suspicion, reluctance to change, and anxiety. For Erikson, trust is the first core virtue to develop and, as such, trust precedes higher order psychological process in development. Therefore, trust continues to exert an influence on thoughts, feelings, and behaviours throughout life.

Several researchers have examined the issue of trust in higher education and a full review is not within the scope of the present article (see for example, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust in an organizational setting requires an expectation of positive outcomes if one accepts vulnerability with respect to the actions of another (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). In the absence of trust, vulnerability can be especially anxiety-provoking. Boud (2000) notes that assessment in an educational context serves two masters; it is about learning and it is about grading. Mayer et al. (1995) propose that a combination of ability, benevolence, and integrity are preconditions for trust, a view that has considerable support (see Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007 for a meta-analytic test of these factors).

The issue of basic trust plays out within the broad context of the education system. In his earlier work with Jean Claude Passeron, Pierre Bourdieu (1977) examines the reproductive nature of education. He contends that schooling serves as a way to reproduce dominant social practices, behaviours and attitudes that do not always meet everyone's needs equally. To

better understand how this happens, it helps to use Bourdieu's concept of 'field.' Bourdieu (1990) suggests that in society we operate in and among 'fields' of practice. Fields are social spaces where people and institutions struggle to gain the resources valued in that space. Those resources are known as 'capital.' For example, in economic fields people attempt to accrue economic capital such as monetary wealth. In the education field, people seek cultural capital, which includes academic accreditation and qualification. In order to secure capital, people must learn the rules and norms of the field similar to learning the rules of a game (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Over time, arbitrary rules become accepted as 'normal'. Following Bourdieu's thinking, schooling might be seen as a field (see Mills, 2008). Over time, those within the field (students, teachers, administrators and all stakeholders) develop a feel for the game, the rules by which they must abide, and the skills and practices they must embody to succeed. Everyone within the field reproduces the dominant practices simply by attempting to succeed—even those who struggle more than others and those who would benefit from 'new' rules. Change is possible, but it is often resisted and can be difficult to evoke (Bourdieu, 1992). While we present here one small piece of Bourdieu's social account of reproduction and his key concepts, his theoretical position regarding education is relevant to our discussion.

We believe that early experiences with the question of trust and learning to successfully play the game in the education field have lingering effects -- these experiences leave a mark. In this paper, we are reflecting on one attempt to change the rules of assessment in a university course. The resistance among the students, expressed only after the course was over, helps illustrate the challenge of altering the rules, so to speak, especially when the new rules still must function within established policy (i.e. numerical grades must be assigned) and be interpreted based on past experience. We believe that the interviews uncover what appear to be underlying mistrusts both students and professors feel in the school 'field' when it comes to assessment.

Contextual Framework: Course/Assessment/Intentions of Focus Groups

The online positive psychology course was presented with a conference motif (for more details on the course, see MacIntyre, 2013). The assessment was designed to offer students the flexibility to choose which discussion questions they would answer and in what depth. Students could earn marks by responding in detail to fewer questions or with shorter answers to more questions, until the maximum 40 points had been earned. The core content of the course was presented by weekly plenary speakers on video, an assigned textbook chapter, and optional readings or videos. The core activities of the course were weekly experiential exercises wherein students were given an exercise and asked to react to what they were learning in the videos and the readings. In addition, four mandatory assignments were given in which students would experience key concepts. The marks for each post ranged from 0 to 4.0 with "4" defined as a rare, truly outstanding post, "3" was assigned for a high quality post that effectively integrated experience with learning resources, "2" suggested a good post that could be improved with additional links to the resources provided in the course, and "1" was assigned for a post that was very brief and not linked to the course materials.

The focus group took place at Cape Breton University in the weeks following the end of the course. All students were invited to participate via email. Five students responded to our request. It was decided that participants may be deterred from discussing their views about the course with Peter, the professor who taught the course. Therefore, Tanya facilitated the session. Working from an interview protocol for the study of community engagement, part of the larger study mentioned above, participants were asked among other things to share their reactions to the learning processes implemented in the course and the activities and assignments adopted by the professor. Everyone had the option to respond to the questions and there was room for discussion among the participants. The session was recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

Three ways students mistrust faculty grading.

The focus group questions did not overtly ask about assessment, grades, or marks in the class. Yet in reviewing the transcript, we began to notice key themes emerging regarding the participants' perceptions of assessment, and we queried what was behind those perceptions. The participants' comments suggested well-engrained ideas about how learning and assessment should operate within the schooling field. We attribute these responses to a sense of mistrust among the students; in response, the following section identifies our own set of mistrusts of students by faculty.

Analysis of the focus group transcripts led us to articulate three specific ways in which students might not trust the assessment process. These expressions of mistrust were interwoven throughout the focus group's responses.

Mistrust 1 – The professor is looking for reasons to take away points, starting with "100" and deducting points for mistakes.
Mistrust 2 – The point value assigned will not be in proportion to my work.
Mistrust 3 –I don't trust that theory has real value for me.

Students appeared preoccupied with figuring out exactly what they must do in order to keep as many points as possible. It seemed that some were more interested in figuring out how to avoid losing points than doing activities that were meaningful to them. As one participant states:

> There is a lot of grey area. I would also wish that he wouldn't give us the option of do this or this. I just need to know exactly what I need to do to get a mark and don't give me so much flip flopping choices...That sounds terrible - to make it more rigid. But just make it more… structured… while still keeping it open and flexible [Laughing].

The student seemed not to trust that the grades assigned would reflect her work, rather than some criteria deliberately hidden by the professor. As one participant said: **"**Say what you have to write in the coffee break to get the good mark. Say exactly what you want." It is unfortunate that, in this context, freedom and choice appear as things to be avoided because they represent an opportunity to make a mistake and therefore lose points.

Moreover, participants indicated they had to keep the professor happy to avoid 'losing' points. For example, one participant discussed an assignment in which she had to reflect on a video. She said that she did the reflection, "But then I just threw in the summary of everything and it was helpful for my grade." She continued:

> It was just to satisfy what we thought we needed to do to get a good grade rather than what was most enjoyable. The reflection was more helpful in understanding positive psych. Rather than the summarizing and the regurgitating which seemed like we had to do it.

The word "regurgitating" is instructive here; it seems to be used in this context to refer to a thoughtless recitation of information previously learned or memorized. The preceding excerpt indicated that students did not see value in summarizing theory as part of their interpretation of their experience, but did so reluctantly to increase the grade. Another participant added:

> It seemed as though you had to make the professor happy in order to get a good grade even if you don't like it. You can't talk about things you liked because you're scared that you're going to get a worse grade than you thought because you've done what the professor wants to hear and not what you want to put.

From an instructor's perspective, it is comforting that students described enjoying the weekly activities, but at the same time disconcerting that they felt it necessary to withhold that discussion in favour of what they perceived as the instructor's expectations. This inconsistency likely ties to the course syllabus and other information provided by the instructor, in which the connection between theory/research and personal experience was emphasized over and over again. The impression emerging from the focus group was that students felt that protecting their grades meant figuring out what they had to say in the posts, not trusting that their authentic responses would be valued instead of penalized for errors. One student reports: "If it's left up to me, I'll probably make a mistake and then do the wrong thing or leave something out that wasn't a bonus task."

Participants said they were unclear on how they were graded and feared that they were doing poorly overall in the course. One participant stated: "I think we all get anxious about that sort of thing. We like to know." Another reported checking her grades online on a daily basis, a behavior that seems indicative of anxiety or an apprehension about grading.

A mistrust of assessment has consequences beyond the feeling of uncertainty and anxiety. One participant recounted the experience of a former classmate:

> I know one person who studies non-stop, is really smart, and would have had great contributions, and he dropped it kind of towards the middle because he wasn't getting good enough grades. But he could have come out with a great grade and I would have liked to read everything he had to say. He got scared and dropped it.

Reflecting on these comments, it seemed that the participants approached the course with the mistrust that the professor was looking for ways to take points away, especially if the wording was not what the professor wanted to hear. Responding to one assignment, a participant claimed: "It didn't feel worth it even though you really did enjoy it. It didn't feel like our hard work was being acknowledged in the form of points." Although 16 of 30 students received the full 40/40 points in the experiential category, there was a palpable, underlying mistrust of the grading process emerging from the focus group. Having students enjoy the course and earn high grades is rewarding from a teacher's perspective, but the lingering sense of mistrust really is troubling.

Further in the focus group's discussion, it appeared that students wanted to either be tested on theory, which they could "regurgitate" with precision, or be free to give opinions – but they seemed to be unsure about how to merge the two as demanded by the design of the assignments. There was a strong and clear sense of separation between personal opinion and the theory introduced in the class. One participant stated: "I wish there were more, like, reflecting though, like there were supposed to be like a reflection of the video but I found, like, if you summarized the video, you frequently got a better grade." Her classmate followed up: "Yeah, I noticed that too which is kind of frustrating. I want to talk about it, like, I don't wanna tell you what I just watched."

The disconnect between the perceived value of the learning experience and the point value assigned the forum post was clearly articulated:

> I just put more of, like, facts about things that I saw in the video or read in the textbook, I got graded better, whereas if I just gave a short, really in-depth, reflective response about my opinions mixed with the text and the video, I got, what seemed like lower grades. It seems like it's not rewarding what I thought was the most valuable.

The students consistently acknowledged the value of new learning experiences, but did not want to have to write about the connection to prior theory and research, especially as it connected to grades. In particular, the participants did not seem to trust the value of the textbook and its contents. As one participant said, "I think the only time I actually used that poor textbook was probably in my conference project 'cause, like, we had to." Another stated:

"But I never actually read the bulk of the chapters. I would just skip to the activities we had to do."

Our counter mistrusts

Together, the authors of this paper spent a considerable amount of time reflecting on the students' responses. We responded with a combination of surprise and frustration, and a fair bit of defensiveness, if we are being forthcoming. Such emotional reactions are instructive (Sayer, 2005). These emotions offer a place from which to critically reflect upon the mistrusts and core values embedded in the various fields we occupy. It became apparent that we, too, were approaching students with our own issues; in a university classroom, trust is a two-way street.

Mistrust 1 – Students are more concerned with 'losing points' than learning.
Mistrust 2 – Students want their marks to reflect the amount of effort they feel they put into their work.
Mistrust 3 – Students don't appreciate the value of theory, and probably will avoid it, unless we attach grades to it.

The specific learning activities in the course, such as performing an altruistic act and then writing a forum post about how the experience informs students' perceptions of the controversial place of the altruism concept in psychology, were designed to inextricably blend theory and personal experience. The intent was for a deeper reflection on the learning experience. This approach requires a great deal of effort on the part of the student. Students want to see that effort validated but the grading focused on the written content of the forum posts.

Perhaps there is a disconnect between students' and teachers' expectations related to valuing process and product. Focus group comments suggest that students resent putting a lot of effort into a project and receiving a grade that does not sufficiently reflect their effort (e.g., 2/4 seemed to be interpreted as losing 50% of the mark available rather than earning 2 points out of 4). From the instructor's perspective, in this course, the quantity and quality of student effort are not directly observable, so perhaps it is inevitable that students focus on process and faculty focus on product. The value of the learning process was emphasized in the course description but we have come to believe that prior experience in the education field interfered with the students trust in the integrity of the grading process. In previous courses that assigned credit for the correct answer, already known by the teacher, a student can only lose marks for getting something wrong, hence the student's comment above: "say exactly what you want." Learning-oriented approaches to assessment focus on outcomes rather than effort (Carless, 2007; 2009), squarely confronting the issue of trust.

As the analysis progressed, it appeared that we (professors) value the role of theory to a much greater extent than do students. For us, theories are tools that help make sense of the world, and we assume that if students don't read theory, they cannot apply it. We came to realize that we do not trust that students will read theory in the absence of an explicit valuing of that reading in the grading scheme. The focus group responses indicate a minimalist approach to theory among students; they do not want to read any more of the textbook than absolutely required.

Where do we go from here?

Listening to the recording of the students' comments, and discussing the transcript at length, we came to the conclusion that a basic mistrust in the grading process, possibly arising from bad experiences with assessment at earlier stages of learning, is the source of the assumptions, suspicion, and anxiety that pervaded the focus group session. The mistrusts that we perceived through this process are preliminary, and more extensive research will help to better appreciate the relevance of trust. Let us end by proposing a course of research. First we recognize that we are perceiving students' mistrusts based on our interpretation of one group of participants responding in a focus group. It will be helpful to talk again to those students and others, asking them directly their ideas about assessment, upon what experiences do they base their ideas and the impact they believe their mistrusts about assessment have upon their learning. Second, although it had not been anticipated, we were intrigued by our own responses to the students' focus group comments and the subsequent mistrusts we identified in ourselves. These, too, need to be unpacked. A next step in research could be to interview other educators to explore the mistrusts regarding assessment they carry into their classrooms, the practices and experiences that informed those attitudes and their perceptions of the implications upon teaching and learning. With such a research foundation we can look to the bigger questions regarding ideological beliefs and practices in schooling. For example, are the mistrusts held by students and educators well-founded? Is it reasonable to think we can dispel the mistrusts when we still must operate within the ever more managerial schooling system (Trow, 1994)? Is there benefit to be had by allowing students and faculty to articulate their mistrusts openly to one another? An exploration of these questions can help us develop a better understanding of the ideological beliefs and values upon which the schooling 'field' is rooted and what is needed to succeed within. Moreover, an explicit accounting of trust and mistrust helps us begin to see more clearly whose needs and interests are best served by the present structures. From there we can consider ways to challenge the status quo and deal explicitly with issues such as basic trust in hopes of creating a field where educators and students feel they more safely can explore innovative ways of learning and assessing.

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ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT MOTIVATION AND LEARNING

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Abstract

Traditional lecture style teaching often fails to engage students by neglecting their specific motivation and individual learning styles. This paper presents results from a project funded by the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Teaching and Learning Priority (TLP) Fund in 2010/2011 and the implementation of its results in the academic year of 2012/2013. In the TLP project, I have conducted a classroom assessment project (Angelo & Cross, 1993) assessing the impact of the discussion and administration of the Reiss Motivation Profile (RMP; Reiss, 2000, 2008, 2013) and of the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005) on student learning in a class on foundational leadership at Renaissance College (UNB). The purposes were to better understand student motivation, in order to design teaching and learning activities accordingly, and to assess the results of teaching and administering the RMP and KLSI to students.

The quantitative and qualitative results help us to understand students' motivations and learning preferences. Interviews and surveys with individuals and focus groups have allowed us to qualitatively assess the impact of this teaching approach on student engagement and learning. The results have informed the teaching and learning in re-runs of the course in 2012/2013.

In this paper I will first briefly introduce the RMP and the KLSI used in class. Second, I will describe the steps taken within the classroom assessment project. Third, I will present and discuss the findings. Finally, I will explain how the findings have informed my teaching in 2012/2013 and present some conclusive remarks and further recommendations.

Introduction

[1] While conducting the original research project funded by the UNB Teaching and Learning Priority Fund (2010 – 2011) and at the time of writing this paper (as of January 1, 2014) the author did not and does not have any personal financial investment, interests or business involvement in the Reiss Motivation Profile. From February 16th, 2012 through to June 30th, 2014 he co-owned and served as CEO of Reiss Profile Canada Corp. (RPCC). The Reiss Profiles used in class in 2012/2013 were donated to UNB in-kind by RPCC; in return, RPCC received a tax receipt from UNB for this donation.

Most of the teaching I was exposed to as a learner was very much focused on the content that I was about to learn. I appreciated that, since I was sincerely interested in the material and was working diligently on grasping it to the fullest extent possible. Whatever new theory, model, or concept my teachers presented, they were very likely to catch my attention. Educators who were passionate about the material and about sharing that commitment to their discipline with their audience could easily excite me about whatever material they were presenting. Often times, their energy was contagious and motivated me to dig even deeper into the material on my own. Passionate teachers were able to lead me beyond the current frontiers of my knowledge into almost any direction.

As a result, in the beginning of my teaching career, my concept of good teaching comprised passionately delivering fascinating material to students who I expected to be as thirsty for knowledge as I was. However, I realized early on that my expectations and understanding were very much biased by my own motivational preferences and learning style. I thrive on "reflective observation" and "abstract conceptualization" (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005), and my strongest "basic desire" is curiosity, "the desire for understanding" (Reiss, 2013, Kindle location 24). This combination, to a large extent, explains both my passion for learning and teaching as well as my preference for a particular style of learning and teaching.

However, during my extended journey of professional development, I increasingly began to grasp the need to expand my repertoire for teaching and learning, to include a variety of styles and preferences, which cater to very different motivation in learners. Based on my conviction that all humans strongly strive for discovering meaning in what they do, experience, and believe (Frankl, 1985), I began to focus on understanding and considering individual motivation and learning style preferences in my course development and delivery. Harvesting student feedback and reflections about what, why, and how they learn became a key element of my preparation for and work inside and outside of the classroom (both in traditional and in online environments).

In the following, I will first briefly introduce the RMP and the KLSI used in class. Second, I will describe the steps taken within the classroom assessment project. Third, I will present and discuss the findings. Finally, I will explain how the findings have informed my teaching in 2012/2013 and present some conclusive remarks and further recommendations.

Reiss Motivation Profile (RMP)

Building on previous work in the field of motivational psychology, Steven Reiss (2000, 2008, and 2013) has identified a set of 16 universal human desires and values that motivate and underlie our actions. Reiss discovered that the Freudian "pleasure principle" does not suffice to describe human behaviour. Along with Viktor Frankl (1985) and others, he claims that pleasure and happiness are rather by-products of experiencing life in general, and our behavior in particular, as meaningful:

> By embracing the 16 basic desires, we experience a general feeling that life has purpose. The more passionately we embrace the 16 desires, the more purposeful our lives become, and the more we desire to live. Desire, purpose, and goals are the main differences between life as a biological mass and life as a human being (Reiss, 2000, p. 132).

Starting in 1995, Reiss engaged in an extensive scientific research project with thousands of participants from various nations, resulting in a list of 16 significant and distinctive life motives (16 basic desires, values or goals) that motivate human behavior; a questionnaire of 128 questions analyzes the individual RMP in regard to these 16 desires. As tested and validated by several independent and peer reviewed research studies, the resulting 16 scores provide a detailed and accurate description of what individuals really want and how they go about pursuing it. In spite of significant criticism of the "validity"tof the Reiss Profile (as exemplified recently by Pelz, 2013), this approach is being used by and can be of value to individuals and HR professionals, leadership coaches and other professionals in the field of personal and professional development – those who are trained in critically interpreting the respective data in the context of psychological test theory and personal development.

While all humans strive for the satisfaction of all of these desires to some extent, the level at which a feeling of satisfaction settles in is different for each individual. For some desires an individual may have a strong need; for others the need may be weak or average. While the desires for which we only feel an average need can normally be satisfied without special care in our daily lives, the weaker- and stronger-than-average motives need to be "managed" on an individual basis: a person will likely have developed particular behaviours and personal traits that will help her or him to avoid "too much" satisfaction of a particular desire – in the case of weak desires – or to get more of it – in the case of strong desires. For example, a person with a higher-than-average need for "order" tends to put extra effort into structuring their work and scheduling their activities, while somebody with a lower-than-average need for "order" likely puts more value on "improvisation" and "flexibility". Therefore, it is important to understand the individual scores for each of a person's desires, in order to "predict" how comfortable and effective they might be in a given professional context.

The following table lists the 16 basic desires (strivings) with the respective values for a weak desire (-0.8 and below) indicated in red and strong desire (+0.8 and above) indicated in green. Individual profile scores within the yellow range indicate an average (and less significant) desire and respective value – the individual will sometimes value the one and sometimes the other depending on their context and individual state of satisfaction regarding this particular desire.

Striving	Values in case of weak strivings	Values in case of strong strivings
Acceptance	Self-confidence	Acceptance
Beauty	Plainness	Beauty
Curiosity	Application/Practical knowledge	Theory/Intellectual knowledge
Eating	Nutritional basics	Variety of food
Expediency	Principles/Honour	Expediency/Purpose
Family	Freedom from family/Laissez-faire	Closeness to children & siblings
Idealism	Realism/Justice for self	Altruism/Humanitarianism
Interdependence	Self-reliance	One-ness/Team orientation
Order	Flexibility/Improvisation	Methodology/Structure
Physical Exercise	Relaxation/Lackadaisical lifestyle	Physical Activity/Active Lifestyle
Power	Non-directiveness/Service	Influence/Control
Saving	Extravagance/Generosity/Spending	Collection/Frugality
Social Contact	Loneness/Reservedness/Introversion	Extroversion/Fun with others
Status	Informality/Egalitarity	Formality/Social rank
Tranquility	Bravery/Risk-taking	Cautiousness/Risk-avoidance
Vengeance	Harmony/cooperation/peace-making	Winning/Competition/Revenge

Table 1: 16 basic desires of the Reiss Motivational Profile® (after Reiss, 2000)

Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI)

Teaching and learning need to include elements that address both the individual and social aspects of learning and that are well balanced and spread around the Kolb (1984) learning cycle. A balanced offering of group work, individual reflections, logical analyses, and active experimentations or fieldwork may serve this purpose.

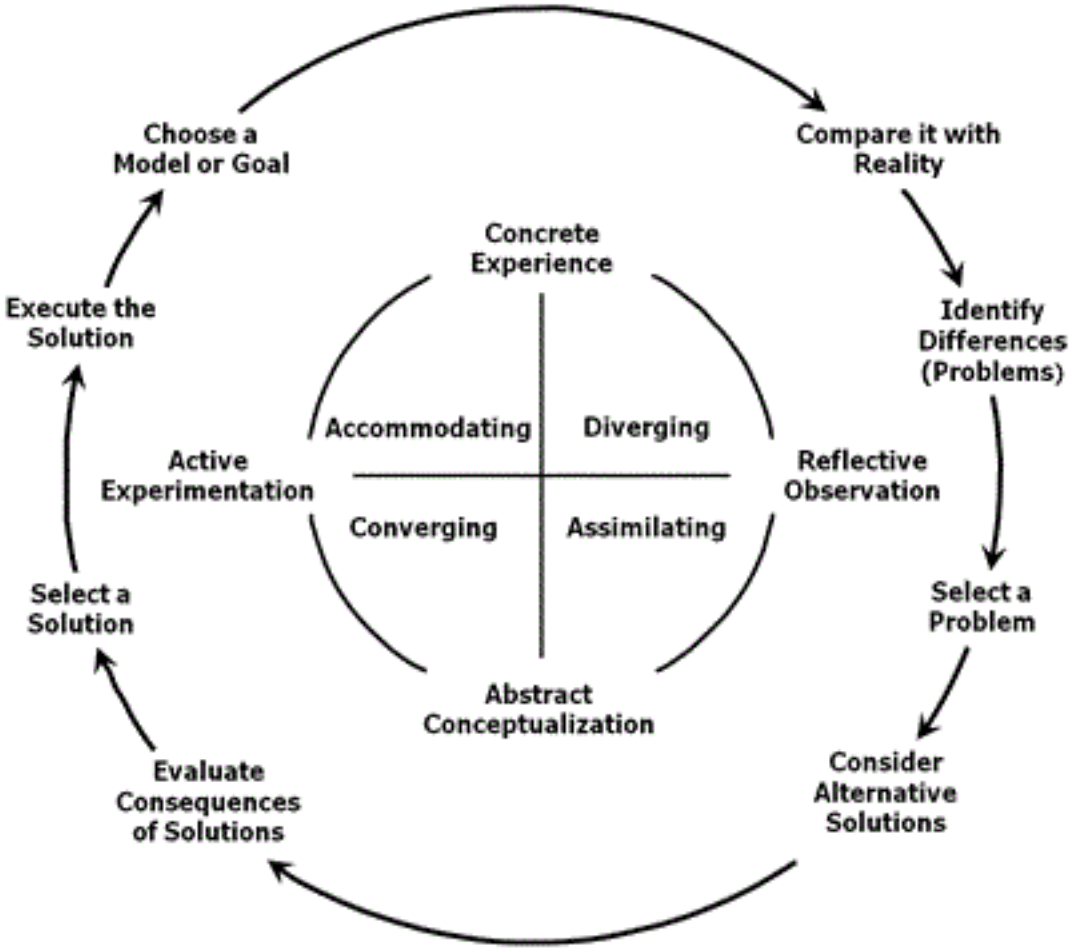
According to Kolb (1984) and Kolb and Kolb (2005) a well-rounded learning process cycles through four different phases:

- Concrete Experience (CE): Learning by experience, relating to people, being sensitive to feelings;
- Reflective Observation (RO): Learning by reflection, observing before judging, viewing from different perspectives, looking for meaning;
- Abstract Conceptualization (AC): Learning by thinking, logically analyzing, planning systematically; and
- Active Experimentation (AE): learning by doing, getting things done, taking risks, influencing through actions.

While many people identify two neighbouring phases as their favourite learning preference, some may demonstrate a balanced pattern of two opposing (CE and AC or RO and AE) or even of all four learning preferences (CE, AC, RO, and AE).

The preferred entry point may be different depending on preferred individual styles of learning that Kolb identified based on the four phases:

- Diverging (Learning approaches including CE and RO): being imaginative, demonstrating many perspectives and broad cultural interests, specializing in arts and humanities, info seeking;
- Assimilating (Learning approaches including RO and AC): creating theoretical models, assimilating disparate observation, inductive reasoning, preferring abstract concepts, orienting towards basic science and math, acting on intellectual understanding;
- Converging (Learning approaches including AC and AE): applying ideas, doing well on conventional tasks, preferring hypothetical / deductive reasoning, orienting towards engineering / physical sciences; and
- Accommodating (Learning approaches including AE and CE): putting into action, adapting well, preferring intuitive decision-making, orienting towards practical / technical (business).



Kolb Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 2005, p. 12)

As indicated in Kolb's illustration, most people have two strong learning style preferences that influence their motivation to learn. For example, a person with a strong emphasis on "diverging" and "assimilating"will most likely prefer to learn by reflective observation. Since this is true for both educators and learners, teachers with one particular learning style (combination) need to make an extra effort in regard to their teaching approach, that they not solely depend on their own preferred learning style but also address all styles existent within their particular class. Most classes will indeed include all learning style combinations. Accommodating them all can elegantly and easily be accomplished by walking learners through various activities covering all four phases of the learning cycle.

Methodology: Classroom assessment project

To understand how students learn and how certain teaching approaches work and can be improved, the rich resources of the Classroom Assessment Techniques of Angelo & Cross (1993) lent themselves as the approach of choice for this project. These Classroom Assessment Techniques allow the teacher to garner immediate feedback on how and what students learn, how certain content elements and teaching approaches contribute to that learning, and what might be some immediate interventions to further improve the learning process and outcome achievement.

In this project, I wanted to understand how administering the RMP and the KLSI contributed to student learning about their learning preferences and their motivations; I also wanted to be able to apply some immediate interventions to better facilitate student learning in this context, if needed. While the KLSI has been widely used and evaluated in various pedagogical contexts (Coffield et al., 2004; Chang et al., 2011), I am not aware of any study of the application of the RMP in the context of student learning about motivation. The Classroom Assessment Techniques were applied in this project within an undergraduate foundational leadership class (26 students) at Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick, in the fall term of 2010, as follows:[2]

1. *Administration of both the RMP and KLSI students (September 15-22, 2010):*
   The RMP was done by students online outside of class time, with a report created automatically. They completed the KLSI in a paper-based version.
2. *Evaluation of results and debriefing in class (September 23-29, 2010):*
   The individual RMP reports were sent to the individual students and all scores were manually entered into an anonymous comparison matrix (see Appendix). Both the anonymized individual results and the comparison matrix were further explained and discussed in class, using

[2] In the original classroom assessment project the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) based on Kouzes and Posner (2007) was also administered and assessed. However, given the particular perspective of the LPI on leadership and leadership development, findings in regard to this particular inventory have not been included and discussed in this paper.

PowerPoint presentation, group activities, and a Q & A session. Similarly, the individual KLSI results were sent to the individual students and the model and theory of the KLSI was explained to students in class, using the same tools.

3. *In-class quick survey of student perceived accuracy of RMP (September 29, 2010):*
   The question "How accurate is the RMP for me personally?" was asked in class and the results were recorded. Issues of perceived inaccuracy were immediately addressed.
4. *Interviews and focus-groups prepared, conducted and initially evaluated (Oct 1 – Nov 30, 2010):*
   Detailed semi-structured interviews and follow-up focus groups assessing student learning about learning and motivation, and their assessment of the applied tools in this context, were prepared and evaluated together with a research assistant. The assistant conducted the interviews and focus groups without the professor being present.
5. *Final analysis evaluation and interpretation of collected data (December 2010-January 2011):*
   The qualitative data resulting from the interviews and focus groups was analyzed and summarized based on the topics as suggested in the structure for the interview and focus group conversations. A simplified grounded theory approach was used to identify key and recurring topics (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998).

Findings

25 of 26 students completed the RMP online and 24 of 26 students completed the paper-based version of the KLSI (Mengel, 2011 a, slide 19). Completion of these tools was optional and a few students chose to opt out.

The RMP scores for the student sample (see Appendix) indicate the range of individual differences among the students; the scores averaged out for all but one basic desire. They ranged from -0.4 to 0.3 and thus are not significantly different from the general population. "Idealism" – the basic desire for idealism and social justice (Reiss, 2000, 2008, 2013) – yielded the only score for this sample that was outside of the average (+0.8). This score indicates an above average need of most students in this sample to engage in activities around idealistic goals and issues of social justice. For "Curiosity" – the basic desire for learning, knowledge and truth (Reiss, 2000, 2008, 2013) and thus the one most relevant in comparison with the KLSI – student scores average at 0.1, with four high scores (plus two borderline high average) and three low scores (plus two borderline low average). This average score also reflects the normal distribution of this desire of the general population.

Regarding the KLSI results for the student sample, the majority (14 of 24) has "accommodating" as their only (six), major (seven) or minor (one) learning style preference. Seven out of 24 scored as "diverging" learners (three clearly scored as "diverging"; for one it was the major learning style; and for three it was the minor learning style). Six out of 24 scored as "assimilating" learners (four clearly scored as "assimilating"; for one, it was the major learning style; and for another, it was the minor learning style). Five out of 24 scored as "converging"learners (none clearly scored as "converging"; for one, it was

the major learning style; and for four, it was the minor learning style). These results are obviously particular to this class and may well differ vastly in other contexts. For example, in a study by Chang et al. (2011), a relative majority (42.9%) of a sample of MBA-students demonstrated an "assimilating" learning style (p. 275).

Following the debriefing in class, students were asked about their perception of the accuracy of the RMP: The majority (16 of 26) found it either "very accurate" (two of 26) or "rather accurate" (14 of 26); ten of 26 found it to be "50:50 accurate" and no student found it "rather inaccurate" or "very inaccurate" (Mengel, 2011 a, slide 18).

In the survey, students were asked the following 3 questions for both the RMP and the KLSI:

- How would you describe your in-class experience with the inventory?
- How did the inventory help you better understand yourself and others?
- How did the inventory help you learn about leadership? What did you learn?

15 of 26 students responded to those questions between October 1 and October 10, 2010 (Mengel, 2011 b).

Regarding the RMP, the following key topics and recurring statements emerged:

- The RMP helped them to understand values and passions of self and others.
- The RMP connects motivation with leadership and learning; it helps them to better understand differences in leadership and learning styles between self and others.
- The RMP helps them understand situational leadership, shared leadership, and different leadership styles and preferences.
- They considered learning in general and leadership learning in particular more "tangible" and "relatable" (to real life) than without their knowledge about the RMP.
- They found debriefing and discussion of the RMP results in class "helpful"and "fun".
- They judged presentation about and discussion of the RMP and its background in class "repetitive", too deep, and too long.

For the KLSI, the following key topics and recurring statements emerged:

- Students found presentation, debriefing and discussion of the KLSI results in class "fun".
- They found the results "repetitive" and confirming already existing knowledge.
- They could not remember details of their KLSI and its interpretation.

The focus group conversations further corroborated and complemented the results of the survey Mengel, 2011 b) as follows:

- Students considered that having them read the textbook (Reiss, 2000) about the RMP, in addition to presenting the material in class, was redundant; either one of those approaches was considered sufficient, helpful and interesting.
- Being able to discuss the nuances and differences in scores and how this relates to real-life and leadership situations in class made this a deep and rich learning experience.
- Self-assessment, observation of others, self-reflection and group discussions were important learning activities and approaches to effectively learn about individual differences, the need to listen to and tolerate others, and to embrace different leadership styles and preferences.
- A highlighted lesson: Everyone has some leadership potential; there is no right way of leading others.
- More activities instead of theory in class would further increase engagement.
- The KLSI was not as engaging and "sticky" as the RMP.
- Teacher enthusiasm for topic and approach translates into student engagement.

Discussion

Based on the findings of the classroom assessment project, the introduction of the RMP to this class had resulted in several benefits and also warranted some opportunities for further improvement.

The majority of students perceived the tool as very or rather accurate. Interpretations of surveys regarding accuracy of personality profiles should, however, be done with care in the context of the "Forer Effect" (also known as "Barnum effect") as discussed in Forer (1949) and in Dickson and Kelly (1985). Since personality profiles offer comments based on statistical analysis of large populations, these comments may be applicable to many people and therefore perceived as accurate by most ("something for everyone"). Yet, the level of agreement of students with their "test" results may provide some indication of their level of engagement with this material in class and beyond.

The resulting scores and their comparison and discussion in class contributed significantly to, and in fact deepened, the learning of students about what motivates them, how they discover meaning, and why they do (or don't do) things. The results also helped students to understand and appreciate the existing ranges of personal motivators, preferences and leadership styles in the context of their own class and of extra-curricular and leadership experiences.

Students experienced the range of different motivational priorities as representative of those in the general population. As a consequence, experiences and reflections in class will immediately help students to make sense of what they experience in "real life" situations regarding different leadership styles and preferences. In comparison, learning about the classes' overall above-average need for "idealism" and social justice was an "aha" to students in terms of their alignment with the RC values (Mengel, 2006) and in contrast to the general population in "real life".

In their varying learning needs and preferences, students of this class were not different from the general population: some enjoy learning a lot, some prefer to learn in practical contexts, and there are many in between. Beyond their shared passion for "idealism", they come to class for diverse reasons and are motivated by very different things. To keep all students engaged, this variety of needs and preferences needs to be considered by offering multiple and different learning opportunities and activities. The balance between theory presentation, more engaging activities and practical applications needs to better reflect individual needs and preferences by offering more and different learning opportunities that students can choose from.

The RMP and its in-depth experience and discussion contributed well to achieving the learning outcome of "knowing self and others" and to the understanding that "leadership is everyone's business": it is about what you do and how you do it (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 337f.).

Reflecting on the value added by including the KLSI in the course material, I could draw additional conclusions. The KLSI provided students with insights about how they learn and about their preferred learning behaviour. The KLSI further clearly revealed that the majority of students have some preference for the "accommodating" style of learning: they like to put their knowledge into action, adapt well, are intuitive, and practical. This clearly corroborates the earlier point about the need to have multiple opportunities of practice and application integrated into the course design. While the results of the KLSI and the average RMP score of the student sample in "curiosity" support each other, I noted no significant relations between the RMP and the KLSI. The individual differences in the students' need for learning as assessed by the RMP, is representative of the general population. However, the KLSI preferences in this class may vary widely from other classes and from the general population.

While many students enjoyed the exposure to the KLSI in addition to the RMP, the overall added value of the KLSI for students appeared to be marginal. Learning through various approaches and activities represented in the Kolb learning cycle (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005) apparently supports comprehensive student engagement and meaningful learning experiences for all.

Application in 2012/2013

The findings of the classroom assessment project, as presented and discussed above, resulted in the following activities and changes for the re-run of the leadership foundation course in 2012/2013:

1. The course used one instrument only (RMP) instead of two.
2. I no longer surveyed students regarding their perception of accuracy.
3. While the textbook (Reiss, 2000) was still required, I reduced the time spent on general explanations in class by providing a brief animated online presentation (Mengel, 2012).

4. I offered in-depth debriefing of the RMP with individual students (30-45 minutes) as an option which the majority of students took advantage of; this further individualized the debriefing and freed up class time for engaging discussions and more interactive learning opportunities.
5. I spent more time on situating the RMP and its application in the context of personal development (self-leadership) and leadership (e.g., class-discussions and reflections about "what do the RMP results imply in terms of my/our different leadership preferences, challenges, and opportunities?").

Conclusion and recommendations

This classroom assessment project provided insights about individual differences regarding student learning and motivation that will certainly further inform my approach to teaching and learning in the future. Many of the lessons learned do apply to courses outside of the field of leadership studies and thus may be helpful for anyone teaching elements of self-assessment, self-reflection and personal development. Using personality profiles like the RMP[3] may be helpful in any teaching context where self-leadership, personal development, and learning outcomes similar to "knowing self and others" are embedded in the program or course. Inventories such as the RMP help students gain a "richer and thicker knowledge of self … [and of] self as a leader" (Mengel, 2011 a, slide 28); they also provide students with valuable knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding their own learning preferences and approaches. Furthermore, personality assessment tools like the RMP can provide us, as educators, with valuable information about the individual needs and preferences of students – including potential challenges and opportunities – that can substantially help us to better address these needs and preferences in any given class. Finally, the RMP integrated well with but also went beyond the KLSI (learning why vs. learning how – Desires vs. Behaviour).

"Over-feeding" students with too much information about too many tools and instruments can lead to the perception of repetition and thus disengage students from their learning; on the other hand, offering different options regarding self-analysis, self-evaluation and self-learning using various models and approaches may provide students with more choices and thus enrich the learning experience. Applying classroom assessment techniques (Angelo & Cross, 1993), particularly in the context of a classroom assessment project, can harvest valuable information that immediately and further stimulates reflective student learning, that informs intentional course design and delivery, and that substantially contributes to the scholarship of teaching and learning. The application of both classroom assessment techniques and personality profiles can also be crucial in overcoming our own learning style (and by extension teaching style) preferences and thus allow us to keep the learner in the centre of our teaching.

[3] Over time I have also used and appreciated other tools like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), DISC, and Enneagram in the context of my teaching.

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Biography

Dr. Thomas Mengel, PMP, Professor of Leadership Studies, Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick, Canada, email: tmengel@unb.ca.

Thomas has been teaching in the field of leadership for more than 30 years. He holds academic degrees in theology, adult education (minor in psychology), history, and computer science (minor in education and business administration). Before joining academia full-time in 2005, Thomas has held various project management and leadership positions and worked as an entrepreneur and consultant in different European and North American organizational contexts. His major focus in research, teaching and his professional and entrepreneurial practice is on the significance of motivation, values, and meaning in the context of project management, leadership, and leadership education. He is particularly interested in supporting personal and professional growth as well as leadership development.

Appendix

RMP scores of 25 students (columns scores for individual students and average across all; rows individual scores for all participants (and average) per basic desire (Mengel, 2011 a, slide 19):

Desire	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Average
Acceptance	1.65	-0.47	-0.35	-0.24	0.94	0.47	-0.35	-0.47	1.18	1.41	-1.76	0.24	-1.29	1.06	0.35	0.12	0.35	0.24	1.29	1.41	0.71	-1.06	1.18	0.94	0.94	0.34
Curiosity	0.00	-0.16	1.56	-0.78	0.78	0.00	-1.25	-0.78	-0.31	-1.41	0.47	0.31	1.09	-0.94	-0.31	0.78	1.25	1.88	-0.47	0.31	-0.62	0.62	-0.47	0.16	0.62	0.09
Eating	0.76	-0.87	-1.69	-1.34	-0.64	0.29	-0.52	0.17	0.99	0.76	-0.87	-0.17	1.45	-0.17	0.17	-0.41	1.10	-0.29	0.64	-0.76	-0.06	-0.64	0.17	-2.00	0.06	-0.15
Family	-0.20	-0.74	-0.34	-1.01	-0.74	-0.07	-0.34	-1.28	-0.07	0.34	-0.74	0.34	0.20	-0.88	-0.34	-0.07	-1.55	1.28	0.74	-0.20	0.74	-0.88	-1.15	-0.74	0.47	-0.29
Honor	0.76	0.76	2.00	0.15	-1.52	0.00	-1.82	-0.30	-0.30	-0.30	-0.15	0.00	-1.67	-1.82	-0.61	1.97	0.45	1.36	0.15	1.06	-0.61	-0.15	0.00	-0.15	-0.45	-0.05
Idealism	1.30	1.03	-0.21	0.89	1.99	0.89	-0.21	0.75	2.00	-0.89	0.34	0.07	1.71	-1.03	0.48	-0.07	1.99	2.00	1.58	1.85	0.48	-0.07	0.89	0.34	1.85	0.80
Independe	1.10	-0.27	-0.14	-1.10	-0.96	-0.14	-0.96	-0.96	-0.41	-0.27	-1.23	-0.82	-2.00	-0.14	-1.23	0.41	0.41	0.82	-0.41	-0.41	-0.41	-0.68	-1.64	0.82	-1.92	-0.50
Power	0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-2.00	0.12	-0.88	-1.00	0.88	0.12	0.38	1.12	1.00	1.12	-0.88	0.12	0.12	1.50	1.62	0.12	0.75	0.75	0.62	-0.50	-2.00	0.62	0.14
Order	0.88	0.00	0.88	-1.32	-1.10	-1.76	-0.99	-0.11	-1.98	0.11	-1.76	0.33	-1.32	0.22	-0.66	0.99	0.22	0.22	-2.00	-0.33	1.54	-1.76	-1.21	-0.33	-0.22	-0.46
Physical	0.00	0.50	1.00	0.00	-0.40	0.20	-1.10	0.50	-1.60	1.30	1.30	-0.20	1.30	-1.50	-0.60	-1.20	1.30	0.80	0.40	0.70	1.50	-0.70	0.60	-0.40	-0.30	0.14
Romance	-0.82	-1.18	0.00	-1.36	-1.09	-0.64	0.36	0.36	-1.27	0.18	0.09	-1.09	1.18	-0.36	-1.73	-1.27	0.45	0.73	-0.09	0.27	-1.55	0.55	0.09	-0.82	-0.27	-0.37
Saving	0.18	-0.06	-1.12	-1.12	-0.88	0.65	-0.88	-0.88	-0.88	-0.18	-0.29	-0.06	-0.88	-0.06	-0.18	0.53	0.18	0.53	-0.18	-0.53	-1.59	-1.24	-0.18	-1.24	-0.76	-0.44
Social	-1.37	0.49	-0.57	-0.17	1.03	0.23	-0.57	0.63	-0.04	-1.64	1.43	1.16	2.00	0.23	0.36	-2.00	1.16	0.63	1.03	0.89	-0.71	1.96	1.29	-2.00	-0.17	0.21
Status	1.97	-0.62	-0.43	-1.68	-0.24	0.24	-0.91	-0.62	1.01	-0.43	1.30	1.20	-0.91	1.01	-1.20	-0.91	0.72	-0.62	-1.30	-0.72	0.05	0.43	1.01	0.72	-0.24	-0.05
Tranquility	0.53	-0.84	1.16	-0.63	-0.32	1.37	-0.42	-1.37	-0.11	0.42	-1.05	-0.21	-0.95	0.32	-0.84	-0.95	1.58	1.26	0.32	-0.32	-0.74	-1.05	-0.74	-1.37	-0.95	-0.24
Vengeance	0.64	-0.54	-1.13	-1.03	-0.74	-0.54	0.25	0.74	1.13	-0.54	-0.74	0.93	-0.93	-1.03	-0.34	1.52	-0.34	0.25	-0.25	-0.05	-1.03	-0.25	-0.74	-0.64	-1.13	-0.26

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS GRADE INFLATION

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Abstract

Grade inflation and grade compression are issues that have been identified as problems in both Canada and the US. Among the various reasons cited for inflation and compression are student and parental expectations, departmental and institutional competition for students, faculty desire to receive better teaching evaluations, increased generosity and better teaching, and also administrative pressure to attract and retain students. After introducing research on inflation and compression, this paper provides simple strategies to respond to rising grades. These include grading guidelines, rubrics, qualitative descriptive grading, including rank on transcripts, mathematical methods to adjust grades, and providing examples of graded work.

Does grade inflation exist?

While teaching part time, a department head indicated there was a problem with my grades. I asked what he meant and was told the grades in my classes were too high. In response to his claim, I explained in great detail that I had developed various strategies, such as allowing students choice in their work, choice in weighting their assessment items, I was very careful about my teaching, I allowed for an iterative approach to their work, allowed for resubmission, etc. These were never understood as significant reasons why my students had earned higher grades. The discussion continued for some weeks with the continued assertion that grade inflation was the culprit. This experience in fact piqued my interest in grade inflation and further had me asking of the phenomena of higher grades, is it grade inflation or better teaching and pedagogy?

Rising Grades

Research by Anglein and Meng (2000), Bartlet and Wasley (1999), and Johnson (2003) demonstrate very clearly that grades at the undergraduate university level are on the rise. There is significant concern across campuses in Canada and the US that grades are being artificially inflated due to a number of factors that include student retention, student expectations, parental pressures, recruitment, retention, and faculty who wish to secure

positive teaching evaluations and reduce student complaints. This concern is reflected in the fact that a US based website dedicated to the issue and maintained by Stuart Rojstaczer contains graphs, data and documentation regarding the rise in grades throughout the US. Rojstaczer and Healy (2010) find that in the US student grades have been rising since the 1930s and took a sharp rise in the 1960s (p.1). Since that time, the average GPA for students has risen from approximately 2.3 to 3.3, with private schools having an even higher rise of 0.1 to 0.2 (p.2), though private schools do not better educate their students (p.3). Rojstaczer and Healy also find that grade variability is compressed in the upper end (p.1), i.e., more student grades are clustered together and they are higher than ever. This means the distinction between excellent and average students is becoming harder to distinguish. Also, interestingly, technical and science schools grade lower than others with a 0.15 average lower GPA (p.3). Overall, students in the sciences have lower grades, the social sciences are just slightly higher while the humanities are significantly higher (p.4). Essentially, grade inflation is not equally distributed across disciplines. Those in the humanities receive higher grades, up to an average of 0.4 higher GPA (p.3).

Bartlett and Wasley's (2008) work on grade inflation demonstrates the meteoric rise of grades at Florida State University. In a 9 year period from 1998 to 2007, the number of A's rose in classes from mathematics to chemistry to philosophy. In some cases, more than doubling. A's awarded in oceanography rose from 19% of students to 57%, while in mathematics, A's awarded rose from 12% to 23%. Johnson (2003) finds the following percentages of A's in the late 1990s: Duke, 45%, Harvard, 46% and Dartmouth, 44% (pp.2-3). At Duke, 15% of grades were C+ or lower (p.2); therefore 85% of grades were A's or B's. Rojstaczer and Healy (2012) note that in the US 43% of grades in public post-secondary educational institution are A's and this rises to 49% in private institutions. (p.3)

So, what of the Canadian context? Anglin and Meng (2000) find fairly dramatic increases in grades at Ontario universities, but not as dramatic as the US. Comparing grades from 1973-74 and then 20 years later. The findings note, overall, an increase in GPA for 11 of 12 courses (p.362). Interestingly, the courses with the highest grades, Music, English and French, continue to be the highest but now with even higher grades after an increase of as much as .59 on the GPA scale. They note in the Arts grade inflation is "especially noticeable … where 16 of 24 courses-university combinations showed statistically significant grade inflation" (p.363). And although Anglin and Meng indicate that grade inflation isn't uniform, it is a problem for all disciplines (p.363). Like the US, grade inflation is accompanied by grade compression with "Statistically significant increases in the fraction of a class receiving an A" (p.363). And, again like the US, the lowest grades are found in the sciences while the arts grant the highest grades and experience the highest inflation.

Grading Policy Changes

As grades in the US and Canada rise, some institutions and governments are responding with new grading policies. One strategy in response to rising grades includes the Texas Honest Transcript Bill that, if passed, will require that the class average appear on all student transcripts to provide context. This approach is at least partially reflected in Rojstaczer and Healy (2012) who tell us that, "Many of the problems with grading today could be rectified if those who evaluated graduates had readily available measures of how individual institutions and major discipline areas grade so that side-by-side comparisons could be made" (p.4). The Texas bill may not reduce increasing grades, but does provide context for student grades. Rojstaczer and Healy (2012) even suggest a national database of grades be established in the US to allow for comparison. Student ranking, another possibility, has been suggested by Johnson (2003) and seems to be getting some traction. The University of North Carolina and the University of California, Berkeley are both considering percentile ranks and class averages on all student transcripts. Other possible responses include achievement ranking (indexing), a weighted class ranking system that measures a student's academic performance relative to this of classmates. Johnson (2003) also suggests a grading policy appear with transcripts. Another possible strategy is to provide qualitative descriptions rather than grades. This currently happens at some institutions, such as York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies (graduate students only), while many universities have a fail/pass system, and others, such as California State, allow students to choose up to 6 courses per undergrad degree that are graded simply credit/no-credit. Additionally, York University has a pass/fail alternative for students who have successfully passed 24 credits. Students can then take as many as 12 credits as pass/fail and the student receives a written evaluation.

For admission to grad school and possibly for employers, these changes can at least partially address rising grades as they appears on transcripts. They do so by providing class-wide and even national context. However, what of the immediate issue of rising grades in individual classes? What are the issues that are driving grades higher? Rojstaczer and Healy (2012) note that such approaches "would not likely deter grade inflation" (p.4). Before we address immediate strategies for responding to rising grades, it is important to at least consider reasons for such an increase, to help develop appropriate solutions.

Why are grades increasing?

One reason for rising grades are teaching evaluations. Specifically, faculty who want to receive favourable teaching evaluations to garner support for tenure and other professional

promotions. Since "instructors can often double their odds of receiving high evaluations from students simply by awarding A's rather than B's or C's" (Johnson, 2004, p.83), it seems rather sensible to provide students with higher grades in exchange for good evaluations.

Other reasons for grade increases suggested by Anglin and Meng (2000) include faculty being more generous, as well as student work and/or teaching having improved (p.365). They also recommend further study to determine some more explicit causation, i.e., to determine if generosity, improved teaching, or improved student work is the cause. I would extend this to suggest some combination of these, and perhaps other factors currently unknown, are at play. Anglin and Meng also point to university competition for students and inter-departmental competition for students, with some limited research to back this explanation, as cause for grade inflation. Give them high grades, and they will come seems to be the mantra of departments and universities of late.

If teaching effectiveness is on the rise, it would seem reasonable that student grades would also rise. As Benton and Cashin (2012) assert, "the best indicant of effective teaching is student learning. Other things being equal, the students of more effective teachers should learn more" (p.3). This should, in theory, drive grades upward to reflect this increased learning and the higher quality of work that students produce. Of course, teaching effectiveness would have to be a national, or really international, phenomena for this argument to hold up and explain rising grades to the extent that they are found in the US and Canada. With the rise and development of SoTL, scholarship of teaching and learning, over the last few decades and the establishment of teaching centres on campuses across Canada, better teaching would be expected. Improved teaching and improved learning could certainly account for some rise in grades.

Other reasons for increased grades may be expectations from high school. Finne (2010) finds that grades for students drop 11.9% upon entry into university for those with high school averages of 90% or higher. Although this results in grade shock for these students, it may also be that the expectations of these students drive grades higher than expected. That is, one factor that is ameliorating this drop, which could be more significant, is the expectations of students. Extremely high grades in high school may extend the expectation of high grades in university. Students met with grade decline, may then respond by demanding higher grades or, in fact, change their future habits to achieve higher grades. This, of course, is speculative and would require further research in the area.

Anecdotally, I've heard it said that parents' grade expectations also intersect with students' grade expectations. Students may want grades to ensure a sense of success and also

to maintain scholarships and funding, while parents may see their children's value and success reflected in grades. Additionally, administrators want to attract students and to retain them. Higher grades certainly have a tendency to be appealing to potential students, and can be a factor in institutional and departmental choice. Offering students higher grades secures their scholarships and also the administrative desire for the revenue that accompanies student registration. As mentioned above, faculty who desire good teaching evaluations may offer higher grades. Another benefit to faculty who award higher grades is a reduction in student complaints. Fewer student complaints means less time responding to inquiries, giving additional feedback, and dealing with upset, at times despondent, and demanding students.

Are Rising Grades a Problem?

Since grades are "used by teachers to motivate students" (Rojstaczer and Healy, 2012, p.1), inflating grades would have the result of demotivating students. If students don't need to work hard to achieve a high grade, they simply won't. Of course this also means that high grades have little, if any, meaning. If a high grade is easy to achieve, and if all students are achieving high grades due to grade compression, then the grade becomes meaningless. Grades will not resonate with significance. A further problem that may evolve as a result of grade inflation is that students may feel compelled to challenge lower grades when awarded, if many others are receiving higher grades and if they are able to achieve high grades easily in other classes.

As previously mentioned, grade inflation is accompanied by grade compression. This means a lower standard and the potential abandonment of rigour. This then translates into less capable students and, we might claim, an ill-informed cohort. This can lead to future failures in grad school, where expectations may be higher, and also difficulties in professional contexts.

Another problem associated with grade inflation and compression is that student progress and improvement is not only difficult, but impossible to achieve and to track. A low achieving student who receives A's for little work will not appreciate the areas of their work, research, writing, critical thinking, etc., that need improvement when their low quality work is evaluated as excellent. Related is the impossibility of communicating to students, and for them to understand, the differences in the quality of work.

Grades are on the rise and it is more than an insignificant problem. If we want students to be able, competent, contributing citizens, responding to the problem seems fitting.

Strategies to Respond to Increasing Grades

In very real terms, we have to address what happens in our teaching and classroom dynamics to counter grade inflation and compression. What follows are practical concrete ways to do so.

Adjustment schemes as outlined in Johnson (2003) represent one possible response to rising grades. Using a mathematical approach, Johnson, pointing to work by Larkey and Cauklin, wants to "provide a simple method for adjusting student GPAs for disparities in grading practices across disciplines and instructors" (p.211). This is done by correcting for averages that represent either lenient or tougher grading (p.216). The result, of course, is that some GPAs will be adjusted down while others will be adjusted up. As you might expect, this would most likely be considered a fairly controversial method to respond to rising grades. Additionally, it would not respond to individual course level grades, only to overall GPA. Though it could be applied at the course level, it would most likely be difficult logistically and resource-wise.

Another strategy would be to have a short assignment, quiz, etc., early in the term. This communicates expectations early. Students then understand your standards, what they must do in the future to improve, and what they can expect for future grades. It may be prudent to give this early work a low weight, such as 10%, to allow students to respond in their future work with more effort, better research, etc., i.e., give them the ability to achieve better grades if their skills and abilities allow. Outlining your expectations in the course outline, the contract between the professor and the students, is also an important way to set the stage regarding grade expectations and your evaluative rigour. To this end, develop descriptive documentation that outlines in detail the skills, competencies, and expertise required to achieve particular grades. This would mean a description of what is required to achieve an A+, A, A-, B+, and so on. Students then have a very clear idea of what they must do to achieve their desired grade, and will not be prepared for the grade they receive when this is reflected in the description for their level of expertise and demonstrated knowledge. I call these grading guidelines. As an alternative, the grading guidelines could also be co-developed with students during the first day of classes.

Rubrics have become quite common in university classes. They are helpful and efficient tools in grading student work. They also make grading transparent to students, help students understand clearly their level of competence for particular criterion, and help you justify your grading. Rubrics therefore help moderate grade inflation, obliging the professor to deploy consistent uniform grading. When made available to students in advance, rubrics improve transparency and expectations further. Students know what the criteria are and what they

need to do to achieve a level of competency, and they understand rubrics as more objective and therefore fairer. Further, developing rubrics helps you understand what is important in assessing student work and helps you standardize and thus manage swelling grades. This translates into a good strategy to respond to grade inflation.

Related to rubrics and grading guidelines, providing example work to students is helpful in communicating your expectations to students and thus tempering grading inflation. It is important not only to provide examples of exemplary work, but examples of a full range of grades. Students can then make more direct comparisons to similarly assessed work and understand how they compare. It provides them with a wider context in which to understand the value of their work.

Another strategy in responding to grade inflation is to have a policy regarding retesting and resubmission of work. If retesting and resubmission of work are not allowed, students will be prepared for this. Along with explaining your policy regarding retesting and resubmitting work, it is good practice to explain your policy regarding attendance (easily excused or required) and any grading policies and practices (not on a scale and therefore expect failures or if your grading policy include a maximum number of A's or minimum number of failures). It is good practice to present your policy on the first day and review before the first assignment. This allows students to make informed decisions about how they will move forward with their work and prepare them for any inevitabilities, such as failures or grades lower than perhaps they might otherwise expect or anticipate.

Expectations and foci vary across disciplines. It is not unusual for the sciences to be more focused on content knowledge and recall. This may not be the case in the humanities, where analysis may be more important. It is therefore essential to outline specific disciplinary expectations for your classes such as an emphasis on writing style, a focus of research, the importance of problem solving, content retention, etc. Again, transparency and clarification are important to manage student expectations and to communicate your requirements for high achievement.

Finally, asking students what their expectations are early in the term and responding, perhaps citing some of your policies, expectations, guidelines, etc., as outlined above, is also a recommended practice to address increasing grades. Helping students understand the rationale for your policies, expectations, and guidelines is likewise recommended. Citing some of the research in the area of grade inflation, the fact that it can demotivate students, etc., helps immensely in contextualizing and helping students understand, appreciate, and accept their grades.

Conclusion

Grade inflation is complex. For some, grade compression and inflation are philosophical and ethical issues. Some faculty, as Johnson (2003) tells us, "object to the requirement for them to grade students. Wilson asserts that "the humanities have become hostile to hierarchy, and grading is inherently hierarchical"(p.234). There appears then to be resistance combined with a moral response to the stratification embedded in grades. Grade compression could be accounted for by this moral concern, though this requires further investigation. If you find that grade inflation and compression are a concern, some of the strategies suggested above may help respond to and address both these issues.

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INCORPORATING THE VISUAL INTO AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT: TAKE A HIKE, TAKE A PHOTO, CREATE A VISUAL GUIDE

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Abstract

Providing opportunities to challenge students in their learning, expand their horizons, make "real world" connections, and offer an interesting alternative to a more standard assessment activity, is the ultimate goal in creating assessment activities that take students outside the classroom and their dorms.

It can be difficult to develop assessments appropriate to students early in their undergraduate years that are authentic and relatable to the world around them as well as challenging and fun. Incorporating visuals more extensively in assessment can serve to create more authentic learning experiences for students, particularly in disciplines where the visual element is significant. In this short article a number of activities are explored: (i) photographing and writing captions for course-related material; (ii) recording details (distances, directions, surroundings, etc.) of a journey or planning a trip related to course content; (iii) undertaking an independent design project related to the course material; and (iv) incorporating photographs and diagrams into exam settings.

In sharing their work either with classmates or community/school groups through the online environment (or in hard copy), students are challenged to produce high-quality work knowing that it will be viewed by peers and others, generate interesting materials with a specific audience in mind, write effectively and for a purpose beyond the grade, pursue learning at higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, as well as make connections between their classroom environment, the material they are learning, and the physical and social world around them.

Introduction

Students come into our classrooms with a wealth of prior experiences, diverse ways of approaching learning, and varied motivation. We likely hope these students will develop critical thinking skills, learn to appreciate our discipline as we do, and leave the course knowing more than when they arrived. The concept of constructive alignment (Biggs, 1996) challenges us to create a pathway that links our learning outcomes, our teaching approach and the activities we create, with how we chose to assess the students' learning. Meyers and Nulty (2009) suggest that in our curriculum design one of the aspects we should consider is the creation of opportunities for students that are "authentic, real-world and relevant" (p.567). Newmann and Archbald (1992) first introduced the concept of authentic achievement, and propose that production of knowledge (rather than simple reproduction of knowledge) that is built on prior knowledge, in-depth understanding, and integration, and which has value beyond assessment,

identifies authentic achievement. Wiggins (1993) builds on the work of Newmann and Archbald (1992) and defines authentic learning experiences as:

> … ***engaging*** *and* ***worthy problems*** *or* ***questions of importance****, in which students must* ***use knowledge*** *to fashion performances* ***effectively and creatively****. The tasks are either* ***replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field*** (p.229)

In highlighting phrases in this definition, I zero in particularly on the following key aspects: (1) "…worthy problems or questions of importance" engage students, as they extend their thinking, are non-routine, and have relevance within their disciplinary context. Cumming and Maxwell (1999) present several variants on the interpretation of authentic assessment, and stress the important of contextualizing assessment through coherence between learning goals, teaching processes, learning and achievement, and assessment procedures; similar in many ways to Biggs' concept of constructive alignment (1996). (2) That students should "use knowledge… effectively and creatively", serves to encourage deep understanding, application, and thinking outside the box; and (3) problems that are real-world are meaningful and encourage critical thinking, evaluation, and synthesis. These components not only combine to engage students at higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001), as they stretch students to apply, analyze, evaluate, synthesize and create, they also serve to challenge us as instructors to consider the disciplinary context, as well as where our students are on the novice-expert continuum, and how this context impacts on our assessment at a given time.
In disciplinary contexts where observational skills are significant, such as the nature sciences, geography, and environmental studies, the incorporation of visuals into assessments, particularly where visuals form a significant component of our teaching, provides for enhancing authenticity in our assessments. If one of my learning outcomes is to have students "think like an earth scientist/geographer/ environmental scientist," then it is reasonable that some of the assessment, to be authentic, should incorporate observations and the ability to "read" visuals. What follows is an outline of 4 visual-rich assessment activities from my own teaching that attempt to encapsulate the essence of authentic assessment in the nature sciences and geography. In each, students are required to assess something based on observation or produce visuals from observation. In creating and using these activities, in addition to authenticity, I wanted to encourage students to step outside their classroom, dorm room, and even their texts, and extend the meaning of what they are learning in new contexts. Each of these activities involves a strong visual or observational component or activity, and while these ideas were generated in the context of earth sciences and geography specifically, they are broadly applicable across a number of disciplines, particularly those disciplines grounded in observation.

Take 4 ideas…

1. It is common for novice students in earth sciences and geography to experience difficulty with concepts of scale and direction. An assessment activity that I have introduced and found

to be effective in both earth sciences and geography courses, requires students to find directions, give directions, locate a feature, measure distances, describe a specific object or object type, or sketch an object, or map, to scale. This activity takes students outside the traditional paper-and-pencil version commonly assigned in lab books and in addition to honing their observation skills together with their understanding of scale and distance, they have the opportunity to integrate what they have learned as they make links and connections that were not previously explicit: it could be argued that they essentially have the opportunity to produce knowledge rather than simply reproduce knowledge. This activity takes students outside the classroom into their wider neighbourhood as they develops skill in careful observation, measurement, and scale, and refine their descriptive and concise writing skills. When weather does not cooperate, a related activity invites students to search Google Earth for a geographically interesting region of their choice, and summarize the geographic/geologic/environmental features observed. Both of these activities involve writing the type of careful and measured summary commonly found in professional reports, and require students to apply, evaluate, and integrate their knowledge: when set in the context of writing directions, sketching, measuring for a purpose, or creating a class-generated map of a given type of feature for a newcomer or a tourist to the region, this may add an increased element of authenticity. A word of caution: Cumming and Maxwell (1999) warn against camouflage, wherein real-world elements are "dressed-up" to increase the appearance of authenticity. Camouflage may actually detract from the original intent, and focus the student's attention on something other than the intent of the assessment. In the above example, if students focus too much on the context of the tourist and not enough on the geographic/geologic context, then Cummings and Maxwell (1999) would argue that camouflage has interfered with the main intent, and the authenticity is inhibited. It is up to us to ensure that students understand the key purpose of the assessment, and what is critical to develop.

2. Photo-a-feature: One of the assignments my students have enjoyed involves taking a photo of some geologic/geographic feature and writing a short, relevant figure caption on something related to what we are studying. These photos are posted to a "blog", and classmates have opportunities to comment on, or question the photos of others. This activity demands that students apply their knowledge of class material, make careful observation and description, practice using scale, and share their findings with their peers, creating a real-audience experience. Such an activity simulates a component of standard field classification and interpretation, even to the point where as professionals, we typically share our field findings and photos with our peers, and get input and suggestions from them. Students often tell me they take a family member or a friend along as they take the photos: this activity has the potential to enhance student learning, as they share their growing understanding with others, as well as serve as outreach. Nature scientists and geographers must constantly grapple with the natural world around them: noting and photographing aspects of the natural world are key activities of these disciplines, and such an assessment serves to invite students into an aspect of their future professional world: they take a step closer on the road to expertise as they develop the skills and authentic thinking to field work in the natural sciences.

3. Photo Essay: An extension of the photo-a-feature activity outlined above is the photo essay. In this, students take a series of photos on a particular theme and add a short, clear and concise narration. Typically students will include 8-16 photos, depending on the nature of the theme they have selected. Although there is a written narrative, the "story" should unfold clearly in the photos themselves. Mayer and Anderson (1991) suggest that text combined with visuals enhance learning: this activity requires students to combine a visual with text, increasing the potential for learning. Further, this activity demands that students engage in an extended expression of a given theme: they must synthesize their findings into a logical and meaningful sequence. In our highly visual world, this assignment requires students to reflect on what they have learned, consider how they might represent it using visuals as well as words, and create an aesthetically-significant product that can be shared online, in class, or with the greater community. This assessment requires students to explicate their prior knowledge base, build their understanding of this knowledge through integration to the point where they may actually produce new knowledge rather than simply reproducing existing knowledge in this context, and finally there is both aesthetic and utilitarian value beyond the assessment, all of which fit into the characteristics of authentic achievement as outlined by Newmann and Archbald (1992)

4. For a number of years in most of my exams I have incorporated a component whereby students view photos or diagrams and answer questions related to these. Earth sciences and geography are highly visual disciplines, and our teaching increasingly incorporates photos and diagrams. Given that we use these visuals extensively in our teaching and in our understanding of our disciplines, and such visuals are common and widespread in student textbooks, it is appropriate to similarly use these techniques to assess students in an exam environment. While it is expensive to print colour photos and diagrams, it is possible to show slides on a screen during an exam, as long as we remember to request a room for just our class. For disciplines in which visuals are ubiquitous, this 20-minute interlude during an exam aligns well with the nature of the discipline. To those outside the nature science disciplines (or geography) this may not seem quite like an authentic assessment: to those within the field the ability to evaluate photographs and diagrams, make predictions, and identify beyond the immediately obvious, can be considered an example of authenticity in assessment. This is particularly true if it also aligns with the learning outcomes, the way in which the material is taught, as well as the context of the discipline; that is, the context is key in determining the authenticity of such an activity (Cumming and Maxwell, 1999).

In summary, assessments that incorporate visuals can effectively widen the spectrum of authentic assessment activities, perhaps particularly in disciplines where observation and interpretation of the visual is critical. In addition to supporting student learning, creating such assessments can be an exciting and creative challenge for us as instructors. And while we will likely find that students new to such activities need scaffolding, once they have mastered the ideas, they can rise beyond our expectations and may well enjoy the journey as they learn.

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STUDENT AND TEACHER PERSPECTIVES ON ASSESSING LEARNING AND MEASURING PROGRESS

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Abstract

University courses traditionally use tests and exams as punctuation marks that ostensibly chart how well individual students have achieved the goals of each course unit. However, students do not necessarily progress in lockstep with these markers. This being the case, how do we measure progress? Our perceptions of what happens in the classroom often depend on whether we are sitting at a desk or standing in front of the class. How do teachers know when students are making progress? How do the students know? How useful are traditional testing methods for measuring progress? Is there a match or a mismatch between student and teacher expectations of achievement? With introductory university language courses as a point of reference but applicable to other disciplines, this paper highlights the differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives and expectations of learning and of how learning is evaluated. A short discussion of some of the issues regarding assessment as seen from the instructor's perspective is followed by an exploration of the contributions of a focus group of students who shared their opinions about how they are assessed. The contributions of this focus group seem to indicate that reactions to the process of measuring and evaluating progress and of assessing whether and how well learning has taken place in the classroom are highly individual. Furthermore, it should be noted that teachers and students often approach this issue from very different perspectives.

What do we understand by assessment?

As teachers, we often ask ourselves why we do what we do in the classroom. Equally challenging can be the dilemma of how to put into practice what we feel we should be doing. One area where philosophy and practicality often collide is in assessing and measuring the progress of our students. Time-consuming when done right, often stressful and/or disappointing for students and equally so for teachers who may be challenged by some students or left wondering whether others have been listening at all since the beginning of the semester, the process of assessment can be fraught with difficulties for all of the participants.

Most teachers and students, and certainly all administrators, agree on the need for some form of evaluation or assessment, but defining and interpreting the process of assessment is not necessarily straightforward. A definition by Cheng, Rogers and Hu (2004) may serve as a useful starting point: "[Assessment is] the process of collecting information about a student to aid in decision making about the progress and language development of the student" (p. 363). Nevertheless, even though we may agree on a rough definition of what this process entails, how do we go about implementing it in the classroom? Another point for consideration is how measuring the progress a student is making differs in practical terms from assessment, and what the purpose of both of these procedures is. Assessment in some form, usually referred to as tests or exams, is standard practice in universities and is often used to measure students against an external set of criteria, rather than charting their individual growth throughout the academic semester or year. A student's results can have an enormous impact on her or his future, as competition for jobs or graduate programs is often measured in as tiny increments as any athletic contest. Although we do not usually have much choice about whether or not to use some form of assessment in our classes, educators face a challenge in reconciling the latest trends in educational theory and practice with the real-life pressures of teaching at the undergraduate level.

From the teacher's perspective

At some point, all teachers must consider several central factors which affect assessment, or the measurement of student progress. One of the many logistical considerations for a neophyte teacher is how to go about the process of assessment in the first place. Many if not most of those who teach in universities, unlike their counterparts at the primary or secondary level, have no pedagogical training and little theoretical or practical knowledge about effective assessment techniques (Cumming, 2009a; Hamp-Lyons, 2009). With a lack of direction we often fall back on traditional methods of assessment which measure learners' knowledge in numerical terms. Alternately, we may begin by using the procedures established by colleagues in our subject area even though they may not have changed substantially for many years: these often become routine and unquestioned.

An added consideration in some disciplines such as modern languages is the existence of external curriculum standards and the resulting standardization of assessment. For example, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is now widely used in Europe and in other regions to validate language ability, using descriptors as indicators of proficiency in the various communication skills. Although this is undoubtedly a valuable tool, the challenge for teachers is how to relate classroom assessment to these external standards by

transposing the descriptors used in the CEFR into assessment instruments appropriate for our individual teaching situations (Cumming, 2009b).

A third area we, as teachers, must consider is how to relate assessment to student learning, keeping in mind that one of the central goals of assessment must surely be to promote learning (Earl, 2013; Guskey, 2009; Reeves, 2007). Relating particularly to language teaching, a wealth of research examines techniques such as dynamic assessment, which focuses on ongoing teacher-student interactions as a central process for language learning (Leung, 2007; Poehner, 2008). Other similar and often overlapping forms of interactive assessment are self- or peer-assessment, goal-directed learning, formative assessment, assessment for learning, teacher-based assessment, and so on (Cumming, 2009a; Leung, 2007; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). As suggested above, however, teachers may not be familiar with these procedures.

The importance of the cognitive-affective dimension is stressed by researchers working in the area of interactive assessment (Scott, 2009). Equally important for student progress is teacher feedback, which facilitates the development of students' metacognitive awareness of how they learn (Davison & Leung, 2009; Khonbi & Sadeghi, 2012; Pearson, 2006). The type of feedback is significant, and research suggests that an overemphasis on marks and grades can be harmful to both high and low achievers (Black, 2009). Ironically, though, academic success is often measured precisely by numeric ranking, with the grade point average (GPA) being the chief indicator of how well a student is perceived to be doing.
Because of our dual roles as both teacher and assessor, we may find ourselves in a situation in which our value systems come into conflict (Troudi *et al*, 2009; Yung, 2001), leading us to question whether what we do in the classroom is assessment *for* or *of* learning. Our role as teacher implies that the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning, but often we find ourselves carrying out a pedestrian form of summative assessment to evaluate and record a student's level of achievement.

Regardless of our feelings about the effectiveness of using some form of interactive assessment in preference to the traditional methods, external factors often affect our choice of assessment instruments. Firstly, both teachers and students are subject to time constraints. Alternative forms of assessment are usually more time-consuming for both parties and although we are aware of what we should or could be doing we are often limited both in terms of time and of resources. As an example, rather than arbitrarily assigning a grade to a term paper a teacher may choose to write detailed comments on the paper and discuss these with the student, who would then rewrite the paper for a final grade. Nevertheless, class sizes have been increasing steadily over the past years and to give detailed and individualized feedback to

each student in a class of 120 is clearly unachievable. In addition, although this procedure is obviously beneficial for the student, he or she is also often working under tight time constraints and may find this extra step to be more stressful than helpful.

A second consideration is the reliability of some alternative forms of assessment, which may not be as objective as traditional methods of testing (Ishihara, 2009). We may be concerned that alternative assessment is subject to teacher bias, interpretation or preconception, or that the results are not consistent. The descriptors used are often quite subjective. For example, one of the descriptors used to assess the threshold or intermediate (B1) level of language proficiency for the CEFR is, "Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken." A decision about whether a student meets this criterion is obviously open to a large degree of interpretation on the part of the examiner.

The main question that teachers need to address is how to determine whether learning has in fact taken place and to decide how to evaluate individual students based on this determination. Students, of course, have their own perspective on this, and this issue will be explored in the next section.

From the students' perspective

To get the students' perspective, a focus group of seven students from an introductory Spanish class was interviewed. The focus group was held during scheduled class time and ran for approximately thirty minutes. As the student researcher, I replaced the instructor in the classroom, and all students in the class were asked if they wished to participate in the focus group; seven students agreed to participate and the remaining students left the classroom. To ensure confidentiality, the instructor did not know which students participated. Each student was asked to sign a waiver allowing the use of a voice recorder and allowing what they said to be presented and published anonymously.

The purpose of the focus group was to have a discussion about methods of assessment and the measurement of progress in first year language courses and courses in other disciplines. This was a semi-structured interview. The principal researcher and I had compiled a list of questions focusing on student experiences of assessment; however, the participating students were encouraged to elaborate on those topics. The focus group was voice recorded to capture everything the students had to say and to allow the researcher to be more attentively involved with the conversation. The interview was later transcribed. A grounded research

approach was utilized; we did not have a hypothesis and the focus group was used to gather basic information. In analyzing the transcriptions, discovered themes were linked with the questions asked of the focus group.

First of all, we wanted the students' opinions on the effectiveness of standard methods of assessment. They all agreed that traditional test-based evaluation is the most common form of assessment in every subject. Essays, homework assignments, and participation and attendance grades are also very common. They viewed traditional-test based evaluation as an activity in memorizing as opposed to learning, and felt that these tests actually assessed memorization skills rather than knowledge. The problem with memorizing is that the information could be forgotten as soon as the next day. One student felt that "testing is just a snapshot into learning," as it can only cover a portion of the information taught in the class. A student who did poorly on a test could potentially have a broader amount of knowledge than the test result showed. Multiple students expressed concerns with test anxiety. While not all of them experienced it, they were aware that it was a problem. Someone suffering from test anxiety might not have accurately displayed his or her knowledge when it was assessed on a test. On top of this, even students without test anxiety ran the risk of being inaccurately assessed if they were just having a bad day.

As the students were quite vocal about why they did not think traditional test-based evaluation was effective, they were asked about what methods of assessment they would prefer. They did recognize the problems that teachers may have with other forms of assessment (for example time constraints and class sizes); however, they also had many ideas. Some of their ideas came from previous class experiences. One student was in a class in which the professor gave them options of many different assignments. They "could pick whichever ones [they] wanted, as long as the assignments added up to 60% of the total grade for the class." The student really liked this because "it allows students to show off their strengths and not be disadvantaged by their weaknesses." They suggested having subject-appropriate assessment. One student said, "in classes like math, history, and Spanish it makes sense to have a final exam. But in a class like English or philosophy it doesn't make sense because of the material taught in the class." A few students liked the idea of having weekly tests, worth either very little or nothing at all, simply to encourage the students to be involved in and keep up with the class. They also talked about how much they like group work and how important it is in preparing them for careers after university. Group work also lessens the pressure on the students to know everything individually. The collective knowledge of the group is generally sufficient.

Students emphasized that in a class such as Introductory Spanish, regular homework assignments successfully teach them the material and encourage them to remain involved with their learning. One student suggested that homework assignments might be better for learning because they still have to concentrate on getting the work done right, but the assignments do not generate the stress involved with studying or conditions like test anxiety. It is also much more realistic; in real jobs after graduation they will have access to various resources, for example books, the internet, and other people. This student said that "these homework assignments will better prepare us for life after university." The students did once again comment that they knew it was hard, or sometimes impossible, for a teacher to follow these recommendations.

The students noticed some similarities and some differences in the way teachers and students spot progress. The biggest difference was the awareness of progress. First of all, the students saw progress as the literal progression through a course: first you complete unit 1, then you complete unit 2, and so on. They did not think much about how much personal progress they had made in terms of learning and understanding the material. One student pointed out that "when I have a midterm coming up I think about how much I can memorize between now and then, not how much progress I have made up until that point." After some thought the students agreed they could spot their own progress when they understand what is being explained in class, are able to successfully complete the homework, and ultimately almost everyone agreed that if you are making progress it should be reflected in your grades.
The students thought that teachers, specifically in relation to an introductory Spanish class, spot their progress in whether or not the student can answer questions in class, whether or not they have done their homework, show improvement in results on assignments, and improvement in the use of vocabulary and pronunciation. In a class of fewer than thirty students they know they "will have the opportunity to show the progress [they] have made," but of course this is not the case in larger classes. In classes like Introductory Psychology at Acadia University, with upwards of two hundred students, traditional test-based evaluation is the only assessment used. Although it is not ideal, it is realistic. As already discussed, time constraints and other matters do not allow other forms of assessment to be used.

The reflection on grades is where the students found the most similarities between teachers and themselves. The students believed that while teachers place more importance on numeric grades than the students do, both groups look at grades to see if progress has been made. The students felt the main difference between themselves and the teacher is the amount of emphasis placed on grades; they appreciated that in larger classes it is impossible to look at everyone individually, and that this is difficult even in smaller classes, so the importance placed on grades by teachers in evaluating their students is understandable.

Despite their criticism of current assessment techniques, the students unanimously agreed that assessment is necessary. They acknowledged that "assessment doesn't stop when you graduate university, you will be assessed for the rest of your life" both formally and informally. Sometimes it is stressful and trying but it is "one of life's necessary evils." One advantage of assessment is that it makes students aware of gaps in their knowledge and shows them their strengths and weaknesses. Without knowledge about their own performances, they will not be able to improve and may never realize that they are missing out on crucial information. Assessment is also important because, as much as people dislike it, it gives students a score (in most cases this is a GPA) so that future schools and employers can decide whether or not a student is a better candidate than someone else. For example, a popular medical school may receive too many applications to evaluate each candidate individually. They need scores like the GPA to narrow down and tighten the competition. After this point there are usually interviews, requiring people skills, but to make it to this stage of admissions an applicant's GPA is quite important.

Although the students were quite critical of traditional test-based evaluation, they did point out that "there are so many ways to be assessed, even in one exam, that everyone is able to do well in something." Some students may excel in multiple choice but falter in long answer, and another student might experience just the opposite. When exams have more variety, the students said they feel that they are more likely to achieve a better result.

Participation grades were quite liked by the students from the focus group as they are not difficult to achieve, however they pointed out a notable problem with them. Students often feel too intimidated to participate if they feel as though other students in the class have more knowledge than they do. This subsequently has a negative impact on their participation grade and sometimes their interest in the subject.

One final point that is quite important is that of student expectations. I found in the focus group that motivation, expectation, and achievement were closely linked. First of all, the students in this focus group had one of two motivations to take first year classes. The first motivation is that they are either minoring or majoring in the subject and the first year classes are required to build a foundation for further study. The second motivation is that they needed a language credit in order to graduate. The students belonging to the first group had the expectation of developing a basic knowledge to support their future studies, while the students belonging to the second group had no expectations whatsoever. Achievement was seen by the students as an individual experience based on their expectations for the course and motivations

for taking it. For one student, passing the class might be their idea of achievement, while for another student having an understanding of the language might be a sign of achievement.

The main discovery made in this focus group is that individual students have their own strengths and weaknesses, and thus are better at different types of assessments. Despite the complaints the students had about certain types of assessment, they showed an awareness of problems teachers might face when trying to create a good and fair method of assessment.

Further considerations

Given the reality of the higher education system today and its increasing standardization at an international level, it is probably unrealistic to look for any substantial changes in the ways in which students are assessed and evaluated in the larger scheme. Although there is obviously room for improvement, the current system of assessment works well on many levels, and has the benefit of being understood and utilized almost everywhere. Probably more important at the individual level is for teachers to communicate with their students about the methods they will use to evaluate them, to be willing to listen to the students' ideas about how these methods are useful or not useful for them, and to explain why these ideas may or may not be implemented. If both teachers and students are comfortable with how assessment is used in their individual situation, the learning process itself should be more productive.

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VOICING INTERPRETATIONS: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PEER LEARNING IN A FIRST-YEAR LITERATURE ASSIGNMENT

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Abstract

Most literature instructors want their students to read closely, to write clearly, and to learn how to revise, as well as to participate in class discussions or to give oral presentations. This essay describes a two-part assignment developed for first-year English students that works towards all of these goals. The first part consists of a conventional written analysis of a short story. In the second part, students select and rehearse a portion of their chosen story to read aloud to a small group before writing a reflection on and a review of their own and another person's performance. The voicing of a passage requires that students pay attention to the author's words rather than silently skim the text. In preparing for their readings and listening to their peers, students learn about different interpretations of a closely analyzed portion of a story. The final review/reflection allows students to revise their previously written analyses in the light of these new ideas, to become more aware of techniques of oral presentation and the importance of audience, and to assess honestly how well they and others handled their own readings. I explain the guidelines that I give to students and illustrate with examples from student writing the kind of peer learning and self-assessment that can take place. The assignment draws on insights from writing studies and performance studies in order to introduce students to the basics of literary criticism.

An introductory literature course is one of the first steps a student can take in a long journey of development as a citizen of the academic world and beyond. As an instructor in such a course, I share the immediate goals of most literature professors: to teach students to read closely and to write clearly, with the expectation that students also participate in class discussions and possibly even give oral presentations to the class. While we are introducing students to the discourse of our field and giving them experience in reading various genres, we also have to find ways to model for them the approaches and behaviours of literary critics and scholars in general, such as collaboration, interaction, openness to new ideas. While it is important to maintain these ideals in the daily work of the classroom, the two-part assignment described in this paper can also make students more self-aware of their reading, listening, and writing skills as they take those first steps towards becoming articulate participants in our academic culture.

The first part of this assignment consists of a conventional written analysis of a short story. In the second part, which I call "recitation/review/reflection," students select and rehearse a portion of their chosen story to read aloud to a small group before writing a reflection on and review of their own and another person's performance. The voicing of a passage requires that students pay attention to the author's words rather than silently skim the

text. In preparing for their readings and listening to their peers, students learn about different and often subtle new interpretations of a closely analyzed portion of a story. The final review/reflection allows students to revise their previously written analyses in the light of these new ideas, to become more aware of techniques of oral presentation and the importance of audience, and to assess honestly how well they and others handled their own readings. This assignment draws on ideas about revision familiar to those in writing studies as well as insights from performance studies in order to introduce students to some basics of literary criticism.

The first essay is written within the first few weeks of the course. Students choose a short story from the reading list for a conventional literary analysis consisting of a few pages. To prepare for the writing of this essay, we discuss the stories in class and practice developing a thesis, organizing an essay, and incorporating quotations from the text to illustrate points. The students then have an opportunity to look at their chosen story more closely and to present their reading of it in their essays, which I comment on, grade, and return. In most circumstances, that would be the end of this portion of the course: having written their piece, students might read the instructor's comments or they might not before moving on to the next topic of study and the next essay. However, in this two-part assignment, the summative assessment given for the first assignment is subordinated to the more important formative assessment that the students themselves will be instrumental in providing in their written reviews and reflections.

I keep telling my students that we are never really finished discussing a good piece of literature, and one way to prove that is to have students write about the same text a second time. Asking students to first write a conventional literary analysis means that they have read the text and thought about it (to varying degrees); they think they've had their final say. The second part of the assignment, however, makes them revisit the text, possibly question or expand their interpretations, consider other readings, or find support for their initial ideas in others' views. It is an act of re-visioning through other perspectives of what they had previously written, and one goal is that it will lead to real revision in the student's writing. Theoretical models of the revision process describe complex mental and social processes (Myhill & Jones, 2007), but among these is the understanding that revision is not simply editing for errors, a distinction that many students do not at first recognize. This assignment encourages students to think of revision as more than just adding or deleting a comma here or there. Asking students to write about the same ideas a second time, but in a piece that is more personal reflection than standard literary analysis, requires a re-visioning of the ideas in a new context, with opportunities to rewrite that can take into account the previously given feedback while adapting to a new genre and a new purpose.

While the second part of the assignment encourages revision, it also focuses on oral presentation. Although we typically structure our written assignments so that students can learn and progress from year to year, oral communication skills often do not receive the same level of conscious preparation and feedback, even when students are often, and sometimes suddenly, expected to give effective oral presentations, usually in upper-level courses. In many cases, class sizes are just too large, especially in introductory courses, for instructors to be able

to listen to individual presentations and to offer feedback. Like many English professors, I run my course generally as a discussion class and incorporate small group discussions. I also include some online discussions which help to break the ice for some students, but even so, I cannot ensure that every student is fully participating. However, in the recitation/review/reflection assignment, every student reads and reflects on his/her own work without my having to listen to each recitation; this assignment can work in classes of 30 or 300. Student comments in these assignments indicate that they become much more aware of what they need to do to improve their oral communication skills through listening to and reviewing each other's presentations. In fact, what has surprised me in the years that I have been giving this assignment is the quality of self-assessment and the insights that can occur as students learn from their peers.

Allow me to explain some of the specific details of the recitation/review/reflection assignment and to illustrate the results with excerpts from students' work. (The short stories on which students have commented are Margaret Atwood's "The Resplendent Quetzal," Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," and Thomas King's "Borders").

The recitation/review/reflection asks students to select an interesting passage from the short story they chose for their first essay and to practice reading it aloud with appropriate expression that contributes to their interpretation of the text. By this point in the course, the class in general has already had some experience in reading aloud informally in small groups and discussing tone of voice in the text. I ask students to select a half page to a full page for the reading. Reading aloud forces the students to read the text closely, especially if they take some time to think about their selection and rehearse it, as I advise them to do. For example, they have to be able to distinguish between the narrator's tone of voice, the tone of voice of any characters' dialogue or thoughts, the effect of descriptive passages, all elements that reinforce what they might have written about in their first essay – and if they hadn't written about these elements the first time around, they might notice them when reading aloud the second time.

I also ask students to prepare an introduction of a few sentences to explain why they have chosen their particular passage. Students are called upon to articulate once again what they find significant in the story, thus keeping alive in interactions with their peers what they had written about for me. After all, revision means learning to revise for different audiences and in different situations. And this is one way in which students get to express their ideas to others, not just to me as the marker of their essays.

On recitation day, I divide the class into groups of five or six. Each group consists of students who have written about the same story. I usually have to book at least one other classroom so that the groups can spread out and claim a little space where they can hear each other reading without too much distraction. I end up running between classrooms to keep an eye on how things are going, but I stay out of the groups, because this is their time to recite for each other, not for me. To ensure that students are focused on their tasks I hand out to them a form on which they record their comments on each reading in their group. The form includes prompts for name of presenter; passage chosen for reading; reasons for reading that passage – what was the student trying to show in his/her reading? The form also provides room for

further notes: Clear voice and delivery? Well-rehearsed presentation? Appropriate intonation? Any gestures or facial expressions used to reinforce the interpretation? Clear interpretation of the passage? Did the presenter accomplish what he/she set out to do? Providing the form is one way of ensuring that students are taking the exercise seriously as well as enabling them to remember what they have heard and seen when it comes time to reflect on and write up their assignments. As further preparation, I follow guidelines for student performances suggested by Green (2011). I remind students that they should be attentive, as they would like others to be when they are reciting, and that while they can ask questions and debate with each other, their general aim is to be supportive of each group member's efforts. I also engage students in some of the warm-up techniques suggested by Green, such as "belly breathing" and a quick vocal warm-up exercise, which have the added benefit of creating some laughs and relaxing the students. Once students are arranged in their groups, I do insist that they stand up to deliver their recitations to allow for clear articulation, voice projection, gestures, and eye contact. And, although I do not require any formal discussion of the different views expressed in the readings, most groups spontaneously develop their own discussions of the different ideas being presented.

At the end of the recitation period, students gather back in our regular classroom. I have them all stand and applaud the efforts of the class in order to reinforce the idea of positive feedback (Green, 2011); I then ask them to freewrite at the end of class about their own performances so that they will have some immediate impressions of their own recitations to work with as well.

The final stage involves the writing of the review and reflection at home. Their instructions are, first of all, to reflect on how their own performances went. They are asked to explain the significance of their selection; to describe how they tried to interpret it in their reading; and to assess honestly what they did well or what they could have improved. I make sure that students understand that what is being graded is not the success of their recitation; what I am looking for is a detailed self assessment of what could have been, should have been, and what was done in the reading.

The other part of the assignment involves a review of one other recitation. Students are asked to assess honestly the successes or shortcomings of another reader in their group, with the assurance that their comments will not be shared and will not affect the other student's grade**.** I believe that it is important to make the actual performances very low stakes in the grading of this assignment. The students for the most part put enough pressure on themselves to do a good job and not embarrass themselves in front of their peers. I do not want to create a situation in which a student feels she has to give her best friend a great review in order to help her get a good mark or make a student feel that she cannot say that someone did a poor job because she is worried that her negative comments will be revealed to her peer.

Finally, students are asked to reflect on whether the other readings that they heard confirmed their ideas about the story or changed them in some way. I encourage students to feel free to revise any ideas expressed in their first essay and to rewrite parts if appropriate for

the second paper. This kind of revision does not allow for simple copying and pasting of large segments – it calls for real revision by changing the purpose of the writing and adding new elements. And because this is a somewhat unusual assignment, I do provide a sample review/reflection for students so that they can imagine what needs to be done a little more easily.

I have been giving this assignment for the past four years; the following excerpts from the 2013 semester are typical of the responses I see every year. For example, students will sometimes comment on the immersive experience that reading aloud affords. Claire states: "While my view of the story did not change listening to Monique's recitation or through the experience of my own, I do feel that through hearing it aloud I connected with the mood of the piece on a deeper level than I had previously." And Ryan explains, "I chose this passage because it truly describes the two characters well, and I felt like I knew them more. The language Atwood used is especially descriptive and I also felt as if she had made me a part of the scene. It was almost as if I was watching it unfold right in front of me."

As these student comments make clear, voicing the text, embodying it for others is a different experience from silent reading alone. Green (2011) reminds us that, "Given this power of the human voice as a learning tool, we should encourage our students to develop that power and, to do that, we need to engage them in verbal performance" (p. 34). Furthermore, Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor and Otuteye (2005) discuss how "the act of embodying writing through voice, gesture, and movement can help early college students learn vital lessons about literacy" (p. 226); they advocate restoring performance into the curriculum as a way "to reinvigorate both teaching and learning in the writing classroom" (p. 227) – and, I would add, the literature classroom as well.

In assessing how they used their own voices and bodies to perform a text for others, students often set their own goals after learning from their peers. For example, Heather writes, "I plan to … dedicate more time to the rehearsal for my next presentation in order to reach my goal of eye contact as effectively as Ryan met his!" Hannah reflects on how she could have reinforced her interpretation with gestures:

> I feel that I used my voice effectively during the reading, however I could have used more body language to help reinforce the emotion in the passage. When reading the line 'Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously' … I could have put a hand to my chest and mimicked the action in which [sic] the story was describing. This small movement could help t[he] audience imagine how Louise was feeling and how her body was reacting.

And when Nicole considers her reading in comparison to one of her group members -- "I stumbled over a few words but my voice was fairly clear. … I myself have learned things from her presentation. I've learned that rehearsal is key" – it becomes clear to me that no matter how many times I tell students that "rehearsal is key," the full effect seems to sink in only after

their immediate, personal experience brings the lesson home. Throughout assessments such as these, students are beginning to understand much more fully the role of the audience in both written communications (how the author's words communicate to others) and in oral communications (how they communicate meaning to others in their presentations).

Often, the opportunity to revisit a text and read a portion aloud leads students to a more precise analysis of its techniques. Both of the following students wrote simple plot summaries for their first essays, a common problem for beginners. On their second attempt, possibly based on my feedback, or a newfound awareness of the voice of the storyteller, or both, they are able to move towards a more precise literary analysis. On her second attempt, Taylor at least recognizes and names the narrator: "The son, who is also the narrator...." while Kara offers an understanding of the narrator and tone of voice that was not at all evident in her first attempt:

> I tried to use a soft voice when reading. Though the story is not written in first person, it follows Louise's thoughts. In the part of the story I was reading, she is very worn out and weak. I could picture her in my mind, dropping heavily into her armchair and listlessly staring out the window. So I read the words softly, as if to slow the words down, and make the scene itself 'soft.'

Reading aloud and thinking about performance necessitates close reading of a text, as Clara discovers even if only at a late stage in the process of performance:

> For the lines of dialogue in the passage, I chose to say them rather loudly with a lot of expression for effect. For instance, when Louise said "free, free, free!" … I tried to sound relieved and enthusiastic. However, while reading I noticed that it was in fact written that when Louise spoke she said things "under her breath" … and "kept whispering." Therefore, I believe I should have been more careful when reviewing my passage in order to stay true to the intentions of the author.

Even those students who have written successful first essays can use the revision essay to dig deeper into the text. Ryan, for example, savours every detail in his reading of a short descriptive passage. In his first essay, he simply commented that "During the trip, there are many times where Sarah thinks of leaving her husband, and actually flirts with other men." However, in his second essay, in thinking about the words that he would have to speak, he develops ideas about internal and external description:

> In one particular part, Atwood wrote: "He was a small dark man with several gold teeth, which glinted when he smiled. He was smiling at Sarah now, sideways, and she smiled back serenely".... This imagery describes the outward and inward appearances of the characters. This is because Sarah is portrayed as smiling serenely, but it also brings up her

> possible feelings for the man, even though she's still married to her husband. The tour guide on the other hand, is described externally via his gold teeth, the word "glinted" being a powerful description of his actions during his encounter with Sarah. This also brings up possible internal feelings that he may have for Sarah, which is what I thought while reading it originally. I find this combination of internal and external description made this passage that much more fun to read.

It is not only in assessing their own recitations but also in reviewing others' that students acknowledge a better understanding of the story. For example, Yi offers a detailed critique that leads to an interpretive conclusion:

> Here is how she controlled the pauses: "Free/ Body/and soul/free." What distinguished Monique's reading from others' was the way that her voice rose and fell. If we read every single word in this sentence through raising our voice all the time, like this: "Free (voice rises)! Body (voice rises) and soul (voice rises) free (voice rises)!" then it would probably sound like a mad scientist who succeeds in separating his soul from his flesh by some fantastic devices, rather than a woman who just finds her way out of misery. So Monique's voice slightly switched to lower volume when saying "free" at the end, which helped us realize that Mrs. Mallard's epiphany should not be filled with rage or agony but with spiritual relief. And I found that this detail could be easily ignored by other readers.

One of the objectives of the assignment is to expose students to different perspectives on the story. While this is a general goal in all regular class discussions, these small group readings ensure that every student in the class voices an interpretation. In many cases, interpretations of the stories are not all that different, which in itself can play a supportive function, as Monique finds: "Reading passages aloud to my classmates and hearing their readings helped to reassure my thoughts about Ms. Mallard's true emotions in 'The Story of an Hour.'" Although sometimes students do not hear different views, the performances might allow them to consider different aspects of the story a second time, as Alyssa points out:

> My reading paired with Alison's reading made for a better personal understanding of the text. Both sections were different but showed similar themes in Sarah's dysfunctional relationship with Edward. While my section focused on the lack of control she displayed in manipulating Edward, Alison's focused on how Sarah blamed Edward for something neither of them could control.

However, when students do hear different views from their own, they might recognize new elements in the story, as Kayla reveals when she writes, "To be honest when I was reading it myself I didn't imagine the pride that all of the characters in the story had until Andrea

mentioned it and then backed it up." Meghan offers a more subtle reconsideration of elements of her story:

> She explained that she viewed love as an important theme in Chopin's story because Mrs. Mallard's decision to value freedom over love was evidence of how profound the effect of liberation was on her. Previously, I had not considered this aspect of the story in such a light. I believed it to be secondary in importance to the freedom imagery and Mrs. Mallard's characterization and actions. Clara's was the most unique interpretation of the group and her presentation helped me to better understand the story by unveiling to me a new level within it.

However, students will on occasion encounter competing readings of a text, as Joshua found:

> The student[']s reading clarified Sarah's diabolical position in the relationship as well as in her character. These opinions differ from my essay, which represents Sarah as more of a victim in the marriage dealing with Edward's crazy obsessions and the miscarriage of their first child. Although his interpretation was contrasting from mine, it demonstrated versatile levels of understanding….

It appears that this student is willing to recognize another view and to allow it to stand alongside his very different perspective on the character, thus demonstrating the possibilities of interpretation. In cases such as these, the group has an opportunity to explore whether one reading is more valid than another and to question how they would support their own interpretations of the characters. In other words, the group – and the individual student – are now thinking like literary critics, in a process similar to that described by Weissman (2010): "A reader should read -- and misread -- and reread in collaboration with others to achieve a fuller realization of how a given text allows for multiple readings" (p. 28).

In asking students to voice their interpretations, this assignment provides one answer to the question "How, then, can we incorporate performance into our classrooms and our pedagogies?" (Fishman et al., 2005, p. 246). Oral reading restores the rhetorical concept of delivery into our curriculum, as advocated by Fishman et al. (2005), and can play an important role in the teaching of literature and writing. My students' insights, rendered more memorable through their embodied experiences of recitation for an audience, convince me that it is an exercise worth developing.

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USING PEER AND SELF-ASSESSMENT TO FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PRESENTATION SKILLS

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Abstract

Research in assessment and evaluation indicates that providing students with a variety of formats to "show what they know" and formative feedback in multiple ways and from varied sources greatly enriches their learning experience (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013; Miller et al., 2013). Student evaluation is traditionally conducted by the teacher; however, two types of feedback that have been shown to impact student learning are peer and self-assessment (Wormelli, 2006; Guskey, 2009; Airasian et al., 2012). Students in secondary science and math education courses at St. Thomas University were given opportunities to participate in peer and self-assessment of their pre-internship teaching skills through mini-lesson video analysis. Within 24 hours of the mini-lesson presentation, both the presenting students and a cohort of their colleagues were provided with a digital copy of the video to carefully review for the purpose of generating specific, formative commentary. Both the students receiving the reflective peer-feedback and the peer evaluators reported that the process greatly improved their teaching skills. Although used in this case for pre-internship teacher training, the assessment methods described can be adapted to a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses.

Introduction

Research in assessment and evaluation indicates that providing students with a variety of formats to "show what they know" and formative feedback in multiple ways and from varied sources greatly enriches their learning experience, since it increases the likelihood that their individual learning styles will be accommodated (Waugh & Gronlund, 2013; Miller et al., 2013). At the post-secondary level, the most common forms of student assessment are homework assignments and in-class tests, the majority of which are required to be completed in written form and are almost exclusively evaluated by the course instructor (Biggs & Tang, 2011). While some university and college professors and instructors have expanded their student evaluation toolkits to include a wider range of assessment strategies, the majority of those teaching at the post-secondary level continue to rely on very limited and traditional means to determine student learning levels. Compared with the recent eruption of new learning assessment techniques like electronic portfolios, Prezis, exit slips, concept maps, skits, dioramas, and teacher/student interviews being employed at the K-12 level, the post-secondary milieu generally lags behind in the exploration of which evaluation practices work best for supporting student learning.

At all learning levels, student evaluation has traditionally been conducted by teachers. However, two types of feedback that have been shown to impact student learning are peer and self-assessment (Wormelli, 2006; Guskey, 2009; Airasian et al., 2012). Hanrahan & Isaacs (2001) recognize that the recent emphasis in many university courses has switched from teaching to learning, and from teacher management to student self-direction. As a result, interest has mounted in the educational advantages of students assessing their own work and that of other students. Currently, it is common for post-secondary course syllabi to state goals such as, "students will become lifelong learners" and "students will be able to function effectively in teams." Such new goals reflect changing expectations of graduates in the workplace and, as such, both self- and peer-assessment skills are becoming more highly sought after (van Zundert et al., 2010). Hanrahan & Isaacs (2001) suggest self-assessment can help students set goals and thus learn for themselves, and peer-assessment can help them to contribute constructively in collaborative efforts.

An Example of Peer and Self-Assessment in Pre-Service Teacher Education

In the secondary science and mathematics education courses I teach in the School of Education at St. Thomas University, students participate in peer and self-assessment of their pre-internship teaching skills. In order to understand the context in which this peer and self-evaluation occurs, it is important to first provide an overview of the structure of our B.Ed. program.

In our one year post-baccalaureate program, students begin with intensive course-based study during the months of September and October. During the months of November and December, they complete the first of two student teaching field placements, working with a cooperating teacher and university supervisor in a public school setting. In January and February, the students return to campus to embark on a second semester of coursework and reflection on their first teaching internships. During the months of March and April, the B.Ed. students participate in their second field placement, this time in a different school setting, with a new cooperating teacher and university supervisor. In May and June, the students resume study with a final semester of coursework. In July, the graduates of the program are certified as public school teachers in the province of New Brunswick, transferrable to all Canadian provinces and territories.

It is during the first semester of coursework in September and October that the students in my Secondary Science and Mathematics Education courses are given the opportunity to take part in a program of peer and self-assessment of their emerging teaching skills. In each of these courses, students are required to work in pairs to design and facilitate a 40-minute mini-lesson to engage their classmates in learning a specific concept from the grade 6-10 science and math

curricula. The students are encouraged to develop lessons that are student-centered, inquiry-based, and constructivist in nature, ideally with components of both hands-on and discussion-based learning. These mini-teaching sessions take place in the second half of the courses, such that at least a cursory knowledge base can be established in the areas of pedagogical theory, lesson plan design, and assessment practices before they present their lessons.

Early in the course, students choose their co-teaching partners and sign-up for an in-class presentation date. Typically, the course enrollment is 24-28 students, resulting in 12 -14 mini-lesson presentations throughout the course. The students refer to the provincial middle school and high school curriculum documents to consider and select a topic or concept that they would like to focus their mini-lesson design on. It is important to realize that the students in our B.Ed. program have already earned previous undergraduate degrees, and in some cases, graduate degrees in a variety of content areas. In the case of the students taking my secondary science and mathematics education courses, these are typically degrees in biology, chemistry, physics, earth and environmental science, kinesiology, mathematics, computer science, business and economics.

On the day of their mini-lesson presentations, the presenting pair takes the lead as facilitators of learning for 40 minutes of the class time. The remainder of the class members serves as "students" with the expectation that they participate in all aspects of the lesson as public school students would. Clearly, the students in the class may already possess the content knowledge or conceptual understanding being targeted in the lesson, but the more important focus of the experience is in supporting their colleagues' efforts and concentrating on the pedagogical approaches being utilized. In fact, for each mini-lesson presentation, four members of the class are pre-selected to serve as formal peer-evaluators whose job it is to provide detailed formative feedback to the lesson facilitators. Over the duration of the course, each member of the class will facilitate one mini-lesson and serve as peer-evaluator for two others.

To enable both the mini-lesson facilitators and the peer-evaluators to more easily reflect on the lesson presentation, the mini-lessons are video recorded. In addition to providing an opportunity for later observation of the lesson, this allows the peer-evaluators to focus on playing the role of "students" during the lesson. After the class, I upload a copy of the digital video file to a file sharing website where both the mini-lesson facilitators and the four peer-evaluators can access it. Within one week, the peer-evaluators are expected to review the video file and, using an evaluation checklist developed specifically for this purpose, provide formative feedback to their classmates on their teaching efforts. Once the evaluation checklists are submitted to me via a course Moodle page, I review the comments for appropriateness, request any necessary edits from the peer-evaluators, remove the names of the peer-

evaluators to ensure anonymity, record the grades assigned, and e-mail them to the lesson facilitators for their review. In both the Secondary Science and Mathematics Education courses, the four peer-evaluations are averaged and comprise 25% of the presenters' course grade.

Sample Peer-Evaluation Checklist

Below is a copy of the checklist (in this case from the Secondary Science Education course) that the peer-evaluators use to provide feedback to their classmates. Before the mini-lesson presentations begin, I spend approximately an hour in class introducing the checklist to the students, discussing the performance criteria categories (referred to as "Look Fors") described on it, observing sample mini-lesson video clips from previous years, and reviewing samples of completed peer-evaluations for those videos.

The peer-evaluation checklist is divided into three main performance criteria categories: Presentation, Content, and Implementation. The performance criteria that are described in the Presentation category focus on the mini-lesson facilitators' abilities to present the lesson in a clearly audible, interactive, student-centered manner that is engaging to the learner. The performance criteria listed in the Content category assess the teachers' awareness of and abilities to respond to students' prior knowledge and misconceptions about the concepts being addressed, the creativeness and clarity with which they facilitate the learning activities they have developed, and their abilities to evaluate students' engagement and understanding of the lesson. The Implementation category performance criteria focus on the learners' experience and target such outcomes as participation, knowledge integration, skill development, differentiation, and reflection. For each of the twenty performance criteria on the checklist, peer evaluators assign a quantitative score or 1 to 5 based on the rating scale described, as well as qualitative commentary directed to the mini-lesson facilitators.

As shown here, peer-evaluators are encouraged to be as specific as possible in their provision of evidence to support their comments and grades. This is often done through the citation of particular statements, questions, or comments made by the mini-lesson facilitators at specific times during their interactions with the students. The level of thoroughness, insight, and sophistication with which peer-evaluators typically provide formative feedback to their classmates is evident in this example.

Science Mini-Lesson Look Fors:

Lesson Facilitators:___Virginia & Sonia_____ Date:_Oct. 10, 2013_____
Observation by:_____ Grade:___8____ Topic: __Inter-Tidal Zones_____
Rating Scale:

1 **Weak** – below satisfactory performance, considerable improvement required
2 **Adequate** – satisfactory performance, some improvement required
3 **Good** – competent performance, only minor improvement required
4 **Strong** – more than competent performance
5 **Exemplary** – outstanding performance

Look For	Rating	Comments
PRESENTATION		
The teachers have clear and audible verbal presentation	5	Could hear the presenters throughout the entire presentation, even over groups talking.
The teachers move freely and frequently about the learning space	5	Presenters kept moving throughout the entire lesson, bringing attention to both the fronts and back of the classroom. Very dynamic use of space.
The teachers employ non-verbal interaction techniques with students	5	During lecturing periods, Virginia and Sonia were both making eye contact with members of the class. While stopping by tables during the modeling exercise Virginia didn't speak at certain groups (I'm not sure if it was on purpose or not), this let the students discuss their ideas and allowed for evaluation of student understanding of the task.
The teachers exhibit an awareness of participants' engagement	5	The brainstorm at the beginning was a great way to ensure that plenty of students were able to contribute their ideas. During the building of organisms, both presenters circulated the class making sure to stop by each group of students and keeping everyone on task.
The teachers address students on an individual basis (uses their names)	5	There wasn't a student who wasn't called on by name. Very good job making sure to use students names frequently.
The teachers exhibit a positive and enthusiastic teaching attitude	5	**Sonia** your explanation of tidal forces on the white board at about (**6:00**) was awesome and you could tell you were excited to talk about the tidal zones.

		Virginia you seemed to be having a very good time especially when discussing the "Not Since Moses" race.

Look For	Rating	Comments
CONTENT		
Early in the lesson, the teachers articulate the concepts that will be addressed	4	Brief outline of curriculum outcomes, and what was to be discussed. Told us our main goal of the day was to help Mr.Clam find a friend. Although this was not brought up again until later in class. It would've been fun to have Mr.Clam journey with us.
The teachers utilize activities/ strategies that are crafted to lead to the understanding of those concepts	5	Used a brain storm to get us thinking about the topic for the day. The sea-critter model activity was fun and gave us the chance to be as creative as possible. Use of videos to re-asses student understanding of group discussions, and generate new discussions.
The teachers identify student misconceptions and consider them	3	**Sonia**: "Try it, there's no wrong answer!"- This was a beautiful phrase! Let the students know they're in a safe environment where all ideas are considered. During the discussion on Neap and Spring tides Sonia evaluated an idea proposed by one of the students and directed them towards the correct path to understanding (telling them where to look instead of telling them what the answer is). During the discussion on tidal bulges we didn't get a clear explanation on why both sides of the Earth experience a tidal bulge. There could've been more time spent on this to clear up any misconceptions
The teachers assess student understanding in a systematic, varied and ongoing manner	3	Most of the assessment of student knowledge was based around discussion in front of the class via student-teacher interactions. It seemed as though once ideas were understood for one student it was assumed they were understood for all the students.
The teachers use representations, abstractions, and models as appropriate	5	Through the use pictures and white board drawings the reasons for tidal influences due to the gravity of the moon and sun were

		explained. Later on the use of a diagram was again used to show the effects of Neap and Spring tides. Used the "Not Since Moses Race" to reinforce the dramatic effects of the tides in the Bay of Fundy.
The teachers appear knowledgeable about the topic and its connection to the course	5	They sure do! Sonia is very well versed in the use of tidal charts and the reasons as to what causes the tides. Virginia seemed to be more strongly suited towards the biological side of lesson, knowing a lot about the environment of the inter-tidal zone and the qualities required to live there.

Look For	**Rating**	**Comments**
IMPLEMENTATION		
Students are given opportunities to apply existing knowledge to new situations and integrate new and prior knowledge	5	At about (**8:00**) when describing tidal forces, students were able to contribute their thoughts on why the moon and sun affect the tides, and how this is done. Students were provided with the opportunity to discuss why the tides are much higher in the Bay of Fundy then in between N.B and P.E.I. This allowed students to apply their previous knowledge of fluid dynamics to the geography for Atlantic Canada. At about (**15:00**) Leighanne and Cory got to apply their previous experience with tide charts to group discussion.
Students are given opportunities to do more than follow procedures – they ask their own questions, choose their own strategies, or design investigations	4	I think it was Colleen who asked in response to James' point about the video being taken over a time period longer than 12 hours; "Why do you think it's longer than 12 hours?" This opened up discussion that was carried forward by the class. At about (**18:15**) Jennie answered a question concerning why the Bay of Fundy has higher tides, but wasn't given the opportunity to explore her idea. Discussion fell back on the teacher, and a prime Volley Ball opportunity was missed.
Students are given opportunities to manipulate materials and equipment	5	Building an inter-tidal creature with clay and assorted materials gave students a hands on and personal attachment to the activity. Having

		students create physical "things" was a great way to make the students feel like their ideas were valued.
Students are given opportunities to utilize higher-order thinking skills through evaluation, synthesis and creation.	4	Through the use of the model activity students had to apply the ideas learned in class to create an ideal sea-critter. This allowed for students to form their own ideas and reasoning, critique each other's thoughts, and create an end product. The majority of questions were very basic explanation based questions that weren't terribly open for discussion.
Students' contributions are incorporated into the lesson	5	The whole point of the model exercise was to allow for students to share their original ideas as to what made an ideal friend for Mr.Clam. **Virginia** After the video said "What do you guys see?" this allowed for students to discuss what was shown in the video, and then discussion arose from students' prior knowledge (more specifically how long the video was recorded over).
Students are provided a variety of differentiated learning opportunities	4	Made use of videos, clay molding activities, lecture, and power point. The clay was exceptionally well done because students had to apply their knowledge of what they learned in class to creating an inter-tidal zone species.
Students are provided adequate time to complete the learning activities	5	Yep. Given about 10 minutes to build our inter-tidal organism and the remaining time to discuss what we had created.
Students are given opportunities to reflect on their learning in a formative way	5	Students got to build their own creature, there's not much better application than that. Students were able to collaborate with class mates and learn from one another. Re-teaching is an excellent strategy for students to really understand what they discussed.

Total Rating: 92/ 100

Reflections on the Peer-Evaluation Process

At the end of the semester, in an effort to gain the peer-evaluators' perspectives on their role in the process, a focus group with students from one of the courses (Secondary Math

Education) was established. This was done in order to better understand their peer-evaluation practices and question them about the experience. Using their laptop computers and a copy of one of the mini-lesson video files, the students were asked to demonstrate how they evaluated their peers' teaching efforts. In order to capture their thoughts during the evaluation process, the students were encouraged to "think-aloud", describing what they were doing. The students were also interviewed about their impressions of the peer-evaluation process and their role in it. These think-aloud sessions and interviews were video recorded for review and analysis.

Below are excerpts from the think-aloud peer-evaluation reflections and interviews.

One of the peer-evaluators explains the technical process he utilized when reviewing the mini-lesson video on his laptop computer:

> *Jack: So what I like to do when I'm reviewing these mini-lessons, is I put the video on one side of my computer screen and then I have my evaluation sheet to work on, on the other side. So, I can see the video on one side of my screen and I can type at the same time and if I need to, I can stop and pause the video to collect a thought in case I don't want to miss the next thing coming up.*

Another peer-evaluator provides a step-by-step commentary of the math mini-lesson she was evaluating:

> *Rachel: So for their activity, they're doing a good job incorporating manipulatives to have students who are kinesthetic learners have hands-on equipment. And they are allowing students to work in groups to discuss their own answers and discover the patterns for themselves. This activity was a good one to get students to understand the pattern before they showed them the formula.*

In interviewing the students on their roles as peer-evaluators, one pair had the following to say:

> *Interviewer: What did you find was the most difficult part of being a peer-evaluator, using the evaluation form, and going through this whole evaluation process?*
>
> *Rachel: I thought it was difficult sometimes to assign marks to specific sections. I know that you think that they (teachers) did a good job but*

then when you watch it again you try to pick up on little things. You don't want to necessarily give them full marks on everything because I mean we're still learning how to teach.
Interviewer: So how did you go about it? Did you put the grade first and then the comment, comment first and then the grade? What worked for you?

Rachel: It varied. Some sections, I knew 100% that they deserved 5 out of 5 on it. In those sections I usually put the grade first and then the comments. The other ones, I'll usually write the comments and then based on what I said, I'll assign them a grade.

Jack: My approach was more so as I watched the video and I heard a comment or observed a certain strategy being employed, I would pause the video and go to the checklist right away and find where that applies, like in which of the three main categories. Then I would type up my comments and I might use a quote from the classroom conversation as evidence. I feel like that approach is pretty practical because right there in the moment you can have it and you don't always remember that from the lesson alone. That's why it's nice to have the video to see that.

Reflections on the Self-Evaluation Process

In addition to the feedback received from their peer-evaluators, the mini-lesson facilitators are encouraged to engage in self-evaluation of their teaching. This is a two-step process in which the pair meet to: 1) review the video recording of their mini-lesson and engage in open commentary about what they observe, and 2) review the completed checklists from the peer-evaluators to compare comments and to reflect on the suggestions made.

During one such facilitator meeting, I witnessed the following conversation between two mini-lesson facilitators as they reviewed their video for the first time:

Brad: Yeah, I remember this part when Ray picked up on the pattern too quickly.

Liz (laughing): Yeah.

Brad: It really threw me off. I talked to him afterward and he said he didn't realize that wasn't what he was supposed to do.

Liz (laughing): Right. But you did a good job posing more questions to get those students who didn't see the pattern caught up and on the same page.

Brad: I hope so.

Liz: I think we have good awareness of the classroom. We're using the space very well.
Brad: Yeah, I think we did. We didn't just stay in one space, we moved throughout the room and I think it kept the students engaged.

During the second part of the self-evaluation process, while they were reviewing the peer-feedback evaluation forms, this same pair of mini-lesson presenters had the following to say:

Brad: One thing I noticed really we were quite weak on was promoting student-to-student interaction. It was all pretty much us (teachers) and them (students).

Liz: Right.

Brad: It's going to have to be something we develop, getting them to talk about each other's answers.

Liz: Yeah, I see the same thing on this evaluation. It says we didn't really give the students a chance to provide feedback on each other's responses. The evaluator recommended using different techniques, like instead of just student to teacher dialogue, maybe using some volleyball style student to student conversation. That's something we could try in the future.

In discussing their participation in these peer and self-evaluation exercises, the students made the following comments about the impact on their teaching skills:

Interviewer: So how does participating in these peer and self-evaluation activities make you better as an emerging teacher, getting ready to start your first practice teaching field placements?

Rachel: I think you can learn a lot from watching yourself. As much as I hated being videotaped, you learn a lot about what you do; your mannerisms, the things you say too much, that kind of stuff. So, definitely what you need to work on and what you're doing well. It will help you when you can see that.

Jack: It's actually, like, confidence building for those moments. Because, for some of the moments you just put your head down and say, 'Wow – I just tripped over myself there', but then other times you're like, 'Wow – I really had a good handle on the class', or 'I think I explained that well – people seem to understand it.' So, it can be confidence building too.

Brad: Having worked in the chemical industry before deciding to become a teacher, I can tell you that the majority of professionals I have encountered are generally not good presenters. They know their stuff but they don't necessarily do a good job explaining it to others. This peer-evaluation process has given me the opportunity to learn what makes for good teaching and presenting skills and has allowed me to both provide and receive critical feedback from my colleagues in the class.

Liz: I know that in my undergrad degree I had to do class presentations, but we never had a chance to get formative feedback on a level like this. I think the prof just gave us a grade based on what he or she saw in class, but having four of your peers take the time to review the entire mini-lesson and critically review it with a checklist is way more helpful than just having the prof evaluate you. I have become aware of so many more aspects of my teaching and presenting skills this way.

Implications

Although used in this case for pre-internship teacher training, the peer and self-evaluation methods described here can be adapted to a variety of undergraduate and graduate course

formats. For instance, Ashley & Goldin (2012) describe a peer-evaluation process at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Law in which students in legal writing courses review and evaluate one another's written assignments and provide feedback supplementary to that of the course instructor. Davis (2003) describes a similar process at the Arizona State University Law School in which students in a first year legal research and writing course critique and peer-edit their classmates' work prior to submission. She states that "peer review encourages cooperation between students – often absent from the first year experience but an essential part of legal practice." [2]

A review of the literature on training practices in North American law schools indicates that peer and self-evaluation activities utilizing the kinds of video review processes described in this paper are uncommon. While many law schools utilize videotapes of experienced lawyers in the courtroom to highlight specific legal processes and strategies (Galves, 2004), there are very few that appear to engage law students in the peer and self-evaluation of one another's developing skills through the review of video recordings. Applying such practices to law school courses focusing on the development of legal oratory skills such as debate, refutation and cross-examination would provide valuable peer-generated feedback to emerging lawyers.

Research has shown that medical students can provide reliable, valid evaluations of their peers and can be valid predictors of success in residency, provided their assessments are both honest and thoughtful (Cottrell et al, 2006). Student peer assessment (SPA) has been used in medical education for more than four decades, particularly in connection with skills training. Eldredge et al. (2013) recount a study conducted with first-year medical students at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine to engage them in the peer-assessment of classmates' PubMed article and case searches. It was determined that students' searches of these databases were much more accurate and comprehensive when guided by peer feedback.

The Peer and Self-Assessment Program at the Indiana University School of Medicine involves all students in the first three years of medical school. Students rate themselves and their peers on professionalism, communication and collegiality using a 9-point Likert scale supplemented by comments, then generate individualized reports allowing students to see their self-perception compared with the way they're perceived by peers. Students meet with their mentors to review their reports and explore the difference between self- and external perception (IU School of Medicine website, 2013).
A review of the literature on training practices of North American and British medical schools indicates that student peer and self-evaluation using video review processes such as those described in this paper is rare. Although some medical schools utilize video recordings of actor role-plays and actual doctor/patient debriefing sessions to teach specific medical practices and

techniques (Dearnley et al., 2013), it appears there are very few that engage medical students in the peer and self-evaluation of one another's developing skills through the review of video recordings. Physician training programs could adopt processes similar to those in the teacher preparation program described herein. Courses that develop medical students' skills in patient interviewing and examination, symptom diagnosis, emergency and operating room procedures, etc. could engage students in the review and peer and self-evaluation of video recordings of practice sessions of these important practices.

The video-based peer and self-evaluation activities described above are not limited to use in post-graduate professional school programs such as education, law, and medicine. Undergraduate courses in a wide range of content areas may be able to utilize some aspects of the practices described here. This video review and peer/ self-evaluation process could be used in performance-based courses in music, dance, theatre, and drama. Similarly, courses in English, Spanish, French and German that promote the development of students' speaking skills could also benefit. Science laboratory skills such as dissections, titrations, and data analysis could easily be video recorded for later peer and self-review. The possibilities are wide ranging.

Conclusion

In post-secondary education, the most common forms of student assessment have traditionally been homework assignments and in-class tests; the majority of which are required to be completed in written form and are almost exclusively evaluated by the course instructor (Biggs & Tang, 2011). While some university and college professors and instructors have begun to include a wider range of strategies and methods in their assessment practice, the majority of those teaching at the post-secondary level continue to rely on very limited and traditional means to determine student learning levels.

Developments in self and peer-assessment practices in K-12 education have demonstrated their effectiveness (Airasin et al., 2012) and are gradually being adopted by post-secondary educators. Providing college and university students with opportunities to critically reflect on their own performance and to receive peer feedback on developing skills is a component of learning that is becoming increasingly common and accepted (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). Providing students with a wide variety of feedback permits them to gain a deeper insight to the degree of their learning than is possible with traditional teacher-only evaluation.

Through the process of engaging students in reviewing video recordings of various knowledge and skills-based presentations and performances and embarking on critical peer and self-assessment practices as described herein, it is suggested that valuable insights to their

learning can be gained. As demonstrated by the sample peer evaluation checklist included and the transcript from focus group interviews about the peer and self-evaluation processes of students in the B.Ed. program at St. Thomas University, it appears that the feedback provided through these assessment practices can have substantial impact on students' understanding of their strengths and areas of need.

If we, as educators, can open our minds to the value and legitimacy of including self and peer-evaluation to our assessment toolkits, we will be doing our students a great service by expanding the means in which they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. My hopes are that the days of providing student-written and teacher-assessed assignments and tests as the only means of evaluating student learning are soon to be a pedagogical relic of our past.

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THEATRE AS REPRESENTATION (TAR) AS AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE ASSESSMENT TOOL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

Assessment of and for learning in higher education, and in particular programs in education continue to pose challenges for instructors attempting to gage student comprehension and progress. While terms papers and oral presentations may prove effective, theatre as representation (TAR) is an alternative vehicle that can be employed as an assessment tool for instructors to gage in-classroom reaction to content and context. The foundation for this approach to teaching and assessment rests on the belief that many issues in education remain somewhat esoteric unless conveyed in a manner that is meaningful to practitioners. By placing either research findings or current pedagogical concerns within a scripted dramatic piece, participants can grapple with issues within the safety of a script. Unlike role-play improvisation (staging, memorization, and character interpretation), TAR is safe because participants are more engaged in the content of the case study rather than the presentation aspects of the scenario. This session offered an opportunity for attendees to participate actively in a dramatized case study scenario. As well, attention was devoted to open discussion surrounding how TAR can be used to assess learning. By the culmination of this presentation, the theoretical and practical value of theatre as representation was made clear, with the ultimate hope being that practitioners acquired a new construct they can place in their pedagogical toolkit, and use actively in their professional practice.

The Purpose of this Workshop Session

The purposes of this workshop session were three-fold. First, to introduce theatre as representation, a teaching technique that employs a scripted dramatic scenario, for class participants to immediately respond to its content and context. Second, to discuss its use as an immediate response assessment tool for a course instructor to ascertain the engagement of both the scenario's content and context to and for student class members. And third, to gather response from the session's participants on the verisimilitude of the content and whether the script read as true or partially true to their own personal experiences.

Foundations of TAR

Communicating both the theory and practice of education has been done through a variety of means from courses to professional development workshops or conferences. In order for connections to be made between the theories behind the research and the practice as experienced by practitioners/students, individuals need to be cognitively, affectively and perhaps even physically involved in the direction of the ideas vis-à-vis their own practice. "The classroom situation most provocative of thoughtfulness and critical consciousness is the one in which teachers and learners find themselves conducting a kind of collaborative search, each from her or his lived situation" (Greene, 1995, p. 23).

Taking Greene's (1995) concept to heart within the context of teaching higher education courses, we have to wonder how *provocative* our pedagogy is in stimulating collaborative interactions between students and instructors. As educators we believe a successful blueprint for such a provocative pedagogy is *theatre as representation* (TAR) (Meyer). TAR is similar to readers' theatre in that participants gather to read a text live with some theatricality, though not required unless staged (McCaslin, 2000). Using theatre in a community sense, the higher education classroom becomes a venue to further awareness on a specific social or health issue (Nisker et al., 2006) and, to a certain extent role-playing permits learning in the sense of "acquiring new information and…raising awareness" (Bolton & Heathcote, 1999, p. 9).

When TAR, in any of its incarnations, is used as a teaching tool, all students have the opportunity to take on character roles in the piece (either as actors or readers) and to be audience members. Because each scenario is grounded in some combination of research, interview data (where possible), and hortative stories, dialogue is based on real phraseology that helps to create the sense of verisimilitude necessary to immerse both participants and audience into the scenario.

The following scenario is a TAR piece in which participants at the 2013 AAU Teaching Showcase were asked to assume various roles.

Urban Junior School Challenge

Backdrop:

Urban school: low to low-middle income community with 450 students; staff has mixed experience, but the majority of staff have 12-20 years of teaching experience. There have been 3 principals within the past 7 years, each with a mandate to "fix" the school. The current principal has been on the scene for the past 4 months. There are a number of staff on term positions in the sense that they are guaranteed a two-year term due to the negative behavior of a significant number of students. This usually means that these "term teachers" use their positions as a stepping stone, so-to-speak, into other positions within the school board. These

teachers tend to be younger in age and experience than the more seasoned staff. The student population has a chronic lateness and absentee issue. There is a breakfast program in the school which is highly utilized, as many students are not properly nourished. There are 12-15 students who are involved in criminal activity, and it is not uncommon to have a police presence in the school.

Teacher 1: T1
Teacher 2: T2
Teacher 3: T3
Teacher 4: T4
Vice Principal: VP
Student A: A
Student B: B
Student C: C
Student D: D
Student E: E
Student F: F
Student G: G
Student H: H

Scene 1: Staffroom: Prior to commencement of classes

T1: So what do you think…how many will be out today?

T2: I'd say at least 30% with 30 students coming in by 11:00.

T3: If this is a pool, and it's Monday…hmmm…35% for the first bell, and no more than 20 students by 11 and 20 students by lunch.

T4: Well, if that's the case, then my quiz is not going to happen, again—My class average for any good day is only 65% and if your predictions are correct that means I'll have less than half today—I'm never going to get through the course.

T1: …and we can't fail anyone. Is anyone still calling home to parents about our "delinquent" students? (*There is no response)*. Well then, it's another day in Tombstone.

T3: Tombstone?

T1: Don't you watch Westerns? Tombstone is the 'ole west town with lots of 'stick-em-ups', gunfighters, Marshalls, saloons, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday…

T3: It does sort of sound like this place.

(The teaching Vice Principal walks in as the teacher's chuckle.)

VP: It's nice to hear laughter so early in the morning. What's so funny?

T2: Oh, we were first taking a sort of a 'pool' on our absentee-lateness rates for the day and somehow it came down to how this school is something out of a western movie like *Tombstone*.

VP: Amusing…somehow I don't like thinking of myself as Wyatt Earp.

T1: Oh. I don't know, just think of your pen and detention slips as a six gun and you look the part! *(Laughter all around. The bell rings. Everyone leaves except VP and Teacher 4.)*

VP: As amusing as that conversation must have been, we do have a serious attendance problem here that is getting worse.

T4: No kidding. Many students are going to fail.

VP: Many of us teachers are failing.

Scene 2: Classroom: Several students and teacher midway through class.

T3: So let's review the thematic statement of Three Sisters (Goes to the board and lifts up a screen that is covering the following statement which she/he reads aloud). "Self-inflicted suffering serves as life's raison d'être as shown by the major characters' compulsion to complain and be complacent (a frustration-release mechanism) as opposed to taking affirmative action to change their individual low-life conditions."

O.K. then let's have some explanation as to what this really means. Think of this as a review before the test tomorrow.

A: Ms./Mr. T, what test are we having tomorrow?

T3: The one that has been scheduled for the past week. It's been on the assignment calendar for quite a while and I have been mentioning it daily.

A: Oh, yeah, while I haven't been here for a few days so I guess I'll need more time for it.

T3: Well, you have until tomorrow

A: That's not fair. I haven't been here.

T3: You know the rules; you have not produced a medical note from a doctor or clinic; when I have called your home, there has been no response. So it's unexcused. So you write the test tomorrow.

A: And if I'm not here?

T3: You'll get a zero. Now let's go on. I asked about interpreting this thematic statement (Student B raises her/his hand). Yes (to student).

B: There's going to be a lot of zeros. I was gone as well. (Students C and D enter the room very lackadaisically.)

T3: That may be. But as I said before without medical notes, you must write the test and seems none of you were sick *(to C and D).* Do either of you have a late slip from the office to enter class? *Blank negative stares from students)* No, eh? Please go to the office and get the late admittance slips and please try to come back before class finishes *(they leave).* Let's try again. Can anyone explain the thematic statement?

E: Ms./Mr. T, can you explain what a thematic statement is?

T3: It's in your notes. I saw you copy them down the first day of this unit. Please open your notebook.

E: I lost my notebook.

F to G: She's/he's so stoned all the time.No wonder she/he lost it.

T3: (Somewhat frustrated). Maybe someone can lend you the notes. Let's get on here…

G: I have the notes but I don't remember what it means.

T3: Take a guess.

G: It's what the play is about…right?

T3: What type of "about?"

G: What do you mean?

T3: Can anyone help this student out?

F: Yeah, the story is about these three sisters who are well-off snots whose father died and now are bored with what they are and they start screwing around with each other's husbands…

T3: thank you but that's more about the action or *(students C and D enter the room and hand their late slips to the teacher)* Thank you…take your seats. As I was saying, that is more about the action or plot line. The thematic statement is more about the underlying cause and effects of the sisters' constant frustration. What does this play tell us about daily life?

(students G and H enter the room with late slips)

Please take your seats. So…*(seeing blank faces from most of the class)*, please get into your study groups and come up with a group response to defining the thematic statement.

(students go into their groups)

Students A, B, C, Group 1; Students D, E, F, Group 2; Students G and H, Group 3

A: Do you have any idea what we're supposed to do?

B: yeah just answer the question: what does this play have to do with our daily life.

C: I took some notes a few days ago…I'll look

A: (to C) What few days ago? You've been in and out of here like never. And when you are here, you're on cloud nine— are you ever not high?

C: Kind of now. I got busted two nights ago and all my stash is in the cop shop as evidence to my evil ways.

B: What is that now—3 or 4 times?

C: Five actually…my probation officer says that they'll send me to some half-way house the next time.

B: what do your parents say?

C: I don't know. Don't remember them—I heard my father is doing time for armed robbery and I have no clue about my mother. This is my fourth foster home.

B: Here she/he comes…let's write something down….You know C, this three sisters story is like your family…pretty screwed up—maybe that could "reflect and define the thematic statement"

Action Shifts to Group 2

T3: (to F) Now let's go over this again. A thematic statement is a cause and effect concept where you have some type of abstract idea like love, hate, boredom, or frustration as shown through a storyline *(looking at F's notebook*). Here look, you wrote most of this down some classes back.

F: yeah, so like these Prosorov sisters feel like really confined in this useless Russian military town. So this frustration has been making them feel bored and trapped in this place. Like these sisters, Olga, Masha and Irina—are like hopeless because they feel like trapped in this like useless town.

T3: that's good…you're on the right track. E, keep reading the play, you're almost through Act 1. When you're finished write me a few sentences on what happened. You can hand it in as you leave class *(going to Group 3; speaks to G.)* Where did H go?

G: to her locker to get her notebook. You were busy, so she just left.

T3: O.K. then let's see what you've done *(looks at the paper)*. G, this is very good, you've captured the concept. You could only get this if you read the play. When did you read the play, as you've been in and out of class for the last 2 weeks?

G: Do you really want to know or are you just trying to save me from evil?

T3: Saving you from evil?

G: Everyone wants to save me as if I carry some curse.

T3: Just tell me what you want me to know.

G: Well you asked for it but only till H comes back…O.K.

T3: that's fine…the period is almost over anyway.

G: My mom is never round and my little brother needs to be watched because he's got Down syndrome.

T3: I knew that

G: My mom's a drunk and when she passes out, well Tommy, my brother, needs to be watched. So I miss class a lot. It's not that I'm bad, but everyone here gets on my case, and yells at me for being absent or lazy. So I yell back and get in trouble. You tell me Mr/Ms T…what's a kid to do?

(bell rings and everyone gets up to leave except G)

T3: (*as everyone leaves)* place your papers on my desk and do not forget the test tomorrow.

D: Is "T" completely nuts. Has anyone been in this class for more than two days straight since the term began? I have no idea what's going on.

A: don't show up. They can't fail you anyway. She/he has to give us a make-up time anyway—it's in the rules.

(All exit except T3 and G)

T3: What do you want to do? Do you like being in school?

G: It's a place away from home and my mother. Besides as you know I'm not exactly normal. I have some very close friends who aren't normal, so I get a lot of flack from that too. I don't belong.

T3: What do you mean—if it's too personal you don't have to say anything.

G: I don't care…everyone knows I have a trans-gendered boyfriend.

T3: You're only 13

G: Why are you surprised…kids have been screwing around here since they were 10 years old.

T3: (after a few moments). G, I can't tell you what to do, but I can help you here in class. You are very bright. What can I do to help you?

G3: What do you want to do?

TAR and Assessment

The preceding TAR scenario touches upon many macro-level issues that educators routinely encounter, including but not limited to classroom management, supervision of instruction, and inclusive practices. As participants grapple with the issues raised in the scenario, we as instructors can observe individuals demonstrating their achievement of understanding and skills by actually performing in this scripted piece (Gronlund, 1998, p. 3).

At the culmination of the TAR scenario, instructors are encouraged to engage the group in active discussion surrounding the case. Keeping in mind we were looking for this TAR's use as an immediate response assessment tool for classroom participants' reaction to content and context, we asked the session's participants the following probing questions framed around the ensuing points: (1) what just happened in the case?; (2) what are the overt and covert issues in the case?; and (3) what do you as an instructor want participants to walk away with from the case?

Through the informal discussion that occurred with the session's participants, we, as presenters, drew the following conclusions.

In terms of the first question, the session participants easily grappled with both the content and context of this TAR scenario. For the attending in-service teachers, it was agreed that the scenario itself was truthful and realistic. The participants were quite accurate in recounting the

scenario's plot line in regards to character roles and their mutual response to each other (teacher to teacher; teacher to student).

For question 2, participants stated that there were three major issues. The first was the cavalier attitude of the teachers in the staff room during the first scene. Overtly, it was felt that these teachers, in creating a 'pool' on attendance rates, were unprofessional. Second, the number of dysfunctional students and their responses to the classroom teacher's queries were frighteningly true. Covertly, the final conversation between Student G and Teacher T3 illustrates an acute student understanding of current sexual mores (relationships), even more pronounced than that of the teacher.

Turning to question 3, many participants agreed that the greatest challenge for them would be to create a rubric of/for assessment. For example, student participants should leave the session questioning their own understanding of issues such as level(s) of comprehension (text, perceptions, moral considerations, and the like).

In essence, TAR can be likened to a performance assessment, which rests on the premise "...that curriculum, instruction, and assessments are intricately intertwined. By focusing on what students need to know, understand, and be able to do, teachers are more aware of what to teach" (Moon & Callahan, 2001, p. 52). Further, TAR can be employed by post-secondary instructors as an immediate response assessment tool "…in which students carry out an activity or produce a product in order to demonstrate learning" (Arasian et al., 2007, p. 148).

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FURIOUS FIVES

PEER ASSESSMENT OF GROUP WORK IN CULTURALLY DIFFERENT CLASSROOMS

Dr. Emin Civi, University of New Brunswick

The use of group work has been widely accepted as an effective teaching and learning tool in Business Education (Conway, Kember, Sivan, & Wu, 1993; Freeman, 1995), as it provides students with necessary employability skills which will be of use within industry (Cassidy, 2006). I use group work as a major component of my International Marketing and International Business courses. Peer assessment is observed as a way of stimulating learning (Stefani, 1998) as it provides the opportunity for students to learn from their peers (Falchikov, 1991). I have also incorporated a peer assessment for a group work in these classes in University New Brunswick Saint John and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar.

Group work in these two classes accounts for half of my students' final grade. A particular example that demonstrates the nature of group work in this discipline is the "pamphlet project", which was to propose an international entry for a business and highlight why the country of their choice was well-suited to expand their business. Nearing the end of this project, I utilized peer assessment techniques. I had each group remove their names from their pamphlet, and I then anonymously distributed the documents so each group had another group's work. I provided a rubric for the peer assessments in order to explicitly define the intended goal. The students wrote their feedback on the pamphlets, then the groups were given these assessments; if they thought the comments were useful, they were given one week for revisions. In both classes, every team opted for the additional revision time in light of the peer assessments.

A second peer assessment took place once the groups submitted their revised pamphlets. Each team's work was distributed throughout the class and every group ranked every brochure, excluding their own, in specific categories, including content, the written presentation, spelling and mechanics, and visual appeal. This ranking used a scorecard system; upon completion of the rankings, these were collected and the top pamphlet in each category was determined.

Students displayed a positive attitude toward peer assessment, despite some initial concerns about the responsibilities associated with assessing peers, especially in Qatar. The students indicated that this process was fair, enjoyable, and useful. It is important to note, however, that in collectivistic cultures like Qatar, students are hesitant to give or accept negative peer feedback. There was also some concern about peers' capability to accurately assess this work. In the end, students reported that peer assessment improved their work and provided insight into a professor's expectations.

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INCEPTION: A MOMENT OF META-META-COGNITION (OR HOW WE BECOME AWARE OF HOW WE SELF-ASSESS)

Stephen Hare, Halifax Regional School Board

In this Furious Five presentation, I will create a learning moment for all participants to respond to. Afterwards, I will ask everyone to reflect on how they were learning just a moment ago, and what types of inner dialogue they were having.

I will then show 5 (of course!) simple ways for each of us to remember how to make observations about ourselves and how we can become better at those aspects of self-assessment we focus on.

The 5 ways are:

1. Monitor emotions (our feelings about our feelings)
2. Self-questioning - what types of questions were we asking ourselves
3. Monitoring of others - were others learning/understanding this faster than me? Self-conscious?
4. Connections to other things. Who was thinking about other dance songs during the lesson?
5. Our final judgment - how do we define our takeaway

Being a more adept self-assessor is a goal for all learners, and this presentation will show how we can become more aware of what we are doing when we evaluate ourselves.

OPTIMIZED STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Robert Hawkes, Mount Allison University

In many subjects it is critical for students to be able to self-assess their own mastery of concepts.
In developing an introductory level physics textbook, we employed student checkpoints tied to learning outcomes. As part of the development process, student advisory boards provided feedback on issues such as format.
In this short presentation, we will give examples, and show how the same principles can be readily applied to instructor-developed print and electronic materials.

ENLISTING STUDENT TEAMS TO HELP WITH MIDTERM EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING

Shannon Murray, University of Prince Edward Island

Midterm, anonymous, informal evaluations of teaching are such helpful, simple ways to take the temperature of the class, to address problems you may not even have known were there, and to improve the second half. Most of us read these in isolation, but I'm going to suggest reading them with a team of students.

In my larger Shakespeare class, I ask for a team of volunteer leaders. I don't put any other limits or requirements on the volunteers: they are to determine together how they want to work as a group to make the class better. They can be spokes- or ombuds-people; they can suggest and even lead supplementary sessions or organize film viewings; they can work as a team or individually; they can come up with something completely different or do nothing at all. Most importantly for me, if I have a question about anything from due dates to classroom discipline, I can consult them. At the end of the class, they get a letter for their portfolios.
It was on a whim a couple of years ago that I decided to share my midterm evaluations with that team, before I had even opened the envelope. (I usually use the "What can the instructor do to improve my learning? What can my classmates do? What can I do?" model.) We read through them together, grouped the suggestions and comments, and drew up a plan to address any issues.

I found the process helpful for three reasons:

1. The students were a good check for my own judgement. I am not the best judge, for example, of whether the material is being covered too quickly or too slowly, so any comments about pace could be checked by students who had the experience of the class. When the team disagreed about something – say about whether too much time in

class was being spent on watching scenes from the plays – I would let the class know that.

2. I think (I hope) that the process conveyed to the rest of the class how seriously I took their suggestions – even when I could not act on them all.
3. The team approach to midterm evaluations also built on the idea that the whole class—not just the instructor—is responsible for the learning in the course.

A couple of quick suggestions if you want to try this:

- Let the class know that others will read their anonymous evaluations.
- The student team has to trust you enough to disagree with you and to tell you if they think you could be doing something better.
- Remember and model good techniques for receiving feedback: listen carefully, ask for clarification, don't argue!
- And finally, take a deep breath! It's not an easy thing to go through – especially if you haven't vetted the submissions first.

USING SCREEN-RECORDING SOFTWARE TO MAKE TRAINING/INFORMATION/LECTURE PODCASTS

James Whitehead, St. Thomas University

The first few days of classes can often result in information overload for students – and much of the most important information that you diligently communicate may go in one ear and out the other. Students are often 'class-shopping' for the first two weeks, and a significant fraction of your final class roster may not have been enrolled at the time these messages were communicated.

Why do we go through these important class messages if we can simply hand out a paper syllabus instead? For many of us, orally highlighting the key elements can draw attention to the most pertinent points and students get to ask for clarification and, realistically, many students are unlikely to closely read the syllabus anyway.

This presentation will introduce a simple and free program that can be used to record these introductory messages, either live (in class) or a pre-recorded intro/welcome message. The software (which can record voice, face and computer screen) has a number of other potential uses too. For example:

1) You need to do a demo in class showing students how to navigate through the library website to access a specific database - record the demo for posterity, and direct them to it instead, saving valuable class time.

2) You'd like to provide some feedback on an essay draft, but are fed up with having to write a million scribbles on each paper (that don't adequately communicate the nuances of your feedback). Why not scroll through the Word document while recording your verbal comments

and highlighting sections with your mouse, as you would if you were providing informal advice face-to-face?

3) And what about those 'flipped classrooms' you've heard about? How do you actually record the lecture components that students are supposed to watch outside class-time? This demo will show you how, and also how to post the videos to a free file-hosting site.

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ABSTRACTS

(of other Showcase sessions)

Highlighting Reading: Assessing Students' Comprehension of Course Texts

Heather Sparling, Cape Breton University

Recent interest in the "flipped classroom" means that reading outside of class takes on a new importance, providing the course content upon which the teacher bases more interactive and engaging classroom activities. But this requires not only that students do assigned readings, but that they understand them. In my own experience, I have observed that many students, as illustrated in assessments based on course readings, seem confused and misunderstand course texts. How can assessment be designed to a) motivate students to do assigned readings; and b) assist students with the development of effective reading skills? We must begin by understanding what challenges students when working through an assigned reading, before we can develop assessments that either minimize challenges or structure manageable challenges from which students can learn. In this interactive workshop based on John Bean's "Helping Students Read Difficult Texts" (2001), we will begin by reflecting on the role of reading in our own courses. In groups, we will name challenges contributing to students' reading difficulties, then develop strategies for helping students to become better readers. Finally, based on our understanding of reading challenges and armed with strategies for helping students to work through those challenges, we will design assessments of reading comprehension and evaluation. Participants will leave with practical ideas for helping students with course readings, and for assessing their understanding of them.

An "Integral" Approach to Assessment

Robert Lapp, Mount Allison University

Assessment can be a confusing issue, if only because the two primary forms of assessment---summative and formative---can seem to be at cross-purposes. Moreover, innovations in assessment that stress its role in the improvement of learning are often resisted by students and institutions focused primarily on the currency of credits and grades. One way to sort out these contradictions is by adopting an "Integral" approach to assessment based on the Integral Theory of philosopher Ken Wilber and applied to teaching and learning by Esbjörn-Hargens, Dea and others. This session will provide a brief introduction to most useful and accessible elements of an integral approach to assessment. This includes the value of including both interior and exterior perspectives that arise within both individual and collective contexts. With assessment practices situated within four equally valuable (though crucially different) "quadrants," we can then examine the way stages and lines of development within each quadrant can situate (and thereby accommodate) a wide array of---and responses to---assessment practices. The result is a model or "map" that can reduce instructor anxiety in the face of assessment challenges by providing a check-list of perspectives and a tool-kit of best practices. In the end, what seems contradictory is re-situated as complementary, and what seems confusing can give way to the comprehensive---and even the compassionate.

Assessing Faculty Attitudes towards Teaching: Moving Towards Evidence-Based Teaching And Learning Practices

Brad Wuetherick, Dalhousie University
Stan Yu, University of Saskatchewan

Active, student-centred teaching has been increasingly cited within the literature as a form of best practice in teaching and learning in higher education, synonymous (in part) with evidence-based practice. Despite this evidence and the offer of resources to support instructors, little meaningful change has occurred in higher education teaching practices (Henderson, Beach and Finkelstein 2011). Several scholars have demonstrated that the uptake of teaching innovations is highly dependent upon educational beliefs, presumptions of the instructors who implement them, and the teaching context in which they find themselves (Samuelowicz and Bain, 2001; Lindblom-Ylänne, Trigwell, Nevgi and Ashwin, 2006). Kuh, Laird and Umbach (2004) further revealed that certain types of instructors are more likely to place emphasis on, and implement, active and student-centred educational practices. These studies suggest that undertaking an institutional assessment of the beliefs, attitudes and demographics of instructors can shed light on discerning whether they are likely to adopt evidence-based teaching and learning practices.

This presentation explores the importance of institutional assessment on teaching and learning environments though a university-wide survey at the University of Saskatchewan examining instructors' attitudes about teaching and learning. This included an exploration of self-reported values, beliefs and attitudes about evidence-informed teaching practice in relation to instructor demographics, such as gender, discipline and rank. Our findings suggest that distinct trends do emerge from the interaction between academic staff demographics and the likelihood of adopting evidence-informed teaching and learning values, beliefs, attitudes, as well as how this manifests in their preference for pedagogical approaches.

"A Backwards Design Approach: Assessment as Learning through Student Leader Training"

Cecilia Jacobs, Student Services, Acadia University

The Resident Assistant training program at Acadia University is generated using Wiggins & McTighe's "Backwards Design" outcome-based learning model. Backwards Design is a method that establishes specific learning outcomes by asking questions like "Why am I doing this?" and "What do I hope to achieve?" Outcome-based learning can be applied to virtually anything, whether it is a university course, training program, project, or a goal oriented life plan. The model is especially important when designing university courses to ensure students meet the required concepts to advance to the next level.

This model is currently used for the Resident Assistant training program because of the high-

level of responsibility these student leaders assume. Resident Assistants are students who live in residence and are employed by the university to provide a level of care for the residents of their building. Therefore, it is crucial that these student leaders have the knowledge and the "know-how" to deal with minimal to extreme situations.

The Resident Assistant training program uses several forms of assessment, both summative and formative, to ensure students retain the knowledge that they learn. The specific curriculum outcomes are first produced, the forms of assessment are customized to measure these outcomes and then lesson plans are designed clearly to meet these objectives.

The "Assessment as Learning" presentation will include a brief summary about Backwards Design and how it can be applied to a program or course, the steps to create learning outcomes, and how to tailor/ match assessment to meet those outcomes. Included in the take-away(s) will be different forms of peer and self-assessment for 'assessment as learning' to deepen learning outside of the classroom (i.e. journal reflections, peer evaluation rubrics, etc.)

Assessing Field-Based, Experiential Learning

Avril Aitken, Bishop's University

Evaluation of field-based, experiential learning presents challenges, given that in the field we seek to assess a student's ability to act strategically *in open-ended and complex situations. Additionally, we call on professionals and experts in the field to act as assessors; they may* not understand program expectations or the goals of a field placement, and may have received little or no preparation for their role.

Participants in this session will learn about an approach to overcome the challenges of assessing field-based learning. It hinges on involving field-based assessors in the development of the tools that will be used in the field. *While tools may facilitate field-based assessment, they can also pose problems. They may focus on micro skills, may fail to distinguish levels of performance, or may lead to uniformly high rankings.* In this session, participants will be introduced to two similar processes for creating tools that counter these problems.

The emphasis is on the particular process used by a collaborative action research team. It involved bringing together field-based mentors, supervisors, and professors to collaboratively build descriptive scales that drew directly on the language of field-based professionals. A pilot study of the use of the tools revealed enhanced communication between students and assessors, increased understanding of university expectations, and more precise written feedback for students.

The presentation is directed at those interested in carrying out, or participating in the step-by-step process.

When Assessment Reveals a Dark Side: New Paths To Academic Sanctions

Rosemary Polegato, Mount Allison University

Some cases of academic dishonesty are cause for a pause. They fall in a gray area: the allegations don't quite fit the criteria, the judicial process seems inappropriate, and the usual sanctions are deemed unreasonable. Those who struggle with these types of cases are invited to join a discussion which will be seeded by a case study of a recent incident. The aims of the session are: (1) to identify new paths to building our capacity to deal with dishonesty in a way that reinforces the values of the individual and the academy; and (2) to specify sanctions that leave learners upright rather than labeled as academic "criminals." Thought-provoking ideas about sanctions that are anchored in instructional strategies that lead to self-reflection and learning are most welcome!

Metacognitive Approaches to Essay Writing: Critical Engagement in Introductory English Classes

Jessica Riddell, Department of English, Bishop's University

Teaching and modeling effective writing – and its attendant skills, e.g. mastering the essay genre, argumentation, critical thinking, ethical and moral reasoning – is an ongoing challenge across disciplines. As educators, we constantly explore ways to intentionally teach – and model – clear written communication skills in a transparent and accessible manner. With this challenge in mind, I implemented a model of assessment in my introductory survey course with objectives that sought not merely to assess effective writing but to 1) teach students to be more reflective about assessment; and 2) to use assessment to inform their essay writing. I accomplished this through a series of assignments. During class time, students were given "real" undergraduate essays (essays written by past students, and whose names had been erased) at three stages of the term (roughly 3-4 weeks apart) on a topic/text that the course had just covered (e.g. Beowulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare). Students were given criteria for assessing essays (agreed upon by members of the English department in advance) and asked to assess the paper and assign it a mark. There was a qualitative and quantitative aspect to this assessment, and the assignment was marked based on clear criteria provided to students in advance. Students were then asked to write an essay and submit an assessment of it that followed the same structure as the first three assignments. In this session, I will outline the objectives, assessment, and outcomes of this initiative and facilitate a discussion on the criteria of assessment, and the various challenges we faced in this approach to essay writing. I will facilitate a discussion around the following topics: methods of assessment (criteria around essay writing), the process of choosing essays for the anonymous peer review assignments, and the merits of student evaluation.

Signal Transduction: A Small-Class Model For Fully Integrating Learning And Assessment

Christopher Dieni, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, with
Neal Callaghan & Alex Whynot, Students, Mount Allison University

In the Winter 2013 semester, I taught a Biochemistry course called "Signal Transduction" to 3rd and 4th year students in the Biological Sciences. Given the extremely complex nature of the material, I radically revamped the course structure to eliminate midterms and finals, and focused exclusively on presentations and papers, favouring problem-solving rather than memorization and "regurgitation." An unexpected bonus of this structure was that assessment was made a part of learning, rather than apart from it. Students gave their first presentation in the course (worth 5%) on which they were evaluated and provided with feedback, and directly applied this feedback to their first paper (also worth 5%), which was on the same subject as the first presentation, and received further feedback. This process continued through their second presentation, second paper, third presentation, and third paper. Overall, students received real-time assessment throughout the course, as they gradually built up to more complex material and more heavily-weighted components. This session will target instructors across all disciplines (including those outside of STEM) with either 1) very small class sizes seeking to capitalize on the intimate learning experience for their students; or 2) those seeking to spread the grading weight over more assignments, incorporate real-time assessment into their courses, and make that assessment part of student learning. I will discuss the pros and caveats of this model as the instructor, and two students will reflect upon it as compared to other courses.

Improving Student Learning And The Student Experience Of Feedback Using Formative Peer-Assessed Lab Reports

Laura A. Mitchell, Bishop's University, Sherbrooke, Quebec
Martin A. Sharp, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow, Scotland

Given that the relationship between learning, assessment, and feedback can be more complex than is sometimes appreciated, it is unsurprising that student understanding often appears strangely divorced from notions of how grading criteria relate to their own performance and marks. Attempting to address this uncertainty amongst students, and with the majority of assessment on psychology degree programs being summative, we sought to facilitate and encourage a deeper, more reflective approach to learning amongst a disparate body of students. In an honours level biopsychology module, we introduced a peer-marked, formatively assessed lab report as the first phase of coursework. In an attempt to allay fears about their own ability, students were introduced to the concepts underpinning formative peer assessment and criteria for meaningful and useful feedback. Following this familiarization phase, and once

the students had conducted their own empirical biopsychology project, they submitted a 3000-word lab report to be formatively assessed by another student. Peers provided detailed written feedback suggesting how the report might be improved. Students subsequently met in order to reflect upon the feedback and grades awarded. At the point of summative assessment, a revised report was submitted along with a pro-forma, detailing how the students had engaged with the feedback and re-formulated their submission in light of comments received. The intervention was overwhelmingly well-received. This presentation will discuss the method and evaluation by students in more detail.

A Holistic Approach to Program Review

Susan Joudrey & Michelle Malloy, Centre for Academic & Instructional Development , Saint Mary's University

Is it possible for a university education centre and a group of faculty members to work together to raise the quality of education and meet the vision of a specific program? Faculty members from Saint Mary's University who hoped to enhance the breadth and depth of the Environmental Science program (ENVS) teamed up with the Centre for Academic and Instructional Development (CAID) to create an innovative approach to program redesign. The collaborative process of assessing a disciplinary program and how it is delivered resulted in the implementation of a two-part, faculty-led education retreat. The process began by determining threshold concepts, or the "concepts that are considered central to the mastery of one's discipline" (Meyer and Land, 2003), and then examining the Domains of Knowing (Baxter Magolda, 1992) specific to undergraduate learners at each stage of their degree. The curriculum was assessed according to how it met these two objectives. One faculty member observed that "This effort will impact every course at ENVS, how we collaborate with each other in teaching, and how we communicate goals and expectations to our students." The session will discuss the theoretical concepts that informed the process and the practical steps taken by CAID and the faculty members, demonstrating how we moved from developing a concept map to mapping the curriculum.

Knowing and Reasoning in College: Gender-Related Patterns in Students' Intellectual Development, Marcia B. Baxter Magolda (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992)

Assessing Intangibles: Alternative Forms of Assessment as Tools for Navigating Student Commitments in the Classroom

Andrew Wilson & Fiona Black, Religious Studies
Mount Allison University

Recent scholarship urges the recognition of some specific "intangibles" in the classroom, namely, students' implication in sensitive ideological issues such as race, class and gender. In addition to raising student consciousness generally about how these issues are manifest in the classroom and the world at large, scholarship suggests that teachers actively "teach to" students' marginalized circumstances and alternative histories. Comparable questions arise with ideological commitments of a religious or spiritual nature, which might also benefit from similar scrutiny and sensitivity; these, too, are fundamentally matters of identity, involving core values, personal and familial histories, and socio-cultural contexts. What happens, though, when such intangibles become—inadvertently or purposefully—part of the teaching strategies and assessment structures of the course? Indeed, should one assess intangibles at all?

Our presentation uses the Religious Studies classroom as a context for exploring the intangibles of personal commitment, with a view to understanding what role they play in classroom dynamics and what challenges they pose in assessment. Through three specific exercises, participants will have the opportunity to explore: 1) the connections between commitment and material objects; 2) the possibility of using creative (visual) avenues to explore difficult theoretical concepts; and 3) ethical engagement through classroom dissidence. In this way, our session will show how non-traditional strategies and modes of assessment help navigate the ethical contours of teaching around personal commitments. Such strategies allow students to acknowledge, affirm, and explore their commitments academically without the perceived threat of personal attack or the diminution of rigour.

(Dis)Advantaging Students with Assessment Decision-Making

John Grant McLoughlin, University of New Brunswick
Ryan Jones, University of New Brunswick

The calendar description looks identical. The course number has not changed. But the students have and so what? Do you really assess the same when the classes are so markedly different? Do you even have the same expectations of all students? Or do you find that the goals of teaching and learning shift depending upon the collective, the individual, or the role of the course? Our experiences suggest that many layers need to be unearthed in answering such questions. For instance, teachers' (un)familiarity with students is a factor that will be discussed.

Who teaches the class? What does the grade mean? This session will feature discussion around the messiness and conundrums that exist as we strive to teach effectively, knowing that

assumptions implicit to our interpretation of a grade, such as relationship, accommodation, flexibility, and the like, all muddy its meaning. The main objectives are two-fold: to consciously raise awareness of these issues and their implications, and to offer teachers ideas that may be helpful in addressing the realities in one's practice.

- Are we comfortable with accepting that assessment is not consistent?
- How do our objectives and beliefs in teaching affect the forms and interpretations of assessment?
- How do we (dis)advantage students through assessment decisions made within all facets of a course?

This participatory discussion will be enriched with questions and insights from your personal contexts.

Assessing The Impact Of A Preparatory Training Course On Assessment Practice In A Higher Education Institution

Anna-May Edwards-Henry, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine

Among the courses offered in the faculty development programme of The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, is an assessment course. This course takes a pragmatic approach to developing knowledge and skill in assessment and professionalism. The programme is entering its sixth year of implementation and is due for review. Reviewing the assessment course is one component of the review exercise. A survey instrument was administered to 93 of 106 participants of the assessment course over the period 2009 to 2013. Twenty-nine percent of the participants responded, but their responses were comprehensive and provide solid information on assessing the impact of this course. The information included participants' rating of the course in terms of its influence on their knowledge, practice, and professionalism. They were asked to identify new assessment methods they have used as a result of participating in the course, as well as to provide specifics about the impact of new methods on the performance of their students. Participants were also asked to cite barriers encountered in attempting to change their assessment methods. Also examined were their reflections written at the end-of-course in the context of their intentions to engage in best assessment practice. From the survey responses, several participants seemed liberated from a narrow, and perhaps pernicious, thinking on and practice of assessment, and were subsequently able to use varied assessment methods and prepare high quality questions, mark schemes, and rubrics. This most often translated into improved student performance, which some described in glowing terms. Where there was opportunity to implement ideas and tools gained in the course, respondees made studied changes to their practice that registered a commitment espoused in their the end-of-course reflections. However, a small number cited barriers that reflected departmental culture, but not necessarily institutional guidelines.

The Effects of Face-validity on an Outcomes-Based Assessment Program

Susan D. Dawson, Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island

Undergraduate and professional programs are increasingly facing calls for greater accountability, and outcomes-based assessment is one way that accreditation bodies and programs have responded to these calls. When well implemented, outcomes-based assessment (OBA) not only provides increased accountability, but can also promote faculty engagement with teaching, increase student engagement, and ultimately improve student learning.

At the Atlantic Veterinary College, we have implemented OBA's for our fourth year students in clinical rotations. Part of our developmental evaluation process examined faculty and student engagement, and the effects of OBA's on student learning. Reliability and validity of the assessments continue to be of particular concern. While we were initially most concerned with content validity (are the assessments measuring what we intend?) the results of student focus groups revealed the importance of face validity (do students perceive the assessments to be accurate?) When students felt that the OBA's were not accurate, they were less engaged with the entire process: they did not value OBA, and OBA did not improve student learning.

Implementing OBA is one example of curricular change, and the lessons we have learned about face-validity and faculty and student engagement during our development and implementation process can be more broadly applied to any academic program implementing curricular changes.

Stay True to your Principles - Dare to Try Something New!

Dawn MacIsaac, Computer Science/ Engineering & Katy Haralampides, Engineering, University of New Brunswick, & Adrian DC Chan, Systems and Computer Engineering, Carleton University

The purpose of this session is to generate discussion around using innovative forms of assessment. Three examples of assessment activities will be presented, each designed within its own distinct context, and all demonstrating the application of three guiding principles for assessment. First, assessment should be authentic. That is, it should, as much as possible, be a measure of what students were supposed to learn. Second, assessment activities should offer students opportunities for growth. That is, by engaging in the activity (or preparing for it), students should have the opportunity to change their mental model of an aspect of what is being assessed. Third, assessment should be an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they know or can do.

Creative thinking and extra work are almost always necessary to develop assessment activities guided by these principles, and sometimes even a little bravery is needed when delivering them for the first time. But based on our experience it is worth the effort. The first example we will share is a lab exam we deliver in a first year computer science course. The second example, implemented in a fourth year biomedical engineering course, is a student-driven marking scheme we adopted based on an idea presented by Sandra Bell at a teaching showcase presentation in 2010. The final example is a freeform inquiry activity we designed for a course on engineering and social justice, based on an idea presented at the AAU Teaching showcase in 2012. Once we present our examples, we will open the floor to discuss other important guiding principles for assessment, and/or other examples of creative assessment that uphold the principles presented.

Profile of a Living Practitioner: An Assessment For Learning About Post-Graduation Work

Magdalen Normandeau, University of New Brunswick

There is a big difference between undergraduate course work and the work done after graduation. To help our students choose the right post-baccalaureate path, it is important that we help them understand this difference, and to become aware of what it means to work as a practitioner in their field. To this end, I included an interview-based project in two upper-level physics courses. As part of this project, each student investigated the work of a living physicist, and then interviewed that person to find out more about his/her work and how the interviewee came to be in his/her current position. Students shared their insights with each other at the end of term during a round-table debriefing session, and each student received copies of all reports. This project is an example of assessment for learning, but it is unusual in that, while it includes learning of course-related material, it mainly focuses on learning that reaches beyond the confines of the particular course. In this presentation, I will discuss the logistics involved in this project, share the results of its first three implementations, and offer advice and suggestions for anyone wanting to incorporate something similar in their courses. Such a project would be of value in any field, particularly in those where undergraduate course work does not provide much insight into the reality of work after graduation as is the generally the case in science programs.

Peer Assessment: Feedback That Enhances Learning

Dr. Joanne Pyke, Faculty Liaison, Teaching and Learning; Assistant Professor, Marketing & Eileen Smith-Piovesan, Coordinator, Teaching and Learning, Cape Breton University

Peer assessment has been used successfully as a formative tool to enhance the learning and teaching process. Research suggests that positive formative effects on student achievement and attitudes are as good as, or better than, teacher assessments. According to the literature, the use of peer assessment as formative feedback has proven to be an effective tool to motivate student learning, elevate performance, increase confidence, and encourage participation. Students involved in peer evaluation receive immediate feedback and are more proactively involved in the learning process. Based on this information, a feedback rubric was adopted in an "Introductory Public Speaking Communication" course at Cape Breton University. Students received instruction on how to provide formative feedback using criteria outlined in the rubric. Following each in-class public speaking exercise, and subsequent to each student presentation, the rubric was used to provide formative feedback. Based on student course evaluations, participants found this exercise helped them improve their public speaking skills from the perspective of both the assessor and the person being assessed. The instructor for the course reported that students' confidence levels improved as well as their public speaking competence.

In this presentation, participants will experience the in class peer assessment/feedback exercise as successfully adopted in this Public Speaking Communication course, which helped students to modify behaviour and improve learning.

Motivation and Learning Strategies of First Year University Students

Elizabeth Bowering, Psychology & Joanne Mills, Counselling Services
Mount Saint Vincent University

Despite stringent admission policies, highly qualified faculty, and effective teaching practices, approximately 25% of the first year cohort drops out after their first year of university studies. While the current research, based mostly in the USA, suggests some cognitive and psychosocial variables correlated with academic success, it is unknown whether these research findings are applicable to first year students registered at Canadian universities (Kim, Newton, Downey, & Benton, 2010; McCormick, 2003).

As such, on four occasions in 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, we assessed over 250 of our university's incoming first year undergraduate student cohort, in terms of their knowledge and use of Learning Strategies (i.e., critical thinking, rehearsal, effort regulation), and Motivational characteristics (i.e., external versus internal locus of control, test anxiety), via completion of an

online Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire. Demographic information was gathered from the University database (e.g., high school GPA, age, gender as well as Fall 2011 Term GPA and April 2012 Cumulative GPA).

Our initial findings suggest that students who exhibit an internal locus of control, and also plan, monitor, and regulate their cognition and time/study environment, are more likely to be academically successful. Screening students at the outset of their first year of study may help identify "at risk" students in need of support services.

The data presented in this session will be interest to administrators, faculty, and academic support staff. Discussion will focus on the implications of these data for supporting the first year experience

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When Things Go Wrong: Assessment and Response to In-Course Problems

Andrew Nurse, Canadian Studies, & Owen Griffiths, History, Mount Allison University

One objective of post-secondary instructional assessment is formative criticism, which, ideally, illustrates ways in which instruction can be enhanced. At times, minor elements of a course "go wrong" and can be fixed relatively simply. In other cases, however, serious problems may occur that prove difficult to resolve when a course is ongoing. What we do, then, when things "go wrong" in major and minor ways is an important but ill-discussed aspect of post-secondary instruction. Our session is designed to address these issues using a combination of Mount Allison's Anonymous Student Questionnaires (ASQs) and case studies drawn from our direct experience as university professors.

Our aim in this session is three-fold: (1) to analyze how student assessments can both identify and confuse (disguise?) potential problems in course design and delivery; (2) to consider strategies for responding to problems that contribute to a course "going wrong;" and (3) to emphasize the need for institutional strategies that foster formative criticism and enhance accountability among all stakeholders (professors, students, administration). This last, overarching aim is intended to generate discussion about the relationship between professorial and student expectations and reality, on the one hand, and forms of assessment and control, on the other. In conclusion, we will submit for the audience's consideration our belief that assessments of teaching and learning can tell us as much about the assessors as they can about the subjects under evaluation.

Successful Strategies For Making Science More Accessible To Students

Colleen Barber, Department of Biology, Saint Mary's University

Many science students do not connect with the scientific literature in a meaningful way, and are inexperienced in scientific research. In this session, I discuss two strategies that I implement in second- and fourth-year courses designed to help students break through these barriers, as they become young scientists. After presenting these ideas, I will engage the audience in discussing assignment ideas, and how best to assess them.

The first assignment is designed to engage students in original research, where they learn and implement the scientific method. Students collaborate with two other students in deriving a testable hypothesis, designing their study, and collecting data. They use the scientific method to arrive at the final tangibles of a manuscript and class presentation, and the intangibles of increased self-confidence and enthusiasm for science. This engagement method is implemented in both my second- and fourth-year courses, and has resulted in student publications in esteemed scientific journals.

The second strategy helps connect students with the broader scientific community and is implemented in my fourth-year bird course. Students choose an avian scientist in whose work they are interested, and read two of his/her publications. They summarize the research, interview the scientist, and present their findings and experiences to their peers. Several students have gone on to do graduate research with one of these scientists.

Participants will take away two different ideas that can help students develop into junior scholars. This session is targeted towards science instructors, but those in other disciplines may be interested.

Sustainability, Accounting, and Assessment

Lynn MacLean, Cape Breton University

Many accounting academics use a mix of formative and summative assessment tools to evaluate students. Assignments are used to provide students with feedback on errors, such as applying accounting standards, and how such errors should be corrected. Quizzes, midterms and exams are used to determine students' achievement of learning at the end of a chapter, module, or term. In addition, cases have become important tools that enable the assessment of how students apply theory to tasks, problems, or situations they may face as professionals and business leaders in the future.

However, are such assessment tools appropriate when sustainability-related topics are introduced into accounting courses? We must ensure that students are not only exposed to emerging practices, guidelines, and tools for measuring, evaluating, and disclosing economic,

environmental and social concerns, but also why such knowledge is important. For many academics, incorporating topics related to sustainability-related topics into an existing curriculum may require that they change their role as knowledge holders to one where they are lead learners.

This session will suggest sustainability-related topics to incorporate into accounting curricula, such as sustainability reporting trends. An overview of sources of material and classroom presentation ideas will be provided. In addition, potential assessment tools will be offered.

Using Surveys of Student Engagement to Assess How Students Perceive Their Institutions

Carla VanBeselaere, Economics, Mount Allison University

Surveys of student engagement such at the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) are becoming increasingly ubiquitous. This presentation will consider whether the data from these surveys can provide us with new insight into how students assess their learning experiences. As a basis for this discussion, I will use data collected from Mount Allison University (MTA) students through both the NSSE and CUSC surveys. I will look at what students report in these surveys when asked about their perceptions of Mount Allison University. I will consider how students respond when asked about specific educational practices that are assumed to be effective, and hopefully, together, we will untangle correlations and causation in such a way that we can obtain a clearer picture of how students assess their teachers, faculty, staff, and maybe even our institutions.

Encouraging and Assessing Deep Reading Using Reflective Journals in Science Courses

Geoffrey Lee-Dadswell, Cape Breton University

Getting students to do the assigned readings is an age-old problem. When a course uses a "flipped classroom" model it becomes crucial; if too few students keep up with the readings then the entire approach can fail. How do we push students to go beyond doing the readings, to read deeply, and to think about the reading before they come to class? It has become common in introductory science courses to use Reading Quizzes, but the outcomes of this approach, while better than nothing, are not really satisfactory. For example, quizzes can encourage students to adopt shallow learning approaches, such as skimming the readings looking only for quiz answers.

A promising approach is to replace the quizzes with Reflective Journals. It is virtually impossible for a student to write a good journal entry without having done the reading. Also, marking on a rubric that rewards students for reflection and for making connections to ideas encountered outside the readings can push students to read deeply. In this session, participants will experience a student's-eye view of reflective journaling and we will discuss the benefits and difficulties of using this approach in large first year courses. Time will also be spent discussing the use of this approach across the disciplines.

Shifting Landscapes in Higher Education: Assessing Students' Diverse Ways of Knowing

Zhanna Barchuk & Mary Jane Harkins, Mount Saint Vincent University

As our world becomes increasingly globalized, international student exchanges have become a significant part of university programs. This interactive session will draw attention to the importance of integrating innovative assessment methods to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students from diverse backgrounds. Teachers in post-secondary education are finding themselves in the cusp of a dynamic shift in the concept of educational spaces and opportunities. As we move away from face-to-face teaching, courses and international work placements often include an increase in the use of blended learning and/or are now fully online. Innovative assessment strategies are needed that are sensitive to students' varying cultures, traditions, and values, and that are transferable across a range of contexts in different countries. Based on the presenters' work with exchange students between Canada and Kenya, the participants will be introduced to a range of assessment strategies that draw on students' cultural backgrounds, and contribute to students' academic knowledge and professional development. Templates for the strategies will be provided.

Assessing the Impact of Permanent Learning Teams to Build Engagement, Learning and More!

Margaret McKee, Dept. of Management, Sobey School of Business & Susan Joudrey, Centre for Academic & Instructional Development, Saint Mary's University

Many professors are interested in fostering greater engagement and learning in their classrooms, but are not sure where to start or how to assess the benefits to students. The research suggests that "[s]tudents who work in cooperative learning groups often outperform students who work independently or in competition with each other" (Lei, Kuestermeyer, and Westmeyer, 2010, p.318). It has been our experience that permanent learning teams can promote engagement in a course, increase the quality of in-class discussion, foster greater

interaction between domestic and international students, and provide other unexpected benefits. Our presentation will include a brief overview of the academic literature on permanent learning teams and provide details on how the teams are being used in a mandatory third-year business ethics course for undergraduate Commerce students at Saint Mary's University. Given the conference's focus on assessment, we will elaborate on how annual instructor course evaluations have been used over the past two years to assess the effectiveness of such teams on a number of student outcomes. We'll save time at the end for a brief question and answer.

La Nuit du Conte: A Night of Storytelling and Learning

Rohini Bannerjee, Saint Mary's University

In French 2200, a course offered in English, Saint Mary's students are introduced to the oral traditions and literary genres of the Francophone World. In this presentation, we will discuss the innovative curriculum design of this course whereby students discover traditional rituals, music, song styles, contemporary forms of traditional and popular culture, oral traditional narrative, prose, religious texts, and poetry, all within a globalized Francophone context. In particular, we will examine the benefits of our students' self-directed learning when assessed at the end of the course with a creative writing and performance assignment, shifting away from a traditional final paper. We will demonstrate how students participate in a "Night of Storytelling" or Nuit du Conte, sharing their original fable, legend, or fairytale with the wider Saint Mary's community, incorporating and implementing the global oral traditions studied in class into their own contemplative contribution, and discuss how this is a successful end of term assessment, encouraging a more student-centered learning environment, and a more lucid and interactive rubric. We will discuss how students were well prepared for the storytelling with scheduled tutoring at the SMU Writing Centre and mentoring advice from a local oral historian.

Students learn from each other by bringing to life the rhythms of the Louisiana Cajuns, the language regionalisms of PEI Acadians, the poetic melodies of Arabic-inspired Tunisian ghazals, and the fantastic Voodoo tales of Haiti, giving each genre their own Maritime-Canadian-Anglophone twist and interpretation.