
METACOGNITIVE MENTORING FRAMEWORK

REDUCE STUDENT ATTRITION IN ONLINE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a veteran instructor's experience during a short, yet intensive mentorship within a Community of Practice (CoP) framework. As a member in a Participatory Action Research mentoring/coaching project, the educator gained new insights and knowledge about how to better serve first-year, entry-level, College 100 learners. Key insights cultivated via a peer coaching and mentoring process helped the educator develop specific instructional best practices better suited to the cognitive, constructivism online learning format designed for first-year learners. The most profound growth experiential learning take-away from the coaching and mentoring process was the understanding of and new skills applied that work best with the student population. Having veteran experience instructing advanced learners for a variety of institutions, the educator learned that instructional techniques cannot be applied uniformly when teaching in a first-year classroom compared to more advanced learners. In addition, the educator provides many of her best practices she uses in all her classrooms at many institutions she teaches for. She shares them with you in this book. Novice and veteran educators and trainers in any instructional environment will find useful teaching tools to benefit learners of all ages.

INTRODUCTION

This discussion is about the personal and professional account of a veteran, instructor who experienced a metacognitive, peer mentorship. The discussion explains the issues and challenges, the process, and the learned best practices to support 1st year online students at a for-profit higher education institution. The goal for the reader is to: (1) understand the value of a metacognitive, peer mentorship, and (2) learn super cool instructional techniques to support online learners in creative, inventive, engaging ways. My experiences throughout this process might help educators, coaches, mentors, human resource staff, administration, managers, trainers, and students learn new ways of interacting and producing in any educational setting. The value of this discussion might: (1) help reduce drop-out rates, (2) engage, inspire, challenge, motivate, and support learners, and (3) assist management in

professional development activities when training educators in any educational environment.

The beauty of this discussion is that anyone can find specific instructional best practices to support their interactions throughout the learning process whether one is a student, an educator, or a manager of educators and trainers. The peer-mentorship process and the learned best practices can be applied in any educational setting and by anyone interested in an improved learning process. Students can learn how to interact in an educational setting to improve their performance. Educators can learn how to support learners with new, differentiated instructional techniques for any age and learning style. Managers can learn how to support educators during training initiatives while providing effective, intuitive instructional techniques and take-aways.

Attrition is always a concern for all learning

environments. The instructional strategies presented can be incorporated in any educational setting and include intuitive, creative, technology components to support the learning process. The purpose of this metacognitive, peer mentorship not only enhanced student engagement and reduced attrition, but also supported faculty instructional development. I experienced the following concepts in action during the online faculty mentorship:

1. self-regulated learning process,
2. interactions with cognition and metacognition,
3. gaps in knowledge,
4. using advanced learning technologies,
5. intelligent tutoring systems,
6. information processing theory,
7. proposing future directions,
8. activities offered before, during, and after lessons or as ongoing assignments in an online course,
9. improving problem-solving skills,
10. using metacognition principles to enhance student learning,
11. increased teacher awareness of student thinking,
12. “teachers’ awareness of students’ learning can be practically enhanced (Lee, Irving, Pape, & Owens, 2015),
13. learning attitudes and engagement (Lee, et al., 2015),
14. teachers’ feedback is a critical instructional strategy”(Lee, et al., 2015),,
15. classroom interactions can be enhanced by “shared issues or difficulties” increasing a “positive Sense of Community” (Lee, et al., 2015),
16. exploration of multimedia instructional presentations,
17. teacher’s use of language that explicitly targeted students’ metacognitive knowledge altered their metacognition,
18. “metacognitive thinking strategies with different teaching strategies” (Lee, et al., 2015),
19. collaborative “online inquiry” (Lee, et al., 2015),
20. Personal Online Inquiry,
21. professional learning community (PLC), and
22. at-risk, metacognition, student retention, and student achievement,
23. professional coaching and mentoring,
24. peer coaching and mentoring,
25. Community of Practice (CoP) (Antonietti, Colombo, & Di Nuzzo, 2015; Azevedo, Mudrick, Taub, & Wortha, 2017; Chekwa, McFadden, Divine, & Dorius, 2015; Efklides, 2017; Huang & Chang, 2013; Laskey & Hetzel, 2010; Lee, et al., 2015; Millis & IDEA, 2016; Mytkowicz, Goss, & Steinberg, 2014; Özcan, 2016; Prytula, 2012; Thomas & Anderson, 2014; Zepeda, Richey, Ronevich, & Nokes-Malach, 2015).

The peer-mentoring and Participatory Action Research process changed the instructor’s best instructional practices to align more appropriately with a first-year cognitive, constructivism online classroom environment. The resulting coaching and mentoring process: (1) enhanced job satisfaction, (2) reduced isolation, (3) modeled more appropriate instructional practices for facilitating in a first-year online classroom, and (4) allowed opportunity to connect with and learn from a network of faculty peers (Algozzini, et al., 2016). The Community of Practice (CoP) mentorship model helped the instructor develop a stronger sense of cognitive instructional practices to apply in her first-year classroom. The following categories interpret the most original approaches of a cognitive perspective regarding learning: (1) reciprocal teaching, (2) cognitive apprenticeship, (3) inquiry learning, (4) problem-based learning, (5) anchored instruction, and (6) discovery learning (Yilmaz, 2011).

BACKGROUND

The online classroom is quite different from traditional classrooms and requires specific, measurable, differentiated strategies and techniques to help students succeed. In addition, when direct and targeted strategies are not used within the online classroom, students may feel isolated, experience more challenges, and higher attrition rates are evident. The change initiative I was involved with at XYZ University addressed these challenges with targeted measures not only for learners, but for online faculty as well. How online faculty interact with learners can greatly impact attrition and students' perceptions about their ability to persist. The research reveals faculty presence and interaction in the online classroom greatly impacts student success (Antonietti, Colombo, & Di Nuzzo, 2015; Chekwa, McFadden, Divine, & Dorius, 2015; Huang & Chang, 2013; Laskey & Hetzel, 2010; Lee, Irving, Pape, & Owens, 2015; Millis & IDEA, 2016; Mytkowicz, Goss, & Steinberg, 2014; Özcan, 2016).

Furthermore, creating a sense of community enables learners the opportunity to engage at higher levels, feel less isolated, and develop more confidence in their abilities in a student-centered learning environment (Portugal, 2015a; Portugal, 2015b; Portugal, 2015c; Portugal, 2015d; Portugal, 2014e). The deliberate training of faculty using targeted methodology, specific communication techniques, and modeling differentiated instructional strategies can support a sense of community (Algozzini, Bessolo, Gabay, Voyles, & Batchelor, 2016; Portugal, 2015a; Portugal, 2015b; Portugal, 2015c; Portugal, 2015d; Portugal, 2014e; Yilmaz, 2011).

Online learning is no longer viewed from a negative perspective by most traditional universities. Moreover, traditional universities have jumped onboard and created online learning environments in most of their offerings. The level of competition for students in higher education in state, private, for-profit, and non-profit institutions is high. Regardless of the type of institution, administrators are very aware of the fact that student attrition must be addressed at all levels and within every program. Entry-level and first-year learners are particularly susceptible to dropping-out early and all institutions in higher education are concerned with these challenges.

When students drop-out of a university, they may never re-enroll again, or they may re-enroll at another institution they feel may better serve their needs. With this in mind, higher education institutions compete with every other institution on the market to keep the students they enroll and to attract students who are shopping for the environment that works best for them.

Students are looking for the institution that will serve their needs, address their learning style, support their ability level, offer a sense of community and belonging, and differentiate the instruction. Students may not cognitively understand they are looking for these specific concepts, but they do know when their needs are not being addressed. As administrators and faculty, we may be aware of specific theories of instruction and best practices, but are we actually addressing these issues within our online classrooms in our daily best practices? Do trainers, human resource practitioners, administrators, and faculty mentors address every action online faculty should be making in their classrooms? Is there measurable, specific, and directed training created to help online faculty implement these best practices?

Online Faculty

Most online faculty typically receive four-week, intensive, new recruit online training when they are probationally hired. But, do most institutions with online platforms offer on-going faculty development in the area of best practices for student success? Do most institutions really know what actions within the online classroom actually work toward retaining students and helping them persist? Interpreting theory into specific best practices often times can be an underdeveloped, murky area in faculty development.

Furthermore, what may work with graduate-level learners may not work with first-year learners. Similarly, what may work in a traditional, lecture-based, face-to-face setting may not translate well in a student-centered, online instructional environment. How are higher education institutions addressing these challenges in faculty ranks?

I have been an adjunct instructor for XYZ University since 2011. I received all the typical training every adjunct starts with which is the four-week, structured online faculty orientation. Next, a *teach-as-you-learn* class is assigned during a

peer-mentor observational period. Typically, this is the same type of training online faculty receive at most institutions and introduces the new recruit to the learning management system and various requirements and practices one must include in his or her instruction. Teaching at XYZ University for several years before this change initiative came along gave me insight into the high attrition rates the university experienced with first-year students. I was very aware of the attrition rates as I experienced students dropping my entry-level class in high numbers before class started, the first week of class, and throughout the eight-week module. This was not a unique situation to me, but was a common occurrence in all first-year, College 100 classes throughout the institution.

Although I, and my colleagues, each have vast experiences teaching in online classrooms, extensive researching skills, strong publishing backgrounds, and training in hands-on best practices, strategies, and techniques, our first-year students continued to drop our classes in high numbers. Why was that we asked? Why does this happen and what can we do about it? In addition, this phenomenon is not an isolated challenge. It is widely known at all higher education institutions that online students and first-year students are the most challenging to retain. This issue is present at every higher education institution and each institution seeks, creates, and develops training designed for faculty development to address this issue in various ways.

As an online instructor, I have been involved in faculty training for 15 universities and coming from that perspective, I can say most institutions typically offer the four-week new employee training module then continue to add more faculty requirements and administrative-type duties in the classroom over time. New techniques are rarely addressed, but more administrative “to-do’s” in the online classroom are added-on to the workload each year.

These administrative “to-do’s” are rarely or never tested or piloted for student success and attrition measures and are merely added-on to faculty requirements for continued employment. This is very common and typical in most online instructional settings. In fact, most online instructors who have lasted in online instruction know new faculty administrative duties within the classroom are common every year.

Over 69% of higher education institutions are committed to increasing online enrollment and online education has been steadily increasing by 10% each year (Forte, Schwandt, Swayze, Butler, & Aschcraft, 2016; Welch, Napoleon, Hill, & Roumell, 2014). Two important contributing factors identified in increasing student success, specifically in online classrooms include: (1) the fostering of an increased sense of community with peers and institution, and (2) online instructor support. Online education has experienced an expansion within higher education and studies documenting factors positively influencing student attrition rates have increased as well (Gašević, Kovanović, Joksimović, & Siemens, 2014; Kranzow, 2013; Rice, 2014). Online instructor presence, specific and directed instructor retention strategies, student engagement, and sense of community are important factors that must be addressed in faculty training and mentorship programs.

Having taught for many institutions and heavily researching and writing about the challenges students, faculty, and institutions face in online education, I know the role of an online instructor can greatly impact student success and attrition (Portugal, 2015a; Portugal, 2015b; Portugal, 2015c; Portugal, 2015d; Portugal, 2014e; Portugal, 2006f; Portugal, 2006g). Furthermore, having taught for so many institutions for over a decade in an online format, I have experienced many changes, practices, additions to workload, rhetoric, training modules, and professional development efforts seeking to remedy the attrition challenge every institution faces.

DISCUSSION

Program Evaluation of 1st Year Online Learners

When the program evaluation of the first-year College 100 course at XYZ University was audited, my internal reaction was “Uh-oh more heads are going to roll and faculty will end up getting more work piled on us.” Typically, this is a common reaction when an internal audit, assessment, or program evaluation is conducted in any workplace. To my surprise, when the program evaluation completed, the changes that were implemented not only kept students from dropping-out, it helped direct online faculty in more practical, targeted, instructional practices that directly related to first-year student challenges. The curriculum changes

were specifically designed for first-year students with an interactive, intuitive, easy-to-follow, step-by-step, visual and auditory perspective. In addition, assignments were completely revamped and redesigned with a first-year learner sensitivity in mind.

For example, first-year learners had to complete a fully developed academic APA paper including citations, referencing, and synthesis of research throughout the body of their writing. Common right? So you ask, “What’s wrong with that?” The program evaluation suggested that first-year learners might benefit from more interactive, instructional methods with differentiated, authentic instructional assignments as well. The final project changed from a fully developed APA research paper to a menu of deliverables students could choose from with an authentic, performance-based, APA or MLA assignment. Although there are more academic instructions with very specific rubric components, the final project is now a multimedia presentation students create with the following components:

- Reference all sources, graphics, and videos in a chosen format style (APA, MLA, or Chicago) at the end of your presentation.
- Create a script, rehearse, record, and properly embed narration for your entire presentation.
- Include a minimum of two media forms that are different to strengthen your presentation that include video, animation, graphics, images, or additional audio.
- Use at least one (1) advance feature of your presentation tool. This may include slide transitions, animation, or automatically playing videos or narration.

Student Presentation Examples

(used with permission)

Rich Hutnik used YouTube: <https://youtu.be/B9oBeuFZPxS>

Ryan Toyer used Adobe Voice: <https://voice.adobe.com/a/D3XLG/>

Malachy Moran used Knovio:
<https://view.knowledgevision.com/presentation/52299d42a5fc4719979990a573541325>

As an online instructor, I have advocated for the use of use of technology components in education at all levels, K12 through university, for many years.

I write about this issue in peer-reviewed, I practice using technology in all my classes, and I mentor my student-teacher candidates in this practice as well. I have been a faculty supervisor and mentor to student-teacher candidates for many years at various universities and I always advocate for the inclusion of technology in every lesson I observe my student-teachers delivering when I visit their K12 classrooms.

I have always asked my student-teachers to not only create interactive, differentiated, authentic lesson plans, but to offer a *menu* of authentic deliverables to students so they can develop these skills early in life. I expect to view technology components in the lesson delivery of my student-teacher candidates; and I expect to see student projects assigned that give them an opportunity to be creative in an academic setting as well. Needless to say, I was overwhelmingly excited when the curriculum changed at XYZ University in College 100 and students could use technology in a creative, academic manner in their final project submissions.

The program evaluation was not only effective and non-intrusive to my work environment, but the changes that were made in curriculum enhanced student learning opportunities while addressing engagement strategies in inventive ways. Furthermore, the program evaluation wasn’t about looking for what faculty was doing wrong and letting people go, it was about enhancing the curriculum, creating a sense of community, and developing interactive, audio-visual tools to help first-year learners succeed.

Program Changes and the Mentorship

Now, let’s talk about how the program changes and the mentorship I received to adopt the new faculty best practices unexpectedly changed my workload for the better and enhanced my instruction. For a veteran online instructor who thought she knew everything that surprised me as well! The new best practices included the following components:

- Standardized rubrics,
- Standardized announcements,
- Standardized probing, Bloom’s Taxonomy questions bank,

- A bank of tools, resources, and videos shared amongst faculty that can be posted in the classroom,
- Access to peer faculty and management online classrooms to observe best practices in action,
- Access to monthly meetings or recorded meetings for coaching, mentoring, sharing of ideas, challenges, experiences,
- Interactive, intuitive audio / visual curriculum,
- Conversational communication style in the discussion threads with more interaction within each individual discussion thread,
- Less emphasis on heavy APA instruction and more emphasis on peer-to-peer engagement, faculty-to-peer engagement and interaction in the discussion threads, and
- Addition of a multimedia final project replacing the typical, APA academic paper.

Since I have taught for over a decade at 15 universities, I have had extensive, and I mean *extensive* faculty training and professional development in systems, practices, theory, strategies, techniques, technology, and administrative duties. I thought I knew it all. In addition, I teach and mentor undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral learners in the art and practice of teaching others. Every institution has very specific ideas about what online faculty should and shouldn't be doing in the online classroom.

Most practices are quite similar and have been standardized in most online educational settings. Moreover, every quarter and every year, faculty have more duties, more responsibilities, and more tasks to check-off and complete within the online classroom. All of this extra work or "pile-on" of faculty duties is in hopes of retaining students and lowering the attrition rates. Now let's compare and contrast. As I was trained, and used to being extraordinarily substantive in my responses to students, I continued this practice at XYZ University as well. The program evaluation changed all that.

Faculty were mentored in responding and connecting with students in a different manner. We were coached on responding in a more conversational manner; less "over-use" of substantive, supporting research-paraphrased and citations throughout the

body of our communications. The same practice required everywhere of focused, probing, Socratic questioning was still in place, but with shorter written responses not heavily-laden with extensive supporting theory. This was a big change for me. I was used to creating *extremely* substantive responses with heavy research-focused comments.

The type of responses that are required at the graduate, EdD, and PhD levels of instruction with student-teacher candidates are not necessarily the best way to engage first-year College 100 learners who may be intimidated and even confused by my standard level and type of interaction. The mentorship at XYZ University walked me through the newly designed faculty best practices and the training altered my perception about best practices and communication style with my first-year learners. What works for one group of students doesn't always translate well for first-year learners.

Furthermore, first-year College 100 learners at XYZ University are just getting acquainted with the vast career and educational opportunities ahead of them; they are not necessarily ready for the type of interaction I engage my student-teacher candidates with at other institutions. I was used to over-performing at 15 universities with *very rigid* faculty performance requirements that I put into practice with my first-year learners at XYZ University. This didn't translate well.

Throughout the mentorship process at XYZ University, I learned to communicate with first-year learners in a very different tone, with a very different writing style, and with a stronger sense of community-building in every interaction I made within my classroom. This was a concerted effort to alter my instructional practice in a way that actually minimized my workload. I was no longer creating long, theory-heavy, well researched, substantive responses, but shorter conversational responses relating to students in a personal manner.

Learning strategies to help students interact and engage with one another was a new technique as well. Instead of my focus being on posting substantive research, the focus changed to applied engagement strategies fostering a sense of community and sharing. Instead of posting responses about Transformational Theory, I *applied* the concepts within my classrooms and fostered an intrinsic and extrinsic inspirational, communal environment.

According to Smith (2004), when the facilitator model is used, questions posed to students can appear to be an invitation to explore something, and students participating will experience “the giving of insight” to their fellow learners (p. 1). This model manages to use students as knowledge creators and allows learners more self-direction and autonomy in their learning experiences. In addition, this model further develops questions, issues, and problems that learners bring to the learning environment. Furthermore, Rogers’s notions of meaningful learning, experiential learning, learning through doing, personal involvement, self-initiated learning, learning evaluated by the learner, and essence in meaning can be expanded upon in an online learning modality. For these reasons, Rogers’s student-centered learning theory has much strength when developed in a modality designed for online learners. (Portugal, 2015a, p. 20).

More focus was placed on what students were saying to me and to each other with a conversational “volley-back-and forth” type of communication style and less focus was placed on heavily researched, theory-based responses. Students could *feel* I was listening to them and talking to them. They could *feel* I cared about them in a personal manner. Fostering this type of interaction amongst peers was an additional focus. Instead of creating my typically theory-based responses, I focused on getting students to interact with each other, respond to what their peers were saying, and respond to groups of peers with similar or contrasting ideas and views.

This “volley-back-and forth” technique was a key component I started to focus on in my new best practices. This notion helped to foster a higher level of engagement and a sense of community amongst my learners. So, did this lessen my workload in the classroom, yes it did. Why? Because I was no longer having to post substantive, research-heavy responses to every learner. I was able to carry on conversations that focused on a sense of community and engagement with peers in both an individual manner and a selected group manner.

Performance-Based Technology Assignments

Now let’s talk about the newly designed assignments. My workload decreased here as well because I was no longer having to instruct about APA writing style and guidelines in every response and announcement as I was used to doing in the past. Since the final project changed to an authentic, performance-based deliverable with a technology component requirement, my instructional focus changed as well.

Naturally, students are still instructed on writing style requirements, but the daily interactions I was having with them didn’t have to be so heavily, APA-writing style-based. This gave us more time to interact, share, integrate new ideas and concepts, learn how to apply technology in an educational setting, learn how to critically think in new ways, express oneself with peers, and yes, still learn about writing style along the way.

According to Yilmaz (2011), effective teaching assimilates learning theories that explain and guide various expressions of the learning process. There are three distinct areas encompassing the range of learning theories which include: constructivism, cognitivism, and behaviorism. All aspects of instruction, curriculum, and most educational settings used to be dominated by a teacher-centered instructional framework. Today, the concept of cognitivism, in contrast, is a rather new theory of learning not well known and often times confused with constructivism by teachers (Algozzini, Bessolo, et al., 2016; Portugal, 2015a; Portugal, 2015b; Portugal, 2015c; Portugal, 2015d; Portugal, 2014e; Yilmaz, 2011).

The concept of constructivism as applied in modern teaching explains the notion of learner as maker or creator of knowledge and meaning. The components of a classroom incorporating a constructivism model are as follows: (1) active involvement of the learner, (2) a democratic environment, (3) activities are student-centered and interactive, and (4) the educator facilitates a learning process whereby learners are encouraged to be autonomous and responsible. The role of educators in a constructivist classroom is to scaffold information, coach, and model behaviors, best practices, and expectations (Algozzini, Bessolo, t al., 2016; Portugal, 2015a; Portugal, 2015b; Portugal, 2015c; Portugal, 2015d; Portugal, 2014e; Yilmaz, 2011).

Before my mentorship at XYZ University, one of my graduate students in a teacher education master's degree program at another university made this comment in email:

I want to have a conversation with you, I want to be able to pick your brain, learn new facts that way. I want to have an ongoing conversation rather than reading long theory responses with little to no interaction about my conversion and ideas. I want the discussion to be volleyed back and forth within the discussion thread as if I were in a physical classroom with you. You have a lot of knowledge and that is evident in everything you do and post in the classroom. But, your responses are so intimidating and sometimes I don't know where to start.

That comment is eye-opening, right! Now keep in mind, I am *required* to post substantively with well-composed, well researched responses in every interaction I have in the classroom. That is *specifically* stated in every faculty assessment rubric at every university I instruct at. Because I am a high achiever and very driven, I always receive high scores when I am assessed on faculty performance annually for well over a decade. But...do those faculty assessment rubrics and pile-on duties take into account how the students are feeling? Often times, administrators believe more faculty duties, to-do's, and check-list additions will help students succeed, and more importantly, will *retain* students.

But, does it really work that way? Is student retention about giving faculty more quarterly, annual duties, responsibilities, to-do's, and check-list additions or should we be looking at different types of interactions with learners? Is the curriculum interactive? Are our interactions personalized? What types of engagement techniques are we using to help learners tune-in and interact with their peers more often? Are we using technology components that address learning styles, ability levels, and excite, engage, motivate, inspire, and challenge learners to persist? Is the classroom intuitively designed or confusing and difficult to navigate?

Most universities require faculty to post very substantive responses to students and we have a check-list or assessment rubric that must be

addressed. Often times, faculty keep getting piled-on with more to-do's and check-list additions that we can forget the students on the other end of our interactions with them. As I went through the XYZ University mentorship for the newly designed faculty best practices for the first-year College 100 course, I remembered that email from my student.

Although I am still required to make sure everything on my to-do, check-list is adhered too at all the universities I work for, I learned an important lesson. Having an extended conversation with my learners in the discussion threads in a more conversational manner goes a long way in retaining students and engaging them at a higher level. The XYZ University mentorship taught me that personalized conversions are key and quite possibly more important than heavy, substantive, theory-laden responses, *especially* when working with first-year College 100 learners.

All learners want to feel that special touch from their instructor. I do this in a variety of ways. Most universities require faculty to respond to a minimum of 25% of the students enrolled in the class in the weekly discussion threads. I have always made it a point to respond to every student's initial post. So for example, if I have 30 students enrolled, I will create 30 researched responses every week in the discussion threads. The XYZ University mentorship trained me to go beyond making only that initial response to students and carry on conversions, ask students to interact with each other's comments that I highlight, and volley conversions more often.

Rather than creating substantive theory or heavy instructional style responses, I changed my tactics and interacted more often with shorter comments and group questions highlighting various comments collected from a grouping of students. With these new techniques, I was engaging more students, more often, with shorter more conversational pieces. So in a way, these strategies altered my interactions with learners and lessened my workload because I didn't have to create heavily, peer-reviewed researched response as I was doing in the past.

Although I may have thought my responses were exceptional, first-year learners were intimidated and viewed my responses as more work for them beyond answering the initial required discussion question each week. That strategy and

level of work may be required for master's and PhD level learners who might expect and need the heavy instructional style responses, but for first-year learners, that's intimidating. Moreover, I learned that a conversational volley is important for all learners at every level of instruction. I still create the heavy, researched responses for other university courses I instruct, but I have adopted the conversational volley style into my best practices everywhere.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

Participatory Action Research Mentoring

Now let's talk about the mentorship process and the interactions with my peers and management "coaches." The following components were very much a part of my own learning process during the coaching and mentoring at XYZ University: (1) Participatory Action Research, (2) journey of change from various perspectives, (3) overcoming resistance to change, and (4) overwhelmingly positive growth as a veteran online instructor (Algozzini, Bessolo, et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2011). Moreover, throughout the mentorship process, I experienced: (1) self-regulated learning techniques and metacognitive processes, (2) applied and discussed coaching and mentoring framework as an agent of change, and (3) shifts in thinking and upgrade in instructional practices (Algozzini, Bessolo, Gabay, et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2011).

In a study conducted by Portugal (2015a):

The top six attributes of online instructors were: (a) good organization skills, (b) effective time management, (c) positive work attitude and behavior (e.g., patience, diligence), (d) ability to be comfortable in an online learning environment, (e) flexible and proactive when working with student needs, and (f) technological competence. (p. 37)

In addition to the attributes and skills online faculty should possess listed above, three other important factors are necessary to succeed and stay employed: (1) willingness to continually learn new skills, (2) ability to easily adapt to quarterly, annual changes and adaptations imposed by administration, and (3) ability to accept constant training and updating of new skills, strategies,

techniques, and methods. For traditional, ground-based, lecture faculty, these areas might pose a challenge because change, training, and additional administrative to-do's are constant and typical in online education. The pile-on of more faculty duties and requirements is constant and ever-changing in online education. Pleasantly though, my experience in the XYZ University mentorship far exceeded my veteran assumptions and past and current experiences with the check-list and to-do's.

In a study conducted by Christensen and Spackman (2017), instructional designers and curriculum developers should pay particular attention to the redesigning and targeting of course materials, modules, tools, technology, and interactive capabilities. Students in an online setting can lose "momentum at particular points in the course" and course design should be an important factor in addition to faculty interactions within the classroom (Christensen & Spackman, 2017). Over-looking course design challenges can add to the attrition numbers many institutions face.

Course designers should be given the time, resources, tools, and assets necessary to develop interactive, easy-to-understand curriculum modules to increase student persistence. It's not always about what the instructor is and isn't doing in the classroom. It's also about the curriculum design and the ease or difficulty in maneuvering within the online platform. In fact, many students drop before the first day, on the first day, and within the first week. This issue doesn't point to what the instructor is doing wrong, it points to the curriculum module first.

If students believe the module looks too overwhelming, difficult to maneuver, and difficult to find their way around, they may drop. I know when I was working on my bachelor's degree in my early 20s, I would drop classes in the first week just based on the syllabus and the assignments listed. If I felt overwhelmed or felt I couldn't do the work, I dropped and jumped into another class in that first week. It's worth noting that curriculum design, interactive, technology components, and assignment deliverables should be high priority to any institution dealing with attrition challenges.

Often times, attrition issues are dropped on faculty by way of more administrative to-do's while other important areas of significance are ignored. Moreover, adding more administrative to-do's to

faculty requirements merely adds to the alienation students might feel in the classroom because they are not being served in a way that allows for more important types of personal interactions they may need.

In another study conducted by Dickinson (2017):

Through a two-semester evaluation of online courses, it is evident consideration must be given to teachers establishing a rapport with online students. After evaluating e-mail communication with students and examining student success rates and teaching evaluation data, there is a connection between e-mail tone and student performance in an online class. (p. 1)

I have to agree with this statement 100%! I always use a change-agent, motivational tone with my learners in every interaction I have with them. I make them feel they are leaders within their communities and their decision to pursue their education will help them develop their talents and attributes as change-agents. Sometimes, I feel the personal interactions; personal comments, helpful emails, and personalized feedback I use go a long way in my students' persistence level and my faculty evaluations over the years.

I've had students go on to complete the master's, PhD, and EdD just because they had me in one class and could envision themselves attaining an advanced degree. They were right! They can and they did. Finally, I would like to add that having patience and discretion accepting late work goes a long way with students as well. These various behaviors in my best practices have afforded me many glowing reviews, comments, emails, and high student evaluations for many years.

Thompson, Vogler, and Xiu (2017) posited that a combination of technology tools, social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence utilized by faculty in their online classrooms can greatly impact student success and attrition challenges. In my view, when faculty are overloaded with administrative pile-on's and to-do's, we have: (1) less time to create engaging technology tools with our content; (2) less time to engage students in personal, meaningful conversations in the threads; (3) less time to add new research in our interactions; and (4) less patience to afford our learners.

Truthfully, I would rather create engaging technology tools with my content and have enriching, content-related discussions in the threads than post endless, required announcements and attend to all the daily, weekly faculty checklist categories in the faculty assessment rubric required for employment. Regardless of the administrative pile-on's and to-do's I am required to attend too at every institution I instruct for, I still make it a point to use all the personal touches I mentioned in my best practices.

Personalization Strategies

As an educator, it is important for me to customize, individualize, and personalize learning opportunities, activities, and my own communication methods for my learners. I do this in a variety of ways using differentiated instructional techniques and personalized, instructional, authentic, menu opportunities.

The concept of personalized learning addresses instruction where the instructional approach and the pace of learning are optimized for the needs of each learner. Adult learners want to know: (a) Where am I going? (b) Where am I now? and (c) How can I close the gap? A personalized learning program can help learners answer these questions and help them navigate their own learning agenda and progress.

This means changing the approach i.e. differentiation, changing the pace i.e. individualization, and personalization i.e. the combination of both. Student agency means giving learners instructional activities that are relevant and meaningful to the learner. Learners are often times driven by their self-initiated interests. As an educator, understand the interests, learning style, and ability level of the learner and deliver instructional content in a manner that inspires, engages, and motivates the learner.

Merriam, Baumgartner and Caffarella (2007) documented four characteristics that Carl Rogers, a psychologist with a humanist orientation toward adult learning developed regarding his notion of the adult learning process, including self-initiated, pervasive, evaluated by the learner, and essence in meaning (p. 283).

With these adult learning Andragogy concepts in mind, examine strategies you might develop in your instructional style when working with learners

in any learning situation.

Components and principles such as: (1) intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, (2) learning styles, (3) cultural factors, (4) diversity factors, (5) differentiated instructional strategies, (6) personalized learning, (7) student agency, (8) engagement techniques, (9) technology integration, (10) adult learning theory - Andragogy Theory best practices or Pedagogy Theory, (11) Cognitive Dissonance Theory, and (12) behaviorist, cognitive, and socio-cultural theories can be applied to create appropriate learning environments meeting the needs of diverse adults or youth in a variety of settings.

As an educator, I strive to create and develop on-demand, instructional materials in an individualized, differentiated, personalized manner with individualized instruction and feedback based on the student's needs and interests.

Undertake a plan

Theory of Connectivism and Learning Networks, Personal Learning Networks, and Personal Learning Environments can be strategically used to:

1. Advocate,
2. Educate,
3. Inform,
4. Collect resources,
5. Make connections,
6. Develop partnerships, associations, relationships,
7. Create interactive learning modules and learning tools, and
8. Connect and collaborate with affected populations and stakeholders. (Portugal, 2017, p. 45)

Differentiated Instructional Strategies

According to Portugal (2014):

Individualized teaching strategies may involve faculty using progressive teaching strategies that address various learning styles with significant, specific feedback to each learner that is unique to each learner's

needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching does not address individualized teaching strategies. Faculty should be addressing students on an individual basis, meeting the student where he or she is, and working toward bringing each student to a higher level. This approach requires that faculty respond to each student according to his or her needs rather than using a cut-and-paste-the-same-information-to-all-students approach. All correspondence to each student should be created uniquely for each student based upon students' comments, assignment submissions, e-mails, questions, and so on. (p. 39)

How might we as educators use the best practices we know about and maintain with our students, but when working with family stakeholders as well? What creative ways do you use to engage families and parents to help your students succeed?

Modeling is an excellent way educators and trainers can help learners understand our high expectations. But with modeling, we must explain what we are doing in a step-by-step procedure so learners understand what we are asking them to do as we model our behaviors and actions in the classroom. We can't expect learners to "get it" and know we are modeling. It's best to specifically tell learners what we are doing and why we do it. This helps them understand the learning process and their own learning development. Give learners the tools to understand the process and become self-centered, independent, knowledge creators. That's always my goal.

Examine some of the problems that might occur if differentiated instructional strategies are not used when planning and implementing learning situations.

According to Kanuka and Garrison (2004), "For this construct, the focus group participants agreed that if online discourse is to be effective, then instructors must take an active role and assist, or guide, the discussions. One example provided for how to achieve this was through posing questions of emerging relevance" (p. 29). I always use the discussion question threads (DQ's) to pose questions of emerging relevance each week based upon the assignments and learning objectives. I know that using differentiated learning strategies

with students of any age is a valuable way to help them comprehend course materials and assignments on a deeper level. Differentiated instructional strategies and techniques help educators address various learning styles, diversity, cultural, multigenerational, socio-economic, ability levels, and special needs learners.

I like to use the following strategies in my classrooms: (1) direct instruction, (2) inquiry-based learning, (3) cooperative learning, and (4) information processing strategies. Some of the ways I use these techniques are listed in the differentiated chart below that I refer to often when designing lesson plans and posting probing questions in the discussion threads. I like using technology, Prezi presentations, YouTube presentations, KWL charts, learning logs, reflective learning, questioning, graphic organizers, Internet searches, peer-critiquing, self-assessment, self-reflection, and a menu option of assignment deliverables just to name a few techniques. I try to add these strategies in my probing questions and with the examples I post. Then, I ask my learners to practice what they are learning based on these strategies. In this way, I am modeling best practices, instructional strategies, and engagement techniques.

Special needs learners benefit immensely with differentiated instructional strategies.

Synthesizing the materials and information provided, examine some of the problems that might occur if differentiated instructional strategies are not used when planning and implementing learning situations.

One way to work with learners of all ability levels is via differentiated instruction (matching tasks). As an educator you need to be well-versed in all these instructional methods.

Differentiated Instruction

This Prezi presentation is an example of differentiated instruction and addresses visual and auditory learners. I post this in my teacher education classes with a Socratic, Bloom's Taxonomy question such as...

Review the Prezi presentation link I created and explain how you might use technology in your classroom with your specific content area to differentiate instruction for your learners. Describe why this is essential when working with ability levels, learning styles, special needs, and diversity.

Portugal, L. M. (2014, October 14). Differentiated instruction. Retrieved from http://prezi.com/rjmqnc4kqqpo/?utm_campaign=share&

Example Probing Questions

The following section includes an example of questions faculty can use in their College 100 classes that are provided by the university *questions bank*. Faculty no longer create their own questions, they can, but these questions are pre-made for faculty to use for all eight weeks of class in the discussion threads. The *questions bank* document provided by the university is much longer, these are merely the first several examples in each section of the Bloom's Taxonomy chart. In addition, only examples from Forum 1 and Forum 8 are provided in this list.

Forum 1: Introduce Yourself, Share, and Plan

ANALYZE

When you see a questionable "fact" being shared on FaceBook or another social media site or in person, examine how you react. Do you research it? Do you share it without checking it out? Why?

Based on our readings this week, summarize in your own words your understanding of what it means to develop information literacy?

What impact can false information have in digital information distribution? Share an example real or hypothetical and describe the implications.

As described in Chapter 4 of our required reading this week (Information skills the personal age), "Everyone will have some major event in their life that requires investigation." Examine a time you have had to use digital information literacy to investigate something. What did you learn from this experience? What do you wish you had known or done differently looking back on it now?

SYNTHESIS

Identify a mentor or role model in your life who has impacted your education and or career choice. What skills make this person a strong role model or mentor? How can you take this positive model for your own success as a student?

Explain a brief plan as to how you will manage your time in this course. How will you divide and conquer your tasks to complete upcoming assignments?

One of our videos this week discussed knowing how to find information we need. What does it

mean to you to learn how to learn? Has this changed for you when you reflect on your learning in high school?

Imagine what your life would be like without Google or any search engine. Share three or four areas of impact this would have on you. “

EVALUATION

Why is this important when considering real life applications and consequences?

After completing this week’s readings and lesson, choose the single most important or surprising thing that you learned. Why is this important or surprising?

How can you use the information from this week’s readings outside of school in a personal or professional environment?

What were your initial expectations of the course before you read the syllabus and the Week 1 requirements? How have your expectations changed?

KNOWLEDGE

List three new ideas or takeaways from the videos and/or reading material this week. How are these ideas useful for you?

From the video in this week’s Lesson, “5 Components of Information Literacy,” what are the 5 components?

Can you please list the three main places you get your information from?

Who can you turn to for support when you have questions in this class?

COMPREHENSION

What are some questions you may have about your topic? What question do you want answered the most? Why?

How do you establish the criteria you use to evaluate credibility and truth in digital information?

What expectations do you have for yourself as a college student? How do you plan to overcome challenges you foresee?

What characteristics and skills do you possess that will help you be a successful college student at XYZ University?

APPLICATION

How do you define information literacy? Why do you believe this skill is important to your future role as a student?

How can the use of the XYZ University Online

Library contribute to scholarly research practices?

Do you have similar concerns to those presented in this week’s forum video? What can you do to overcome them?

Based on your previous experiences with finding and evaluating information, how do you plan to change your approach in order to locate and evaluate information clearly in the academic setting? In the workplace? In your personal life? (Choose one when asking a student.)

Week 8 Forum: Sharing Presentations

ANALYZE

As you reviewed your classmate’s presentations, what objective comparisons can you make between yours and theirs? Find a classmate’s presentation that you particularly liked. What did they include in theirs that you would consider making a part of your future work?

What peer critique strategy did you find most useful and why?

SYNTHESIS

Knowing what you know now, if you were to start this task over from scratch, how would you reorganize your approach to the task? “=

What alternative assignment might you suggest for this class? Why?

Your presentation was an analysis of your future career. How could an interviewer verify the information that you presented in your project? What aspect of the project could you make more concise for the reader?

EVALUATION

What do you think about the idea of creating a multi-media project as an academic assignment as opposed to providing your findings in a traditional research essay format?

What are the pros and cons to both?

What aspect of the presentation creation process did you learn the most from and how will this impact your approach to similar projects in the future?

Will you continue to use the Big Six question model in research? Why or why not?

Have your degree or career plans changed as a result of what you learned in the research and creation of your presentation?

KNOWLEDGE

When you were researching for your topic,

where did you locate your most useful sources?

You will need to peer review others' work as you progress on this journey. What are your apprehensions about this process?

COMPREHENSION

In researching and creating your presentation, did you learn more about the topic you chose or how to create an effective multi-media presentation? In what ways do you feel like you learned the most?

APPLICATION

(None)

Week 8 Forum 2: Reflection

ANALYZE

What concepts, were not covered in this course, which you recommend for future courses? Why do you believe these concepts to be important?

How will digital and information literacy change in the future? What are some expectations you have for future technology changes?

How does this online experience compare with a previous training course, other online experience, or face-to-face classroom experience you've had?

Having already taken other online courses how would you say this online experience compared with previous training courses, other online experience, or face-to-face classroom experience you have had?

SYNTHESIS

Since an effective student possesses strong information literacy skills, what are some actions you will take to continue to be an effective student in regards to research and acquiring new knowledge?

Share something you learned from a peer or peers that has either changed how you think about something or a practice you have adopted into your own learning practices. Why is this significant for you?

What misconceptions did you have about being a college student at the start of the course you have since realized? What helped to clarify your understanding?

How has your perception of information literacy and your abilities in that regard changed since the start of the course?

EVALUATION

What did you learn from this course that you can use again in your career field or in other college

classes?

Looking back over your performance over the last 8 weeks, what would you do differently next time?

What information sources (websites, readings, etc) did you find most useful in this class? Explain.

What criteria would you use to assess research material in future classes?

KNOWLEDGE

How has COLL100 prepared you for what is to come in your academic program?

What are three new concepts you learned as a result of this class, and how will you apply them to your education and career path?

When do you share your new learning with your co-workers, fellow students, or management staff? If so, what are their responses?

What course would you choose for your next class? Why?

COMPREHENSION

If you were to explain to a friend what this course was about, how would you describe the course?

If you have future questions about research and information literacy, where can you find the correct information, and how will you continue to seek for new knowledge?

What are some of the ethical and effective learning practices which you have learned from this course?

How will earning a college degree from an accredited university enhance your value where you currently work and/or in the overall job market?

APPLICATION

How can you improve upon the concepts from the course that you found challenging to strengthen your information literacy?

How do you think you may react in the future to information on social media (or in person) that doesn't fit the concepts from this class but are being presented as truth?

How you will apply the knowledge from this course in your field of study?

How will you use the knowledge from this course in your daily work and life situations?

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

I post Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) as a model of best instructional practices when

working with teacher candidates, future leaders, and change-agents to show them how they might work with their own learners using higher cognitive techniques. When I'm working with non-teacher candidates and 1st year learners, I post these strategies AND explain the learning process to both groups and types of learners. It's always important to explain *why* we do what we do and *how* the learning process works to ALL learners.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 1

I. Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

Week 1: Empty Outlines:

In a limited amount of time, please complete an empty or partially completed outline of an in-class presentation or homework assignment. Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 2

I. Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

Week 2: Minute Paper:

What was the most important thing you learned in this module and how might you apply this new knowledge in your classroom with your content?

In addition, what important question remains unanswered? Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 3

I. Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

Week 3: Muddiest Point:

In your view, what is the muddiest point in this week's module for you and how might you develop your knowledge and/or skill set in this area? Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 4

II. Assessing Skill in analysis and Critical Thinking

Week 4: Pro and Con Grid:

List pros/cons, costs/benefits, advantages/disadvantages of an issue, question, or value of competing claims based on the course materials thus far. Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 5

II. Assessing Skill in analysis and Critical Thinking

Week 5: Analytic Memo:

Based on the course materials thus far, write a one- or two-page analysis of a specific problem or issue to help inform a decision-maker. Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 6

VI. Assessing Students' Awareness of Their Attitudes and Values

Week 6: Course-related Self-Confidence Surveys:

Please write a summary indicating your level of confidence in mastering the course materials thus far. Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 7

VII. Assessing Students' Self-Awareness as Learners

Week 7: Focused Autobiographical Sketches:

Write a brief description of a successful learning experience you have had relevant to the course material. Post your response in this thread.

Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) Week 8

X. Assessing Learner Reactions to Class Activities, Assignments, and Materials

Week 8: RSQC2 (Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, and Comment):

Write brief statements that recall, summarize, question, connect, and comment on meaningful points from your previous class.

MY MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCES

Now let's talk about my experiences with faculty peers and management during the XYZ University mentorship. That wasn't what I expected either! Anyone who has worked in education long enough knows new training, mentorships, coaching, required professional development, and the like can be grueling, time consuming, challenging, and not always a fun experience. Just being honest. Some may say, "I love training, coaching, mentorship, and new learning opportunities." But, they probably aren't telling you the truth. Most often, new training is a challenge and a time management

issue as well. In this particular case, I was asked if I wanted to volunteer for the mentorship. I don't know why I said yes, but I did.

The faculty peers and the management coach I was assigned to didn't bully, micromanage, or drive me crazy. It was a great experience and I was able to pop into their classrooms and see how they operate. I was able to stay autonomous, never bullied, rushed, challenged in a negative manner, or treated in a master / slave type of manner. I have to say not only did I learn new skills, but it wasn't grueling, annoying, or frustrating.

Everyone in my group was helpful, kind, respectful, generous, did I say generous...let me say that again...generous with their time, tools, ideas, techniques, and strategies. The process of learning was one of *watch what the others do in their classrooms*, ask questions, and *borrow their tools* type of environment. This wasn't a top-down, do-as-I-say, dictatorship type of learning / training model. Nor was it a jump through the hoops, get this over with, click through the module links to the finish line type of mentorship either. I was assigned a typically College 100 class and learned the new strategies as I taught. Having the ability to pop into other classrooms using the new techniques was a great visual resource and learning tool.

Furthermore, I didn't have to create new questioning responses to each student as I always did. We were given a bank of questions pre-designed for College 100. In addition, I didn't have to create new announcements because all the announcements were preloaded as well. Furthermore, I had access to a bank of tools, resources, and videos I could post in my classroom and I didn't have to create new learning materials. I am used to creating new learning materials, technology components, videos, and resources, but it was nice to see and use what others created. My time was "freed-up" to actually engage in deeper, more meaningful conversations (and volleys) with my learners. The overall experience was easy, informative, and super cool and I don't think I'll ever have to second guess volunteering for new training at XYZ University again.

Finally, the skills I learned are transferable to every university I work for and with every level of learner as well. Now that's cool! I may never lose the endless check-lists and to-do's in this line of work,

but I can add more personalized conversions in all my interactions with my learners. Remembering our students on the other end of our computer screens is the most important factor and often times that's easy to forget when we are working through our administrator pile-on duties.

1. Develop interactive, intuitive, technology-based curriculum.
2. Standardize administrative tasks, announcements, rubrics, and questions bank for discussion threads by week.
3. Minimize instructor pile-on tasks that may be meaningless and do not help to retain students.
4. Add a menu of technology deliverables.
5. Create well-directed, engaging, community-building conversations in the discussion threads.
6. Incorporate personalized instructional best practices.
7. Incorporate differentiated instructional best practices.
8. Develop metacognitive faculty training that enables faculty proficiency in a timely, easy-to-use, easy-to-share, unencumbered, non-threatening environment.

I forgot to mention...the training took place within two classes I was teaching at the time. I didn't have to enroll in an extra faculty training module in addition to the classes I was teaching that term. That saved me a TON of time with fewer annoyances. That method not only saved me a great deal of time, but I was getting paid to teach while I learned new skills. In addition, I applied what I was learning directly in the classes I was teaching at the time. I met with faculty peers and management as needed via remote conferencing and email. That was another time saver as well. I was able to jump in and out of my peer group's classrooms and see what they were doing and how they did it. Furthermore, I was able to use any of the resources they posted in their classrooms such as videos, links, materials, etc. The sharing aspect was super cool and I really enjoyed the opportunity to check out other teacher's classrooms while they were teaching. All these aspects made the mentorship

process beneficial, applicable, easy-to-use, and easy-to-apply in my classrooms immediately.

CONCLUSION

In addition to sharing the training I talked about during the XYZ University mentorship, I also added many of my own instructional strategies that I use in my classrooms everyday. I hope readers found the various strategies, techniques, methods, theories, and ideas presented helpful and useful. I use many, many instructional methods in my own teaching style and I also teach what I know to others. In addition to teaching 1st year learners for XYZ University, I also teach others how to become educators, managers, trainers, change-agents, and leaders in their communities. My educational journey is a model for others and I do my best to help people become autonomous, independent, life-long learners. Part of doing that involves teaching people *how* they learn and techniques they can use to foster their own growth as well as the growth of others.

RESULTS

Student Comments from XYZ University

(The Best Part!)

These student comments were placed in the grade book for me after they uploaded the final presentation. I taught two classes that term and below are all the comments students gave me at the end of the eight week course. Wow! So cool! When people ask me how do I know what I'm doing works...this is how I know. I also know because students contact me and tell me they have enrolled in advanced degrees and I was their inspiration. Before meeting me, they never considered moving forward with advanced degrees. That's super cool too! Another suggestion I have for educators is to keep a document with every nice comment you receive from your learners over the years. When you've had a tough day or administration isn't appreciating you...open that document. Mine is well over 100 pages now and I started doing this in 2009. I should have started doing this when I began teaching online in 2006. Trust me, you won't regret it!

7/23/2017:

It feels good to be back in school and graduating from high school so many years ago and just returning to a class room. Over all I have learned

a lot taking this class, from how to properly do a research to verifying how credible the information researched is and the sources of the information. As for my final presentation, I won't say I am fully pleased with all the work I have done, but I did well base on my circumstances. I tried as much as possible to use the BIG6 method while doing this presentation but I must admit I am not as good at it as I would want to be. It seems to be a very good method as if u follow each step it will make putting your presentation together much easier. Finding scholarly information using the APSU Library on my presentation was not as easy as I thought it would have been. I used Microsoft PowerPoint for my final presentation, this is a program I have not used since high school so it too me some time getting used to it. In the end I added pictures, a video, and animations to my slides to keep my audience focused.

7/23/2017:

Dr. Portugal,

The Big 6 model was extremely crucial to the completion of my presentation. The model broke down the research project into appropriate steps, which made it easy to follow. Overall, the model flowed well and each step built upon the next. What I liked most about the Big 6, is that it helped me stay organized and retain relevant information for this project. Additionally, the model introduced me to new methods, tools, and resources that were extremely useful. However, for me the most difficult part was experimenting with a tool I wasn't familiar with (Prezi). At first it took time to get familiar with all the features and utilize them as best possible. In the end, the overall project was successful and I was able to utilize everything provided to complete the presentation.

7/23/2017:

I've learned a lot of things from the presentation. I learned that I need a clear understanding of physics and math. I learned how to do the research process of finding true information about what I need especially my career path. I need to work on my organizing skills and my notes. I need better applications just specifically for school.

7/22/2017:

I think this presentation gave me a lot of new ways to present information. I've never made a slideshow before, so it was actually challenging

and fun at the same time. I hope it comes across well enough, but nonetheless I had fun with it in the end. It took a lot of going over it to get it right, and to make sure I adhered to all the Big 6 Model's rules. These helped me a lot in order to make sure I wasn't leaving any important information out. Thank you!

7/22/2017:

Overall, I feel confident on the result of my career interest project, the last few weeks I have been working hard on adding all the bells and whistles and feel it keeps my audience interested throughout the presentation. I am glad I started working on this presentation a little early because I didn't realize how much information I had and how in depth I should go on each topic. The Big 6 model helped me through this project by determining what my main goal and concern was. It helped me gather what the most relevant and important information is and configure it all onto each slide. Before working on this project, I was a little overwhelmed with where to start, so then I resulted to the Big 6 model to help me out. I pinpointed what my career interest was in the beginning of classes but I did not know exactly where to dive in. The model allowed me to efficiently problem solve and integrate all my information I had gathered from my sources and applied it into my presentation.

7/23/2017:

The process of the final project was very easy. And doing the presentation went well since we had already been working on this over the past 7 week. All of the information was already embedding into my mind.

7/23/2017:

The creation of this presentation was a learning experience. Prior to beginning the presentation, I had limited experience in PowerPoint and learned how to insert videos and animation into the slides. I started out being way too in depth and had to tone it back for the audience to be able to get a proper entry level grasp of my career field without having any background knowledge of it. The big 6 method I used to create the presentation was helpful because it gave me a good outline of how to complete it. It helped me find information that was appropriate for my topic, understand the tasks involved with creating each slide, categorize and synthesize the information that I ultimately decided to use and I went through

a review process that involved myself and a peer. I have uploaded my presentation to YouTube because that was the only way that I could share it due to the file size being so large. I have posted the link below. I hope you enjoy my presentation.

7/23/2017:

I used PowerPoint for my presentation. I have not used the program in a while so a lot is new and different, but overall I think I was able to display my presentation well and clearly. It shows the basics as to what it entails to become a Marshal to the duties and responsibilities and breaks down the chain of command and the different divisions and offices within the Marshals Service.

7/23/2017:

This project was a little more difficult than expected. The instruction from Dr. Portugal, the forums, and other course material did prepare me for this final assignment. What I found to be difficult was the topic I selected and the subject matter. I chose a topic that I have been working for 28 years of my life. However, experienced in the intelligence field, it was very difficult to put into words that were not sensitive in nature. Providing narration to my presentation was also somewhat challenging and required many takes to ensure the product was genuine. All in all, this course and the process of completing the presentation has surely prepared me for future course as I continue to further my education.

7/24/2017:

My finished product has created more opportunity for future assignments. Putting the information together into a presentation leads me to believe that I will be able to accomplish tasks such as this in the future, with a better ability to fully input the knowledge I have learned. Informing others on what I have learned about my own personal career interest is important because it opens the minds of many who strive to work in the same fields. The process of completing the presentation has created certain barriers in the aspect of adding or subtracting information. The most important part of the Big Six process, I would say, is researching and picking out what is relevant. In the future, I will use this same process to help me with presenting important topics and improve on these new set of skills.

7/22/2017:

In regards to the big 6 process, it puts into words, what I have routinely done for many research topics. You must first have an idea, do the research, organize and store your information, create the product and review and reflect upon your final product. For this particular project, I found it fairly easy to decide what topic to pick, as I am pursuing a degree in my current field of work. I am used to using school libraries, so it was fairly easy to find sources, including scholarly ones. I have had to cite work before, as well as create Power Points in the past. I wanted to make it as easy to comprehend, for someone who is not familiar with Emergency Management, and I believe I have accomplished that. All in all I found the process useful and easy enough to follow.

7/24/2017:

For my presentation I used PP and it was extremely easy to use because I've used it before. It took all week to finish my presentation and I review the grading rubric to make sure I meet all the expectations. I additionally researched one more credible source in the XYZ University library to present in my PP. Creating my presentation was fairly easy since bulk of research was done through my first 6 weeks of class. The evaluation of my resources is very good because I'm able to retrieve from past scholarly sources. I made my presentation as creative and unbarring as possible.

7/23/2017:

I believe that my final presentation came out pretty well. There was not a lot of public information for that was much in depth about Special Agent. The big 6 model helped me eliminate unnecessary information and get the important information. I browsed dozens of sites and eliminated those that were unreliable. The most difficult thing I had to find was the FBI salary chart that was accurate. I believe that the viewers of my presentation would find it very informative.

7/25/2017:

With the finished presentation, thinking back I would have never imagined completing it. The reason being is since I've been in a time crunch it has made it more difficult to accomplish the assignment with a lot going on. It also has been a challenge since it is the first time I actually created a presentation in over 4 years. At first, I did not

know how to properly cite and reference but in the process, I actually learned to, in accordance with the APA citation format. Which was one of the research steps towards gathering the credible sources I needed to have the efficient information listed and give credit where it's due. Using the BIG 6 Model process taught me the importance of plagiarism and ways to avoid it, also how to properly read the scholarly material. I am honestly glad I took this course, it gave me the knowledge of properly researching efficiently, citing the information correctly and also to narrowing down my findings. In all, I have become organized when collecting my research data. It has been a pleasure taking this class and soon hope to take another in AMU. With all the lessons learned from the mistakes I've made, I will improve and use it towards the courses I will be taking in the future. Thank you.

7/23/2017:

My presentation was a very challenging power point creation. This overall was a very rewarding experience and am very pleased with my presentation. I learned a lot about technology and the benefits of living in a modern world with modern technology. I feel like I still have a lot to learn before I chose what direction I want to take my life in. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

7/23/2017:

THE BIG 6 APPROACH

After learning the cyclic nature of research in this class, I made it a priority to frequently refer back to the week 7 assignment tab so as to ensure my project meets all requirements ("task definition"). This also helped me to formulate solid queries ("information-seeking strategies") in my search through databases and the open web as well as question the authenticity of my sources and their possible contribution to my presentation ("location and access"). When overwhelmed with information, I simply referred back to my outline so that I could regroup and refocus, which better helped me parse data; any information that directly answered the questions in my outline or supported the bullets was immediately noted, stored in an organized manner and added to my resource page ("use of information" and "synthesis"). Because my notes were organized in accordance to my outline, it made the process of building the

presentation very easy. However, my initial tool was not as user-friendly as I remembered. So I took a chance and transferred what I had to a tool I'd never used before, but thought was worth trying. It was a life-saver, to say the least. As organized as I was through the research, collection and analysis of data, I don't think my presentation would have been as effective had I stuck to the original platform. It also helped to have a second set of eyes peer in from time-to-time ("Evaluation").

I would gladly choose Prezi again. ☺

7/23/2017:

I could get the audio for the narrations or the video on my last slide to play. The research I was able to do covered everything I had wanted. It made organizing and using the information in my presentation very easy. I found myself going back and looking at my outline assignment and bibliography assignment often when making my presentation. As far as the "Big 6 Model", thought I had used it pretty proficiently over the time of the course slowly building towards my final presentation. I started with a broad sense of where I wanted to go, slowly refining the ideas I wanted to cover as I did my research. After each step I evaluated where I was and made notes to go back and look what I had did. My final evaluation of project as a whole, was that I did okay, given my current situation I'd have liked to have done more. After refining some of the points I felt I had made my presentation kind of short at the same time I didn't want to over kill thought process.

7/23/2017:

I am ultimately pretty satisfied with my presentation. I found Apple's Keynote app relatively easy to use for creating a full multimedia presentation, and I was able to export my presentation as a movie file for maximum interoperability. As far as the research process goes, in retrospect my biggest problem was at the very beginning in Task Definition. I wasn't entirely clear on the assignment, so I included way too much stuff in my outline. I collected information to answer both the question I wanted to focus on and a bunch of other stuff that I thought I might be required to include, which forced me to revise my outline as I was starting to assemble the presentation. Of course, too much content is a way better problem to have than the opposite.

7/27/2017:

I initially began with the idea of using PowerPoint for my project because I am comfortable with the program. I then decide to use Prezi, but in the process discovered it did not have voice over or additional audio for music. I then ran into to the problem of trying to use my government computer with firewalls that didn't allow me to work on my project. I went back through the examples you provided for presentations and identified Adobe Spark as the right program. I do briefings on a regular basis in front of large audiences but I found very difficult to narrate my own project. I did find Adobe Spark to be very user friendly and compatible with my government laptop. I have attached the link because the file is to large.

7/23/2017:

Throughout the entire process of the presentation I have learned quite a bit. I was not very knowledgeable about digital literacy before taking this course, except for knowing some methods of determining whether a source was credible or not. I really enjoyed the fact that in this course it teaches you proper citation techniques, research tips, knowing whether or not a source is credible, and how to use new technologies that I have not used before in research articles of a scholarly nature. I must say that the overall layout of the class helped me in my efforts to complete this project. I enjoyed how it started out with research basics and ended with how to synthesize all of the information that I've researched in order to put it into the presentation. The actual process of putting the presentation together was not difficult because of the fact I had all of the research and multimedia tools that I was planning to use so I simply had to plug it into a PowerPoint. While initially nervous about the narrating portion of the presentation, I found that it was quite self-explanatory and easy to use. Overall, the way that the course was presented and how it progressed from week to week made this final presentation a lot easier, and I will continue to take things I've learned throughout this process with me as I continue my academic career.

7/30/2017:

I was very pleased to share something I am so passionate about with my classmates. Many people do not know what occupational therapy is, let alone hippotherapy! Although I was not able to

embed the video and had to share a link instead, the process of building this presentation was much simpler than those I had created in the past due to the preparation that I learned while in this class. The concept map helped to keep me on track, so that it was clear the subject matter I was addressing. Building the reference page before completing the paper, ensured my references were relevant and also eliminated the possibility to plagiarism. I hope that I was able to impart knowledge that could maybe help someone that may have been touched by ASD.

7/30/2017:

For my presentation I used PP and it was extremely easy to use because I've used it before. It took all week to finish my presentation and I review the grading rubric to make sure I meet all the expectations. I additionally researched one more credible source in the XYZ University library to present in my PP. Creating my presentation was fairly easy since bulk of research was done through my first 6 weeks of class. The evaluation of my resources is very good because I'm able to retrieve from past scholarly sources. I made my presentation as creative and unbarring as possible.

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