EDIT 6400E Summer 2018

Personal Application Paper

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56/60 Lots of good examples and ideas here!

Explain the concept as you currently understand it. (5 pts)

Explain how you learned/developed this concept or understanding etc. What was it that you read/saw/did in this class that helped you learn this? (5 pts)

Write about how and why this idea will impact your future actions, including why you feel this future change or action will be useful, for yourself or for some particular group of other people. Write specifically and in some detail. (10 pts)

What parts of this concept or idea or change you are still wrestling with; what element(s) are you still trying to figure out? (not required)

1. **Cooperative Learning 20/20**

Cooperative learning lays the groundwork for problem-based learning, project-based learning, cognitive apprenticeships, and learning communities. The primary theorists behind cooperative learning are Vygotsky and Dewey. Vygotsky’s Cycle of Public Speech to Private Speech to Thought to Creation fits with cooperative learning as Vygotsky believed that learning has to be social.

Dewey’s 1916 *Democracy & Education* posited that cooperative learning is essential to fit students for a democratic society. That in order to have shared values, learners must have equable opportunity to receive and take from others, and there must be shared undertakings and experiences (to prepare students for life).

The Edutopia video “Collaborative Learning Builds Deeper Understanding” left a lasting impression. It claims that collaborative learning has been shown to result in higher student achievement, higher self-esteem, and higher motivation for all students, across all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. It shows how The College Preparatory School in Oakland, California uses simple ideas that embrace the learning experience such as:

* Students asking each other questions before asking the teacher
* Planning classroom geography – ensuring that students can look each other in the eye
* Supporting a student to throw something out to the group, and let someone else build on it

In my job at the University of North Georgia, I’ve recently served a term as the Chair of the UNG Staff Council. When I began in this role, I was often frustrated that our meetings consisted hours of complaining, which took up much of the meeting time, and it seemed as though nothing was actually being accomplished. Once I was elected to Chair, I instituted a rule that no one could take the floor to complain, unless they could also provide a solution to their complaint. I had hoped to increase productive output from the group and boost morale. However, as I studied cooperative learning in this course, I realized that my rule was not a great idea. I wish that I would have allowed people to throw out their issues to the group, and allowed others to propose solutions or next steps to take. I think that in the past, these conversations could have become productive if the group had an effective moderator.

1. **Authentic Learning Experiences 16/20**

**I liked your ideas here a lot, but you also needed to “**clearly explain[ing] the concept as you currently understand it”.

Before this course, I was completely unfamiliar with the term *authentic learning experience*. I should probably be embarrassed to admit that, because now, it seems like I see it everywhere. I’ve recently been asked to attend an event that has an entire track dedicated to Authentic Learning Experiences. I’ve also just received a [report from EDUCAUSE and the New Media Consortium](file:///Users/nfknapp/Downloads/6400%20to%20grade/previewHR2018.pdf) that discusses the use of technology in designing authentic learning experiences. After reviewing the material from this course, and participating in our group discussion on the topic, I know that authentic learning experiences are one of my most prominent takeaways, and I immediately began thinking on ways that I can implement them in both my full-time position as a staff member, and in my part-time position as an instructor.

In my full-time position as a staff member, I serve as the advisor for UNG’s Online Student Ambassadors. This organization is currently ‘under construction’ but will serve in a peer-mentorship role to new online students. We are currently planning to create a knowledge base of frequently asked questions, and I’ve been wondering how I would assign the work of creating modules for each topic. Now, I think that I will ask the students (ambassadors) to create the modules that they would like to create (or feel most comfortable with).

I am also an adjunct online instructor of POLS 1101, American Government. One of my frustrations in this course, is that student often begin papers, discussions, or forum responses with “I believe that…” or “I am of the opinion that…” when the assessment activity is really aimed at trying to gauge students’ knowledge of a government system or process (not their opinion or feelings of the process). I think that I would now like to give students options about which system/process they choose to write about. I’d like to offer an assignment similar to this personal application paper and ask – which topic are you passionate about? Tell me about it – show me your knowledge! Tell me what works/doesn’t work in your opinion.

These types of assignments motivate learners because they get to engage in tasks in which they feel capable and able to succeed.

**3. Learning Communities 20/20**

Another topic that I have gained a great appreciation for is learning communities. As someone who works in a student-affairs-type job, I’ve heard of learning communities in the past, but only thought of them as groups of students taking English and Math together their freshman year, and not much else. After this course, I realize how often we engage in activities that resemble learning communities.

Learning communities allow for student-driven learning and give students opportunities to pursue their passions (such as Shelly Wright’s “Change for Change” project). They can be as simple as open forums that help people fix broken things (like bulldozers). Professional Learning Communities include supportive and shared leadership, offer collective creativity of the group, emphasize shared values and vision, provide supportive conditions, and a shared personal practice.

I am a member of an informal learning community called *The Garden of eCore.* This group is housed in a course in eLearning, and allows eCore instructors to easily share documents, articles, graphics, etc. We have forums set up that allow us to talk about any problems or successes we are experiencing in our courses. When I was a new instructor, I found this incredibly helpful, and now that I am more experienced, I am looking forward to giving back to this group that supported me.