APPLE Update FINAL - 5/7/16
Berkeley City College
Incorporating Collaborative Exercises in MMART Classes

Our APPLE focus was to
EXPERIMENT WITH COLLABORATIVE EXERCISES IN MULTIMEDIA CLASSES IN ORDER TO:

INCORPORATE LEARNING EXERCISES INTO LECTURES WHERE
STUDENTS ACTIVELY APPLY THEORY BEING TAUGHT IN CLASS

This was in an effort to reach our end goals of:

1)INCREASING STUDENT RETENTION BY BUILDING COMMUNITY VIA IN-CLASS TEAM PROJECTS

2) PREPARE STUDENTS FOR REAL-LIFE CAREER SITUATIONS VIA PROJECT BASED LEARNING

RETENTION through community-building allows students to create a support structure that helps them succeed, especially those transitioning into college or international students acclimating to American culture. Understanding that building a support system will help them when they pursue degrees or transfer to universities.

REAL-LIFE CAREER TRAINING prepares students to work for people - where they must follow a lead and specific instruction. Conversely it will better prepare them if they will have people working for them and they must lead and guide with specific instruction.

ONE-WAY FLOW VS MULTI-RECIPROCAL MODES OF EDUCATION

The current default approach to education is a one-way flow where a teacher disseminates information to a group of students.

One of the benefits of active in-class exercises is that students feel a much **stronger sense of community and belonging at college,** which benefits retention. Yet these are not summer camp style "team building" exercises whose sole goal is to build group trust and affiliation,

Instead, we are peppering our lectures with opportunities in class for students as individuals and small groups, to **actively apply the theories they're learning during class time.**

With more collaborative and/or group exercises, we hope to create a multi-reciprocal classroom, one where teacher and student pass information to each other, but moreover, there is student-to-student learning.

Students, don't just go to class to receive information; they play an integral role in the class learning experience.

This empowers students into an active role. When they teach others, they realize not only have a solid grasp on the subject matter itself, but they have the ability to give rather than only be on the receiving end of education.

This method naturally builds:

COMMUNITY
COMMUNICATION SKILLS
CONFIDENCE

Group collaboration is natural in a video production class since that is the very nature of the subject, but we wanted to explore how to apply that to the variety of classes in Multimedia.

OUR WORKSHOP PROCESS

We broke down the different modes of teaching in our classes: Software, Hands-on, Theory and a Combination of all. Then we moved onto brainstorming what we could bring into our classes.

#1) BRAINSTORM FOR COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

- creative collaboration exercise
- possible cross collaboration with another class
- group presentations on lecture material
- Creating or taking quizzes/lesson walkaways in groups
- Peer teaching (teach each other concepts)
- workshopping groups to watch work and critique
- meet and greets
- in-class on-the-spot assignment with low stakes in the form of a jigsaw assignments (each group does a different part of the assignment for it to all come together)
- workshopping groups to present work and critique
- client-freelancer games
- problem solving or challenge
- group social event
- preproduction meetings
- teacher:producer game

We planned to **intersperse** active exercises throughout the lecture. The in-class exercises can run from **2-30 minutes each** and several of these apply across disciplines.

#2) ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT GROUP WORK

Several of the teachers had reservations about incorporating collaborative and group exercises. The major ones were:

- Some students don't do their part and leave the bulk of work to their fellows.
- Students that are shy, ESL or lack strong communication skills.
- How to evaluate participation of each student.
- How to cover vital info in allotted class time.
- Students want more creative control or individually driven end product of their own.

SOLUTIONS TO THESE CONCERNS

It was incredibly fruitful to have teachers from a variety of classes to discuss these issues because a variety of experience and suggestions came up. In one meeting, we were fortunate enough to have to two former students that could add their perspective. Here's just a bit of we came up with:

- Balance groups a variety of skill level.
- Rework what is already in lesson plan and reframe it into a group setting.
- Make exercises shorter in duration.
- Lower stakes so students are more willing.
- Choose creative group work for advanced classes where students understand basics and may be more interested in taking on supportive roles rather than just leader.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR SELECTED GROUP ACTIVITIES

The teachers with less experience with collaborative activities were exceedingly pleased with how their exercises were going. First off they noted how much it changed the environment of the classroom and were thrilled to walk into a chatty classroom with a higher energy level.

They also were relieved that there was less opposition than they thought there would be to the group activities. We continued to brainstorm ways to improve or change these activities for next semester.

#3) CREATING MODES OF ASSESSMENT

There are two areas to which we refer when talking assessment:
1) Self/Peer assessment performed by the students
2) Faculty assessing the exercise itself to determine if it supported our main goals of collaborative work which were retention and real-life work training.

Issues around assessment were:

- Students resist filling out surveys and assessments.
- Qualitative student assessments in the form of narratives are not easy to translate into quantitative judgements for grading.
- What questions should we ask to assess

Questions on any assessment would depend on class but an example for production classes would be:

- Did the student understand their role and stay in it?
- Did the student support the intent of the director and/or the project?
- Did the director clearly communicate their intent?
- Did the director give their team what they needed to be successful?
- How did team members deal with non-performing students?

- How well did students meet the deadlines?
- How did students deal with absences of team members?
- How did the exercise fare in terms of work to payoff ratio for both teacher and student?

Each teacher worked on assessment forms that best suited their specific class subject. It was also concluded that not all activities require Self/Peer evaluations such as group quizzes or critiques.

TAKE - AWAYS

1) Creation of these exercises is a **work-in-progress** and should be modified to accommodate your particular class, set of students, and what you thought worked or didn't in the past.

2) Some activities will not require self/peer assessments. The method of activity assessment will vary depending on what the teacher deems applies to their specific class subject.

3) Each class will have different activities that are successful based on subject. For beginning level software classes, it might be that social activities (meet n greets, "group therapy") and presentation/critiques will be the most fruitful so that it does not detract from class time and learning rate but rather contributes to the end goals of retention and building future work skills.

4) meet n greet activities created an environment for **better class discussions** because students were more comfortable with each other. This creates equity and class time that serves **all students.**

When students were better acquainted, they saw each other as **resources** and were more likely to come to each other for problem-solving.

5) The point of a group exercise is that students must learn from the difficulties and challenges of group work **- just like real life.**

6) Other teachers and former students are **great sounding boards** with ideas of how to structure activities, how they felt about the exercises (as students). Talk ideas and blocks with each other!

7) The majority of the teachers that participated in our APPLE reported that **retention in their classes was better than it had ever been** in previous years.

Teachers involved in our APPLE:
Terry Bodkin, Michel Bohbot, Isabella LaRocca,
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